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Research Paper Hotel Management



Some Initiatives of Rural Development through Rural Tourism and Mgnreg

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Current Scenario

Tourism in Asia is in a thriving condition. Every country is involved in promoting tourism in a big way. Tourism has become a top priority of the economic agenda of all the countries. For example, if in Malaysia tourism is the top revenue generating sector, in India tourism is slowly getting due focus taking into account the country's rich heritage and cultural tradition. However, a review of the tourism trends in Asia clearly indicates that while economic considerations have reigned supreme, the social aspects are not being given due importance as far as the strategic tourism considerations are considered. Tourism it appears is developing an elitist bias as broadening of its social base with participation from all sections of the society is clearly not visible. The important role of participatory and community based organisations like cooperatives in promoting tourism has yet to be recognised. As a result, the concepts like "sustainable tourism", "peace through tourism", "poverty reduction through tourism", 'community tourism', etc. which can best be implemented through participatory institutions have yet to be popularised in a big way.

The cooperatives in Asia in the recent years have diversified themselves into various areas of socio-economic activities. The cooperative model in the Asian countries is considered a strong force for solving the various socio-economic problems. The failure of the public sector and various limitations of the private sector have compelled the policy-makers to pin their faiths on the cooperative system. For certain activities/areas, the success of which is based on the ability of the grassroot institutions to tackle them with their participatory and people-based approach, the cooperatives are considered to have an advantage over other organisations. For example, in India the cooperatives are considered most effective organisations in the field of rural insurance. Similarly, because of their vast network and reach, the cooperatives are considered best promoters for rural electrification in India.

Tourism : A Neglected Field The cooperatives in Asia have yet to recognise the importance of tourism despite the rapid growth of tourism sector in Asia.

Following are the main reasons :

- Lack of definite data base on the number of cooperatives involved in the field of tourism, inability to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the ones which are present, etc.
- Inability to analyse the changing socio-economic dimensions of tourism sector in Asia, and demarcate the areas in which cooperatives have a strategic advantage over other forms of organisations.
- Lack of policy research in this field which can provide definite indicators for future. For example, it is generally agreed that taking into account the growing tourism sector in India and the presence of strong network of Indian cooperatives, there is lack of policy research in this field which can show a way ahead for definite policy initiatives.
- Inability to strategically link the cooperative sector with the tourism sector in those countries in which tourism is in a boom. For example, in Malaysia and Thailand, tourism has emerged as a big force. But, the cooperative sector has yet to come up strongly in this field.
- Inability of the cooperatives to extend their areas of operations or activities in the field of tourism. For example, some of the sectoral Asian cooperatives are in a best position to incorporate tourism in their agenda, which is not being done. For example, the dairy cooperatives in Asia should think of linking tourism in their activities, or promote tourism cooperatives exclusively. The, dairy cooperatives in India have ushered in milk revolution in the country. They have empowered the masses in the rural areas to trigger off a milk revolution. They have developed milk brands which speak of cooperative supremacy. The areas which are strong-holds of cooperative milk sector can be promoted in a big way as hot tourist spots. Similarly, the school cooperatives in Malaysia are very strong. Taking into account the buoyant condition of tourism in Malaysia and the vibrancy of school cooperative sector, how can tourism be promoted through cooperatives in a big way?
- Weak advocacy for tourism promotion is also a big hindrance. Holding of Advocacy conferences by the cooperatives in the area of cooperative tourism can set the ball rolling in a big way and create a conducive atmosphere for tourism promotion. This can also establish links, with other international tourism organisations who have to be sensitised on the cooperative agenda. However, due to lack of awareness, this is not being done at present. Similarly, lack of development of cooperative literature in the field of cooperative tourism is also a sign of weak advocacy. There is also lack of documentation of few successful models of cooperative tourism in the Region.

