

Residents' Perception on Effectiveness of Tourism Destinations: A SWOT Matrix Analysis

P.S. Buvanewari

Abstract

Indian tourism sector can be glorified if adequate attention is paid to it by the government and others stakeholders. The nation has a relatively high potential in serving almost all types of tourists who come for various purposes including leisure, business, sports, healthcare, education, etc. mainly because of its diverse, nature-rich, heritage-rich landscapes. Some of the Indian destinations are already promoted but still many places are yet to be identified, explored and highlighted as a destination. Successful tourism industry can be assured through a comprehensive analysis on a periodical basis to measure the effectiveness of tourism performance of destinations. Many tools and techniques can be employed to measure tourism effectiveness and one such tool is SWOT analysis. This paper confines to identifying tourism destination effectiveness as it would create tourists delight leading to increase in tourist footfalls, stimulating revisit intention among tourists and increased revenue generation through tourism. Residents, a significant stakeholder category of destinations may be highly aware of a destination's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats when compared to others due to their continuous dwelling and involvement in that particular destination. Therefore their insights will throw light on the different details of destination which may be not be perceived by other stakeholders. This research paper attempts to analyze the tourism effectiveness of a destination through SWOT matrix from the residents' viewpoint.

Keywords: Tourism, Destination effectiveness, SWOT, Local community, Residents' Perception

Introduction

Travel and Tourism is a perennially growing sector as every individual is a tourist at some point or another. Human beings are struck in the routine, monotonous everyday life; when they need a break from such routine, the majority prefers travelling to a new place for an exciting experience. Almost all human beings are wanderlust at least to some extent. Apart from this leisure seeking travelers, there are some other categories of tourists also viz. business travelers, educational tourists, medical tourists, sports tourists etc. So the consumer base for tourism products is very large. In today's scenario, advanced technology and affordable economic air travel and other travel options blurred the regional, national boundaries and the entire globe is seen as one. This has resulted in abundant choices for the prospective tourists. Hence in order to sustain and succeed in the tourism market, tourism products need to be marketed by devising

a well designed marketing strategy and they must deliver superior tourism experience to the visitors. Simultaneously Tourism marketers and Tourism policy makers need to protect the interests of tourism stakeholders of destinations while devising tourism policies/marketing strategies.

The core tourism product - Destination

Tourism products are a service sector offering and the unique characteristics of service sector products viz. intangibility, variability and perish ability, inseparability makes tourism products a complex one. Tourism product is a bundled offering which comprises of various components like attractions, activities, accessibility, accommodation, amenities etc. Each of these components has to be in synchrony with one another to deliver superior tourism experience to the visitors. However, destinations can be considered as the pillar of tourism products. Destination is the region in which tourism attractions are primarily located and also where tourism activities take place. According to WTO (2002) "Destinations have emerged as the fundamental units of analysis in tourism". Destination effectiveness can be stated as how well the destination provided superior and pleasant tourism experience to the visitors i.e. the delivery of tourist satisfaction or even sometime the tourists delight. The actual destination experience is the major determinant of tourist satisfaction. A pleasant memorable experience at a destination will leave tourists satisfied or even sometimes delighted. Whereas, even a single unpleasant memory at a destination will leave the tourists frustrated and annoyed. Delighted tourists may intend to revisit destinations apart from generating positive word of mouth. On the other hand, tourists who had negative experience will become a source negative word of mouth. According to marketing experts, negative word of mouth spreads rapidly when compared to positive word of mouth. In addition to the basic destination experience, value additions are an absolute necessary for destinations to stay ahead in the competition.

Understanding a destination Using SWOT Matrix technique

A destination is a geographical space in which a cluster of tourism resources exist (Steven Pike, 2008). Understanding a destination is crucial for marketing strategy development. This understanding can be attained by gathering information relevant to tourism from sources like actual experience by the tourism officials, expertise of the tourism marketers, statistical surveys and other stakeholders like tourists, residents, entrepreneurs etc. These stakeholders form a part of tourism destination development. SWOT Matrix technique highly regarded as an efficient tool for environmental analysis will reveal a destination's inherent Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The information elicited from residents can be framed into a SWOT matrix to gain a clear picture of destination's current state and future prospects with regard to tourism. Tourism marketers and policy makers should further strengthen the strengths, work on weaknesses to eliminate them; they should also exploit the opportunities

presented by the external environment and should take necessary steps to convert threats posed by external environment into opportunities for tourism business on the identified SWOT.

