

Desert Ecotourism in Rajasthan: A Case Study of Jaipur

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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism is extensively accepted as a strategy with the potential to provide ecological, economic, and social benefits at the local and national level. As we know that aggressive tourism activities without proper planning, effective policy and institutional framework have created serious environmental problems. As a result, it threatens the capacity of tourist attractions because of over-crowding, congestion, traffic snarls and environmental pollution. Finally, if tourism grows wisely and strategically, it might serve as a true care taker of the tangible social and ecological infrastructure available at the tourist destinations. One of the ways for tourism to play this elevated role in our society is to promote ecotourism. Ecotourism is the development of tourism which can ensure and support eco-system on the long term basis. This form of tourism serves both the inhabitants and the visitors of the unique eco assets and legacies at the tourism destination. This study finds Jaipur to be one such destination. The main objective of this article is to review the type of tourists arriving, seasonality in Jaipur and, more specifically, to focus on environmental problems and suggest action plans in an ecofriendly way. There is need for unified efforts in this direction and to make Rajasthan an all year round attraction for the visitors as well as Jaipur itself. The Pink city of Jaipur, the capital of geographically largest State of Rajasthan, is the central focus of this study.

KEYWORDS: *Culture, Desert ecotourism, Ecology, Environment, Heritage, Sustainability.*

Introduction

There are many definitions of ecotourism, sustainable tourism and responsible travel. Ecotourism in Jaipur is an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable activity that responsibly and authentically connects visitors with Jaipur's natural and cultural landscapes resulting in beneficial exchanges among these landscapes, the host community, and the visitor. There is little consensus. That said, in our view ecotourism is overreaching at its finest and calls upon inter-sectoral alliances, comprehension and respect among stakeholders. While the details vary, ecotourism is special form of tourism that meets three criteria: (1) it actively facilitates environmental conservation (2) it includes meaningful

community participation (3) it is profitable and can sustain itself. It has become the name of the game to survive, stand and develop. Tourism that involves traveling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specified object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (both of the past or the present) found in these areas may be called Ecotourism. Both a strong commitment to nature and a sense of social responsibility that includes the sensitivity of travellers are elements of ecotourism. Tourism has always been an industry in Rajasthan. In 2011, 27137323 domestic and 1351974 international tourists visited Rajasthan, out of this 1035885 domestic and 416824 international tourist visited the Pink city of Jaipur. Normally, tourists prefers winter months of November, December and January. There are few tourists in Jaipur during the rainy months of July and August. Summer months of April, May and June do attract sizable number of tourists. Gangaur Mela in April, Sawan Teej Utsav during the month of July-August, and especially the Elephant Festival in March attracts lot of tourists.

Characteristics of Ecotourism and Area of Deficiency

According to Chesworth (1995), Ecotourism has six characteristics. These are: a) ecotourism involves travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas and/or archeological sites, b) it focuses on learning and the quality of experience, c) it economically benefits the local communities, d) ecotourists seek to view rare species, spectacular landscapes and/or the unusual and exotic, e) ecotourists do not deplete resources but even sustain the environment or help undo damage to the environment, and f) ecotourists appreciate and respect local culture, traditions, etc. Moreover, Kusler (1991) believes that ecotourism must have a strong "people element". For example, the travellers should learn about the forest and its people. They should also learn the causes of destruction of the rainforests. The project must also be built through the cooperative action of a variety of key groups because failure to involve even a single group may result in destruction of the resource. In recent years, the city has developed into an ill-reputed center of environment degradation. The touristic value of Jaipur appears to be on the decline because environmental problems have severely inhibited its capacity to attract tourists. Remedial actions have been formulated, but excess stress on carrying capacity continues to occur, indicating failure of existing policies or their ineffective enforcement. New methods are needed to reduce overcrowding in such areas and to promote tourism in new areas.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to analytically analyze the environmental concerns and their impact on Jaipur as a destination, which would optimally predict the integrated development of tourism in the study area. It also has the following aims:

- *to help preserve ecosystems and natural areas (usually already within protected areas) with a high tourism potential;*
- *to cultivate environmental consciousness among the local population by educating them about the dangers of overexploiting resources and unrestricted number of tourists;*
- *to promote new economic incentives, e.g. selling of local (environmentally safe) products, crafts, and cultivated medicinal plants thereby create some entrepreneurial skills;*
- *to ensure communal ownership and control, and that part of the profits flow into community development programs rather than into personal enrichment; and*
- *to foster a feeling of pride and community through a revival or preservation of “traditional” practices and cultural techniques.*

Methodology

This present study has been developed using a range of different techniques. Firstly, a comprehensive literature review in the broad fields of biodiversity conservation, ecotourism and ecological economics was carried out. Lessons important for the study of ecotourism were also drawn from (sustainable) development theory, as well as biological and ecological journals and books. Secondly, a number of grey literature reports such as policy documents, NGO reports, student’s dissertations, tourism publications, internet publications and the like about the area of study were carefully examined. Thirdly, a combination of qualitative and quantitative primary data were collected through structured and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders who could be considered as having firsthand experience of the situation in the Jaipur.

The primary data was collected through personal interviews according to the viewpoints of tourists. The present study relies on information from respondents, the validity of which depends on their own powers of recall, their honesty and fundamentally, their answers to the questions included in a questionnaire. Sample surveys on visitors were conducted during peak and off season to gather details on tourist profiles and attitudes towards the environment of Jaipur.

To undertake a survey of 100 tourists (domestic and international), the researcher visited Jaipur five times (April 2011-July 2012); on each occasion, twenty tourists were interviewed at random (It should be noted that total responses could be more than respondents because of multiple responses). Frequency distribution system has been used to reach conclusions. The secondary data has been collected from published as well as unpublished sources. The published data includes information from various publications of Central and State Governments, books, journals and newspapers. The unpublished data has been collected from Jaipur

Nagar Nigam, Jaipur Development Authority, Department of Transport, Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board, Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation and other non-government agencies.

Findings and Discussion

Jaipur has a potential and need to find its place on the world tourist map. Researcher found that visitors originate from different geographic regions, domestic and international. The ratio of domestic and international tourists was in the order of 71:29. In 2011, the sample revealed that there were a high percentage of the tourists from USA, with some UK, Italy and Japan. According to Table No. 1 (January 2010 to November 2010) highest tourist arrivals are in the months of October, November and January.

Table 1 : Tourist Arrival

Month	Domestic	International	Total
January	114316	38853	153169
February	93774	38799	132573
March	92761	42847	135608
April	101779	25420	127199
May	58483	19410	77893
June	71716	18052	89768
July	75340	18735	94075
August	79461	27411	106872
September	73294	22225	95519
October	121104	36397	157501
November	120327	47051	167378

Source: Pragati Report of Tourism Department, Govt. of Rajasthan

The climate of Jaipur follows the pattern of India in general, which may be divided into four seasons of about three months each. Beginning in January, the first quarter is rough, snowy, stormy and raw. The second quarter is dry and sunny, with gradually increasing dust and heat. The third is rainy, damp and relaxing and the fourth bright, clear and bracing. The best seasons in Jaipur can be broadly divided into two: winter that starts from October to mid January and summer that extends from March to June. In winter, visitor numbers increase as it is a peak tourist season and they decline with the beginning of the monsoon.

Desert tourism in Jaipur is, by and large, nature tourism, to view the splendors of heritage, culture and to experience nature in an unmodified state. Tourists visit

desert areas for diverse reasons. Findings showed in Table No.2 reveal that 89 percent Indians and 81 percent foreigners came to Jaipur for pleasure and sightseeing. The scenic value of the monuments is an attraction. They provide opportunities to observe and study the rhythm of heritage, culture and nature.