Indian Case

Starting in 1904, the Indian Cooperative Movement has made rapid strides in all the areas of socio-economic activities. The cooperative concept has worked wonders in India. Today there are more than 5 lakh cooperative societies with a membership of 23 crores and working capital of Rs. 198.542 million. The cooperative credit institutions are disbursing 46.15% of agricultural credit and cooperatives are distributing 36.22% of total fertilisers in the country. The share of cooperatives in production of sugar is 59% and they cover 55% of the handlooms. The cooperative networking and reach is so vast that the cooperatives cover 100% of total villages and 75% of the rural households. The cooperative movement is the world's largest movement, India's economic reforms have given a big push to tourism sector. Tourism is today projected as an engine of economic growth and an instrument for eliminating poverty, solving unemployment problem, opening up new fields of activity and the uplifted of women. New opportunities are being tapped to promote eco, adventure, rural, postage, wildlife and health and herbal including medical tourism.

The Indian Government is now considering Rural Tourism as one of the thrust areas. Keeping into account the strength of

Indian cooperatives it wants that cooperatives should come up in the field of Rural Tourism as the cooperatives cover 100% of the villages in the country. The UNDP- Ministry of Tourism Project on Tourism talks about strong community-private and public sector partnership for boosting rural tourism in the country. The Indian cooperatives due to their immense reach and wide network are strategically well positioned to take a leading role in the field of Rural Tourism.

Paradigm Shift in Tourism

An analysis of the tourism trends in Asia clearly indicate the following :

- Shift in focus towards decentralised form of tourism which can effectively tackle the problem of poverty allegation by generating jobs. It is now well understood that tourism can best fight poverty by generating jobs ,both in the rural and urban areas.
- Growing recognition of social aspects of tourism which can provide equal opportunities of travel for all, promote respect for culture, values, sustainable development, etc.
- Realisation that economic spin-offs from tourism sector can be used for the betterment of the society, and creating a peaceful atmosphere in which there is understanding and cooperation amongst all.

In all the above areas, the cooperatives in the future are well-positioned to formulate effective strategies so that they emerge as lead players in promoting decentralised form of tourism. The world tourism community is looking towards the cooperatives to play a strong balancing role in tourism development so as to help in creation of an equitable society. It is heartening that cooperatives are now considered an effective instrument for poverty alleviation. A rich academic debate on this subject has emerged. International organisations now view cooperatives as an important tool for bridging the divide between rich and poor. Poverty, being endemic in Asia, can the cooperatives in Asia tackle the problem of poverty by linking their agenda with tourism? This is a big challenge.

Strategic Initiatives

ICA being the apex body of the world cooperatives must play a pro-active role in promoting tourism in the Asian Region, ICA's specialised organ, TICA must align with Bureau of International Social Tourism (BITS) with which it has strong relationship, so that initiatives in the following areas may be undertaken.

- Establishing strong networks with the Asian Cooperatives, and locating areas of collaborations.
- Undertaking, a big research project so as to gauge the effectiveness of cooperative model in tourism sector in Asia. Other projects may be conceptualized after this..
- Sensitising the tourism bodies in Asia on on the importance of cooperative sector in Tourism, and forging useful collaboration with them.
- Organising conferences and seminars on important thematic issues.
- Due to lack of presence of international bodies championing the cause of social tourism in an effective manner, TICA-BITS may think of setting up a Centre with the relevant support so that definitive advocacy/promotional measures may be taken for promoting tourism in the Region.

TOURISM AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represent a global partnership aimed at responding to the world's main development challenges, including poverty reduction, opportunities for education, better maternal health, gender equality, and reducing child mortality, AIDS and other diseases. The MDGs are an agreed set of goals to be achieved by 2015 based on all actors working together at global, regional and national levels. Strategies based on working with a wide range of partners can help create coalitions for change that support the MDGs at all levels; benchmark progress; and help countries build the institutional capacity, policies and programmes needed to achieve the MDGs.