Background of the Study

Tourism destinations are broad and diverse with a range of stakeholders and constituents to consider in setting a strategic direction, all of whom have legitimate interests in future of destination. To ensure sustainability of tourism destinations, planning must not only be proactive but also be responsive to stakeholders needs. Thus the notion of residents' participation and collaboration in strategic planning is an important and sustainable approach to ensure tourism destination effectiveness. Previous studies focused majorly on residents' perception of tourism impacts. Very few studies were done on SWOT analysis as a tool to examine tourism destinations. This study attempts to synergize SWOT matrix technique for the analysis of tourism destinations from a stakeholders' (residents) perspective.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the role of residents as informants in understanding tourism effectiveness
- To explore tourism destination effectiveness through SWOT matrix analysis
- To examine the influence of certain demographic variables on perceiving the effectiveness of tourism destinations

Review of Literature

Review of related literature revealed the inter-linkage of residents in tourism development. Previous studies have mainly focused on residents' perception on tourism in their region. Relatively high importance is given to the role of residents as they are the ones who are directly affected by tourism development (Haywood, 2000; Simmons, 1994; Snaith and Haley, 1999). Tourism planners need to obtain residents support as their acceptance of tourism in local community is a high priority and also to ensure smooth implementation of tourism development policies (Juan Gabriel Brida, Marta Disegna, Linda Osti, 2014). Cultural tourism planners and other officials who understand methods to gain resident support for cultural tourism investment can maximize economic and cultural tourism gains for the destination (Chris Gullion, Sotiris Hji-Avgoustis, Yao-Yi Fu, Soonhwan Lee, 2015). Ensuring effective communication between tourism planners and the local community is the best way to gain support from the local community (Eshliki & Kaboudi, 2011). Yet another effective way to gain residents' support is to deliver and highlight positive impact of tourism on the local community's region. Higher the positive perception of the residents greater will be their inclination to support tourism (Juan Gabriel Brida, Marta Disegna and Linda Osti, 2014).

Residents' knowledge and awareness of historic sites or natural landscapes they see every day which are potentially important economic benefit for them is very much essential. Destination Managers should pay heed to locals' needs and concerns. Tourists' key takeaways include understanding the significance of what they see, why and how they can help conserve it. This happens in best when locals help with this interpretation, as the process increases their ownership of the story (Jennifer Stange, David Brown). Identifying tourism leaders within the local community is possible when it consists of residents who completely understand and are aware of tourism. Resident awareness of impacts of tourism also helps in mitigating any negative consequences generated by tourism in their destination (Gianna Moscardo, 2011). Unique tourist experience offered by a destination forms the basis for gaining sustainable competitive advantage and attainment of this is closely linked with the quality of hosts-guests interaction and the goodwill of local community (KsenijaVodeb, 2014).

A well-run tourism policy should make best use of opportunities and advantages and also should eliminate any possible disruptions caused by tourism development. These can be attained by doing a complete SWOT analysis (Boles³awGoranczewski, Daniel Puciato, 2010). India has abundant choices viz. natural landscapes, cultural exhibits, divine experiences and so much to showcase to the tourists. India's tourism sector can be further glorified provide the historical and cultural legacy of India are properly maintained. Tourism Ministry of the Indian government has to analyze Indian tourism sector's strengths and weaknesses to fully tap the potential of India's tourism opportunities (Archana Bhatia, 2013).The ideal Destination Management Organizations have to implement strategies which will give it a sustainable competitive advantage; that can be attained by exploiting strengths, neutralizing threats and also by avoiding weaknesses (Steven Pike, 2008).

Research Methodology

Awareness of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of tourism destinations and required policy for sustainability of tourism is need of the hour in order to compete effectively in the tourism industry. Destination stakeholders' may provide greater inputs on the same. Residents share close ties with destinations due to their prolonged presence. The present study is an attempt to understand a destinations' effectiveness from the residents' viewpoint by constructing a SWOT Matrix. Residents were interviewed at Kanchipuram, a popular tourism destination in Tamil Nadu. Convenience sampling method was adopted and a sample size of 70 members was drawn. Details about the participants are presented in Table 1. Interview method was adopted to elicit responses from the participants for the study. A research schedule was used as an aid to interview and record the responses. The schedule contained questions on the following: Demographic details of the respondents, Strengths of the destination as perceived by the respondents, Weakness of the destination as perceived by the respondents, Opportunities for tourism improvement in the destination and Threats of a destination due to tourism development in the

perception of residents. Participants were briefed about the study and then were asked questions based on the schedule. The data collected was analysed to prepare SWOT matrix for easy understanding on the effectiveness of tourism destination.