Table 2 : Domestic and International Tourists visiting Jaipur

Purpose	Domestic (Indian)	International
Adventure	00	06
Business	05	00
Official	00	00
Pleasure & Sight Seeing	60	26
Religious & Cultural	02	00
Total	67	32

Source: Primary data

Since most of the tourists come from large metropolitan cities with all types of pollution, Jaipur, by contrast, looks like heaven with its warm fresh air and light blue sky. The findings in Table No. 3 imply that most of the tourists including Indian and Foreigners rated position of sanitation in Jaipur as about 52.72 percent to be average. 25.45 percent thought Jaipur to be a clean city whereas 12.72 percent tourists considered Jaipur to be polluted and very polluted. Proper knowledge of Ecotourism activities is important to understand the tastes and preferences of tourists. This information will be useful for concentrating on certain Ecotourism activities. Table No. 4 indicates that among Indian tourists, Nature Photography was given the top first priority, Heritage & Culture was recommended with 2nd top priority followed by Sightseeing with 3rd top priority. Among foreigners, Sightseeing was chosen as the first preference among Ecotourism activities. Nature photography got the second priority followed by Camel Safari as the third preference. Table: 3 (a)

Table 3(a) : Tourists view regarding Environment and Climate

Area of Deficiency	International Tourists					Total
	Very Clean	Clean	Normal	Polluted	Very Polluted	
Air	09	13	02	01	00	24
Water	00	09	13	01	00	22
Sanitation	03	07	11	04	01	26
Noise	07	09	08	00	00	24
Visual	06	14	04	00	00	24

Source: Primary data

Table: 3 (b) : Tourists view regarding Environment and Climate

Area of Deficiency	Domestic Tourists (Indian)					
	Very Clean	Clean	Normal	Polluted	Very Polluted	Total
Air	25	27	07	01	00	60
Water	03	31	29	01	00	65
Sanitation	05	14	29	04	03	55
Noise	02	16	30	04	03	55
Visual	14	30	07	01	00	52

Source: Primary data

Table 4 (a) : Tourists Activity Weightage: Domestic Tourists (Indian)

Priority Activity	Weightage									
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th
Air Gliding	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
Balloning	00	02	00	02	00	00	00	00	00	00
Bird Watching	00	02	02	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
Botanical Study	00	00	02	00	02	00	00	00	00	00
Camping	00	04	00	02	00	00	00	01	00	00
Camel Safari	02	04	08	02	00	00	00	00	00	00
Heritage & Culture	12	06	04	04	00	00	00	00	00	00
Nature Photography	16	08	06	10	02	00	01	00	01	00
Sight Seeing	10	10	08	00	04	00	00	00	01	00
Trekking	00	02	04	02	04	02	00	00	00	00
Wildlife	00	05	07	04	00	00	00	00	00	00

Source: Primary data

Table 4 (b) : Tourists Activity Weightage: International Tourists

Priority Activity	Weightage									
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th
Air Gliding	00	00	02	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
Balloning	00	04	00	02	00	00	00	00	00	00
Bird Watching	04	02	04	00	06	02	02	00	00	00
Botanical Study	00	00	04	00	02	04	02	02	00	00
Camping	04	04	00	02	02	00	02	00	00	00
Camel Safari	05	04	06	04	00	02	02	00	00	00
Heritage & Culture	06	06	04	04	00	00	00	00	00	00
Nature Photography	06	04	06	04	02	00	02	00	01	00
Sight Seeing	08	10	08	00	04	00	02	00	00	00
Trekking	00	00	02	02	00	02	00	00	00	00
Wildlife	02	04	02	06	00	00	00	00	00	00

Source: Primary data

Current Scenario

The Peak winter season creates a mismanagement of the traffic in this city. Traffic jams, which can be prolonged, range from two to several hours. This is not the only hardship that tourists have to endure at a time when they come to relax and enjoy their holidays. Unplanned and haphazard growth of Jaipur city is causing deforestation and environmental problems. Jaipur is in danger of being buried by huge quantities of garbage, which is left behind by visiting tourists. Used plastic mineral water bottles to soft drink cartons can be found in the city. Urinal discharge on Road side walls and footpaths are also creates a dirty picture of the pink city. The Rajasthan Government's decision to ban the use of polythene bags has not yet been enforced properly. The frequent digging up of the road, sometimes by telecom department and at other times by water and electricity departments causes many inconveniences to strollers. The heritage city, which was neat and clean, is getting more polluted each day. Increasing air pollution in Jaipur is associated with the rapid rise in population. According to data obtained from air pollution recording station, the pollution level touches the maximum in winters and minimum during the rainy season.