It is generally assumed that international tourism can generate benefits for poor people and poor communities in the context of sustainable tourism development, usually without specifically targeting the poor. However, greater attention has been given to the argument that tourism could be more effectively harnessed to address poverty reduction in ways that are more direct. For example, according to UNWTO, tourism can contribute to development and poverty reduction in a number of ways. Although the focus is usually on economic benefits, there can also be social, environmental and cultural benefits. Poverty can be reduced when tourism provides employment and diversified livelihood opportunities, which provides additional income. This can contribute to reducing the vulnerability by increasing the range of economic opportunities available to individuals and households living in conditions of poverty. Tourism can also contribute through direct taxation and by generating taxable economic growth since taxes can then be used to alleviate poverty through education, health and infrastructure development.

These points refer to the general contribution of tourism at the macro level. When considering targeted interventions aimed at achieving specific MDGs, then actions to make tourism contribute to poverty alleviation at local and community levels needs to be considered. At the same time, however, it is equally important to consider how such targeted interventions can be replicated in other communities or scaled up to have a wider impact. Targeted interventions to address the issues raised in the Millennium Development Goals require that the linkages between tourism and poverty be identified. Figure 3 illustrates many of these linkages.

WTO, Tourism and Poverty Alleviation, (Madrid: WTO, 2002), p. 31 -76- Table 14 develops the figure further and lists the potential contributions that appropriate interventions in the tourism sector can make to the achievement of each of the MDGs. As discussed in chapters II and III, the creation of income and employment in the tourism industry and the tourism economy would contribute to reducing the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day (target for Goal 1).

Similarly, the provision of infrastructure facilities and services for tourists (roads, communications, health and sanitation services) can be designed to benefit local communities at the same time. Such facilities can contribute to the achievement of Goals 4, 5, 6 and 7. In the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women (Goal 3), tourism is recognized Figure 3. Linkages between tourism and poverty reduction as a sector that employs a high proportion of women. However, careful attention needs to be given to gender patterns in tourism careers and employment should be carefully studied and analyzed with particular attention to gender segregation by job category or wage gaps according to gender. Table 14. Contribution of tourism to achieving the Millennium Development Goals Goal Contribution of tourism

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

a. Tourism stimulates economic growth both at the national and local levels and promotes the growth of the agricultural, industrial and service sectors;
b. Tourism provides a wide range of employment opportunities easily accessible by the poor. Tourism businesses and tourists purchase goods and services directly from the poor or enterprises employing the poor. This creates opportunities for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in which the poor can participate;
c. International and domestic tourism spreads development to poor regions and remote rural areas of a country that may not have benefited from other types of economic development;
d. The development of tourism infrastructure can benefit the

livelihood of the poor through improvement in tourism-linked service sectors, including transport and communications, water supply, energy and health services.

2. Achieve universal primary education

a. The construction of roads and tracks to remote areas for tourists also improves access for school-age children and for teachers;
b. Tourism can help local resource mobilization, part of which can be spent on improvement of education facilities.

3. Promote gender equality and empower women

The tourism industry employs a high proportion of women and creates microenterprise opportunities for them. It promotes women's mobility and provides opportunities for social networking.

1. Reduce child mortality
2. Improve maternal health
3. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

a) The construction of roads and tracks to remote areas for tourists also improves access to health services;
b) Revenues accruing to national and local governments through taxes on the tourism industry can be used to improve health services and nutrition for young children and their mothers; Goal Contribution of tourism
c) Tourism raises awareness about HIV/AIDS issues and supports HIV/AIDS-prevention campaigns;
d) Tourism aggravates the spread of HIV/AIDS (negative effect).

4. Ensure environmental sustainability

a. Tourism can generate financial resources for conservation of the natural environment;
b. Tourism raises awareness about environmental conservation and promotes waste management, recycling and biodiversity conservation;
c. Uncontrolled tourism may generate negative externalities as a result of pollution, congestion and depletion of natural resources (negative effect).