Results and Discussion

Objective:1 Role of Residents in Tourism Destinations

Local community is an important stakeholder group of tourism destinations. The term "local community" refers to the residents of a destination. Residents are the ones who are affected either positively or negatively by the existence/development of tourism in their place of dwelling i.e. destination. On the other hand they can also impact the tourism destination's image by their attitude and behavior towards the tourist. Residents are in fact the real hosts who are an integral part in providing "the experience" to the tourists. This experience can be either positive or negative depending upon the residents.

Residents' knowledge of a destination must be comparatively higher than other stakeholder groups. It is due to their continuous and prolonged dwelling in the region which makes them aware of the destinations' inherent strengths and weaknesses. Information elicited from residents will reveal reliable and relevant destination data which even may not be visible to other stakeholder groups. Destination information can be gathered in a systematic way at periodical intervals to ensure continuous tourism development. Even during initial stages of destination building process, inputs from residents can serve various purposes like knowing their support to prospective tourism in their region. Tourism marketers and policy makers should take a proactive approach by taking care of residents' opinion on tourism.

Table 1. Description of Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Category		Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	40	57
	Female	30	43
Age	<25 Years	16	23
	25-40 Years	32	46
	>40 Years	22	31
Marital Status	Single	23	33
	Married	47	67
Educational Qualification	Higher Secondary	16	23
	Graduation	44	63
	Post Graduation	10	14
Occupational Status	Own Business	26	37
	Employed	35	50
	Others	09	13
Period of stay in the tourism spot	Upto 10 Years	24	34
	More than 10 Years	46	66

Source: Primary data

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. Majority of the respondents are male (57%) followed by female (43%). Most of the respondents are in the age group of 25-40 years old (46%) followed by respondents aging more than 40 years (31%). Since majority of the respondents are falling in the higher age group, the marital status also corresponds the same i.e. majority of the respondents are married (67%) and the rest are single (33%). The participants were composed of employees (50%), entrepreneurs (37%) and others (13%) like Homemakers, Jobseekers etc. Majority of the residents reside in the destination for more than 10 years (66%) and the rest were living in the destination for a period of 10 years.

Objective: 2 Tourism destination effectiveness through SWOT analysis

The following points were summarized based on the respondents' views on the effectiveness of tourism destination based on SWOT matrix analysis.

Destination's strengths as perceived by the residents

Residents perceive the presence of various historical sites (temples, sculptures, forts etc.) as the destinations great inherent strength. The unique architectural style in these sites leaves the tourists awestruck. Arts exhibited in these tourism spots (for instance natural paintings pertaining to historical period in the walls of temples) wonders tourists who might have never seen as such ancient art forms. Nature endowed unique landscape pertinent to the region viz. long beautiful coastline, rustic charm of the countryside spots are revered as great strengths by the respondents. Warm, friendly people of locale are another source of strength for destinations as seen by the residents. This response implies the residents' acknowledgement of their role as good hosts to the visitors.

Festivals unique to their region are considered as yet another great strength of their destination. Culture and heritage of the local community is perceived as strength by the residents who state the traditions evoke excitement among the tourists; they tend to enquire residents and passionately listen and understand their tradition and culture. Cuisine of the region was also highlighted as strength by the respondents. Residents state that majority of tourists enjoy the dishes of the local cuisine. Exclusive shopping facilities were highlighted as major strength by residents. Apart from this, residents cite safety of tourists, accessibility, and overcoming language barrier by hosts despite differences in language as strengths of the destination.

Destination's weaknesses as perceived by the residents

Residents enlist a number of weaknesses of which lack of infrastructure facilities were primarily stressed by them. Bumpy roads, Bad condition of public transportation vehicles, water logging during rainy seasons, lack of clean restrooms etc. were the major weaknesses highlighted by the residents. Lack of cleanliness was equally stressed by the residents as destinations' great weakness.

Improper parking of vehicles, huge banners displaying advertisements placed every here and there, walls painted with flashy pictures as a form of advertisements all add to the disgusting looks of destination. Absence of good and responsive local governance was stated as a weakness by respondents. Residents further stressed inadequate maintenance of tourism spots added to disgraceful look of tourism spots. Tourists falling prey to brokers (silk sareebrokers etc.) was yet another major concern in the perception of residents. Exorbitant price charged by local businesses was indicated as a major weakness by the respondents. Overcrowding in tourism spots and congested traffic raising to intolerable levels are also cited as weaknesses of a destination.

Destination's opportunities as perceived by the residents

Residents suggested few areas and measures which they perceive as an opportunity for tourism development in their destination. They feel creation of best standard recreational facilities like development of parks, theme parks, boating facilities in the lakes etc. can be introduced to enhance tourism value in their destination.