Suggestion

- Developing and conducting environmental education and awareness programs using various materials such as publications, booklets, posters, pamphlets, CDs, children's books, video tapes, TV and radio programs, newspapers and magazines.
- Implementing an integrated solid waste management program and other activities in Jaipur.
- Promoting eco-tourism within and outside Protected Areas, establishing eco-lodges, establishing the Training Center, and developing and implementing rectification and recovery programs within the area.
- The creation of employment opportunities to the youth in the field of environmental protection all of whom were trained on the use of modern technology in developing and managing natural protectorates; as well as thousands of opportunities for the local residents within or in the proximity of natural protectorates.
- Ecotourism should lead to nature conservation and local economic benefit.
- Culturally and economically sensitive community development is necessary.
- Planning and management capabilities are essential for long-term success.
- Environmental protection is based upon fiscal viability of management, both public and private.
- Ecotourism and environmental protection require the development of management structures to handle use of sensitive environments.
- High-quality information and service delivery are essential. Well educated guides are essential.
- Ecotourism should be designed to benefit local communities, socially, economically and ecologically.
- Both public and private ecotourism businesses should have an environmental strategy and an environmental officer. Well-educated staff is essential.
- Tour operators and tourists should demand high environmental standards from their associates, hotels, transportation providers and destinations.

Conclusion

Jaipur is endowed with immense potent as a place of tourist attraction, besides being a capital of Rajasthan. Jaipur requires special consideration in conservation of ecological order. There are certain spots, which are environmentally rich and need conservation. Many of the problems, which make tourism unsustainable, relate to the fact that many principles fundamental to ecotourism are not being acknowledged. This is not evident in the conception, planning, design, development,

operation or marketing of tourism in the town of Jaipur. It is essential to have a clear long-term policy on what is desired from tourism in the context of desert development. The growth must complement environmental conservation if tourism development is to be sustainable, especially in the fragile environment of desert areas. Tourism development cannot be viewed in isolation from conservation, natural resource management, and desert development. Initiatives should be designed to reduce the negative impact of human activities on the destination. This should be encouraged by using Information and education for improving the relationship between man and his environment. Important techniques for limiting and controlling visitor flows include the use of guided tours, timed tickets, advance booking for groups and dispersal within the site. To avoid congestion, positive routing of visitor traffic should be adopted. For example tourist signposts could be used to channel cars and coaches away from the city center. Environmentally acceptable means of travel such as walking or cycling should be encouraged. Park and ride schemes can be used to encourage visitors to leave their cars in an appropriate car park and go to their destination by public transport. All this can be implemented easily and at a minimal cost. A site or locality that is seen to be over-visited should not be promoted or 'demarketed'. Out-of-season promotion can encourage visitors to come at a time when numbers are less. Different pricing can be used to encourage off-season visiting. Alternative destinations can be promoted to stimulate visits to other locations or sites. Information and interpretation at entry point can give visitors a greater understanding and appreciation of Jaipur. In the long term, such measures are likely to produce more responsible visitors who have a greater awareness of the sensitivity of the environment. These suggestions which focus on initiatives, transport solutions and marketing information, may seem simple but demand political will at local, regional and central levels. The government has to play a positive role in collaboration with the private entrepreneurs and the local population to assimilate changes in the policy and planning structure. The conservation and preservation of the environment is essential to protect the scarce resources of the economy. The findings also revealed that there is need to create more awareness by providing information regarding ecotourism potentials in the location and its benefits so as to encourage the local leaders and community members to conserve natural tourism resources and hence improve the economy of the locals.

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