5. Develop a global partnership for development

a. Tourism contributes to the socio-economic development of least developed countries, landlocked countries and island developing countries through foreign exchange earnings and the creation of job opportunities;
b. Tourism stimulates the development of the transport infrastructure, which facilitates access to and from the least developed countries, landlocked countries and island developing countries;
c. Tourism stimulates internal and external trade and strengthens supply chains;
d. Tourism promotes the integration of isolated economies with regional and global flows of trade and investment;
e. Tourism reduces the burden on government budgets through implementation of public-private initiatives;
f. Tourism creates decent and productive work for youth;
g. Tourism provides opportunities for bilateral, multilateral and subregional cooperation among countries;
h. Information technologies play an important role in integrating tourism enterprises into global tourism markets.

United Nations ESCAP, Transport and Tourism Division, Transport Policy and Tourism Section. The MDG agenda and the role of tourism in poverty alleviation converges with recent efforts based on the concept of pro-poor tourism. Pro-poor tourism is an approach to tourism development and management that results in increased net benefits for poor people by enhancing linkages between tourism businesses and poor people. Its strategies focus on the local or community level and aim at increasing tourism's contribution to poverty reduction and enabling poor people to participate more effectively in tourism development. Among the many different types of poor people to be considered are: staff, neighbouring communities, land-holders, producers of food, fuel and other suppliers, operators of micro-enterprises, informal businesses, craft-makers, other users of tourism infrastructure and resources, and so forth. Types of pro-poor tourism strategies include economic benefits, livelihood benefits and increasing local participation by building mechanisms for consultation. Such strategies often begin by policies, processes and actions designed to reduce negative impacts on poor people. 64 An instructive example of taking action based on the MDGs and the Tenth Plan of the Government of India is a four-year project (2004-2008) entitled "Endogenous Tourism for Rural Livelihoods" being funded by UNDP. The project incorporates strategies designed to work with a wide range of partners to create coalitions for change in support of achieving the MDGs at the local level and build institutional capacity based on a new model known as endogenous tourism, which is linked to the concept of rural tourism. In India, 74 per cent of the population resides in 7 million villages, which makes the concept of rural tourism appropriate. Urban-centric industrialization along with the stress of urban lifestyles has led to "counter-urbanization" thinking.

That is, theories of demographic transition due to migration based on past patterns presumed a series of three major population movements (rural to rural, rural to urban and urban to urban) as determined by industrialization, economic development and urbanization. Demographers have recently recognized a fourth movement, especially in developed countries: urban to rural, or counter-urbanization. It is generally presumed that developing countries such as India are going through a delayed transition in migration patterns, where urbanization has contributed to falling income levels and fewer job opportunities in rural areas, thus contributing to ongoing rural to urban migration. The Indian government aims to identify and strengthen local resources (cultural heritage, local traditions, art and crafts) and empower communities in rural areas through management of endogenous tourism with a view to influencing the patterns of migration.

In 2004, UNDP began concrete planning on an Endogenous Tourism Project for Rural Livelihoods in India, involving communities throughout the country. The project is structured in terms of India's cultural heritage and indigenous traditions, with common facility centres set up for craftspeople with local showcases for art and craft wares, along with the history and traditions of each area. Communities manage the project activities with partial financing from an incentive fund to encourage a variety of rural tourism initiatives and the marketing of local craft products, as well as dissemination of experiences and practices. Rural tourism in India is in line with Thomas Kontuly, "International Comparisons of Counter-Urbanization", Geographical Perspectives, vol. 61 (Spring 1988), pp. 1-5. David Plane, Christopher Henrie, and Marc Perry, "Migration across the Micropolitan /Metropolitan Spectrum", paper presented at the 41st Annual Meeting of the Western Regional Science Association, Monterey, California, 17- 20 February 2002.

Increased levels of awareness, growing interest in heritage and culture, improved accessibility and environmental consciousness. This new style of tourism in village settings would allow international and domestic tourists visitors to experience a unique lifestyle as well as sustain livelihoods in villages. 66 The main features of the project are presented in box 8.

Endogenous Tourism for Rural Livelihoods From 2003 to 2007, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, has been working with 34 implementing agencies, 30 NGOs and 4 panchayats at 36 sites across 20 states throughout the country. Alternative models of rural tourism are being developed across India, since the government has identified tourism as a vehicle for generating employment and promoting sustainable livelihoods. Micro-financing is included as part of the project. Cultural heritage and indigenous tradition are the foundations of the project's model of rural tourism. Common facility centres for village craft persons and village art centres are set up at the 36 project sites to showcase the

culture and living heritage characteristic of each site. Where appropriate, rest houses are built based on local skills and construction materials. People in the communities are trained in different aspects of hospitality to provide services of international standard. Community ownership and management is central to the project's strategy. At every stage in the implementation, care is taken to ensure the participation of women, youth and other disadvantaged groups. In order to mainstream gender and HIV/AIDS concerns into the project, one of the partner agencies is the Health Institute for Mother and Child. By October 2006, most sites were ready to receive tourists and all implementing partners had become sensitized to gender and HIV/AIDS concerns. The project won a World Travel Award in the category of "World's Leading Responsible Tourism Project" in 2006.

It has been noted that results from such strategies could mean that low numbers of people are employed and they might be concentrated in certain types of jobs. However, the spread of earnings, collective income and other livelihood benefits throughout a community can make pro-poor tourism significant to local poverty reduction. It is not always possible to say what contribution this makes to national poverty reduction efforts, since that depends on the scale of tourism within the economy and the degree of pro-poor change within the sector. However, such tourism can be very significant to a district or provincial economy, even if it might not be large enough to affect national aggregates. There are limits to using case studies for assessing the effectiveness of tourism in alleviating poverty. However, final evaluation of multi-site projects such as India's "Endogenous Tourism for Rural Livelihoods" suggests the possibility of learning and then scaling up such a project for wider coverage. Consideration of the linkages between tourism and the MDGs clearly illustrates the potential of tourism to have a greater socio-economic impact. Governments and other stakeholders face the challenge of translating the potential into actual achievements. One effort to assess the effectiveness of tourism projects was a World Bank study that examinined the role of tourism in the World Bank's development strategy and its lending activities in order to estimate the impacts on the sustainable development of Bank actions.

While tourism has not played an important role in the Bank's development strategy in the recent past, there are some signs that it is being seen as more important. Of the 1,500 or so new projects in the Bank from 1998 to 2003, about 6 per cent in terms of number and 3 per cent in terms of value had some Caroline Ashley et al., Pro-Poor Tourism Strategies: Making Tourism Work for the Poor, Pro-Poor Tourism Report Number1 (Nottingham, United Kingdom: Overseas Development Institute, 2001), p. 41. -83- tourism dimension. In terms of lending, direct Bank operations have invested in infrastructure, which facilitates tourism development. Others that have tried to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism, such as the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS. In terms of strategic and policy advice, the Bank has supported projects that were environmentally and socially sustainable and that helped reduce poverty.

The assessment looked at projects that focus on economic development through infrastructure provision. Among the 1,500 or so projects that were appraised, 32 had tourism as a central or significant feature. Only eight of the 32 provided any real quantification of the benefits of tourism. A careful look at these eight revealed that larger infrastructure investment projects were effective in providing benefits from tourism. Smaller projects with investment in improving facilities and providing technical assistance were more effective and yielded higher returns. Projects involving cultural site development and promotion were also effective in yielding large benefits. In terms of environmental impacts, the projects generally followed good practice and ensured that negative environmental impacts were avoided or mitigated. Social impacts were studied in less detail, according to the study.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Government intervention may be necessary to enhance the contribution of tourism to socio-economic development and poverty reduction. One of the principal roles of Governments is to set policy and legislative frameworks for tourism. Two main reasons why governments should formulate tourism development strategy are Anil Markandya, Tim Taylor and Suzette Pedroso, "Tourism and Sustainable Development: Lessons from Recent World Bank Experience", (Washington, D.C.: IBRD, 2003), pp. 20-21.

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