Eco-tourism is perceived as best opportunity as their regions could capitalize on the serene rural landscapes in their area. Sea coastline endowed by nature could be used to introduce tourism activities like surfing, hot air balloons etc. as a value addition for tourists; inspirations from leading international destinations could be taken for implementation of such ideas. Festivals of the region can be promoted to attract potential tourists. Events and exhibitions like food exhibition, music fest, dance fest etc. can be conducted to attract various segments of tourism market. Exploitation of technology for enhancing the effectiveness must be considered.

Threats of destination as perceived by residents

Residents consider failure to protect the historical sites will gradually erode tourism base in their region. Apathetic attitude of government and lack of civic sense among few visitors leads to gradual destruction of tourism spots. Another threat as expressed by residents includes presence of equally important yet well maintained tourism destinations adjacent to their destination.

Rapid urbanization is perceived as still another major threat as this makes destination lose its authentic charm in terms of culture and ambience. Irreparable damage to destinations due to uncontrollable pollution was cited as an impending threat by residents.

The above points are summarized and presented in a SWOT Matrix in Table 2:

Table 2. SWOT Matrix analysis on effectiveness of tourism destination

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites of Historical importance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Temples, Sculptures, Forts • Vintage arts • Natural Landscapes • Friendly host community • Festivals • Culture & Heritage • Local cuisine • Exclusive shopping facilities • Safety and security • Easy accessibility • Absence of language barrier 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of infrastructure facilities • Lack of cleanliness • Unappealing ambience of the region • Ineffective local governance • Deceptive trading practices by local businesses • Inadequate maintenance of tourism spots • Inflated price • Overcrowded tourism spots • Traffic jams • Pollution problems • Neglect of non-tourist recreational facilities
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional recreational facilities • Eco tourism development • Novel tourism activities • Special events and festivals • Leveraging technology • Lack of control over unpredictable events (natural and manmade disaster) • Projection as a weekend gateway 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destruction of historical sites • Competition from other destinations • Rapid urbanization • Gradual erosion of authenticity • Irreparable damage due to pollution

Source: Primary Data

Objective: 3 Demographic influence of respondents' perception on tourism destination

The perception of SWOT on tourism destination effectiveness varies with gender of the residents. Male residents associate strengths and opportunities better when compared to female residents. The awareness level of male respondents on the uniqueness of tourism destination is also higher than female respondents. Similarly young respondents have better access to information that they identify the effectiveness of tourism destination through SWOT analysis. Elderly people reveal that some transformation that had taken place in tourism destination whereby threats have been converted into opportunity over a period of time. Residents were classified into different categories based on their period of stay in that particular location and on their involvement in tourism directly or indirectly. The study reveals that duration of stay and involvement in tourism is

directly related with their capabilities to identify the SWOT better than other groups.

Conclusion

Tourism is a highly attractive service sector to earn revenue especially foreign exchange. The government has dedicated tourism departments operating for the development and maintenance of tourism products. But the tourism marketing efforts of tourism departments are not up to the mark except a few states viz. Kerala and Gujarat. Apart from Government, tourism agencies, transportation services should develop tourism marketing strategies. Marketing strategies needs to be carefully crafted and must be effective to tap the potential of India's rich, diverse and unique landscapes. To device an excellent marketing strategy, informational inputs are required. These inputs to be valid, reliable and useful must be collected from the stakeholders. Channelizing tourism growth toward local needs, interests, and limits can greatly enhance tourism's value to the community and aids in creation of a sustainable tourism industry. The skills and resources of small communities could be directed towards tourism development. Making tourism "fit" the community requires good effort. Vision, Planning and Work - could help in creation of a successful and sustainable tourism industry (Glenn Kreag, 2001). Residents' are directly impacted by tourism in their area. Residents' perception determines their support or opposition towards tourism (More their positive perception, greater their support will be and vice versa). Therefore, tourism planners/marketers must ensure pro-residents approach to tourism policy/marketing in destinations (Zhang Min, Pan Xiaoli and Wu Bihu). When residents' are included in tourism planning process it is more likely that they will render support for further tourism development in their region. Effective destinations are sure to re-welcome delighted tourists as it is the ultimate goal of tourism marketing (Pike, 2008). This study focused on understanding destination effectiveness from residents' viewpoint. Further studies may take into account the perception of other stakeholders' as a part of understanding destinations.

References

- Bhatia, A. (2013). SWOT Analysis of Indian tourism Industry. *International Journal of Application or Innovation in Engineering & Management*, 44-49.
- Chris Gullion, Sotiris Hji-Avgoustis, Yao-Yi Fu, Soonhwan Lee, (2015) "Cultural tourism investment and resident quality of life: a case study of Indianapolis, Indiana", *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, Vol. 1 Issue: 3, pp.184-199.
- Eshliki, S. A., & Kaboudi, M. (2011). Community Perception of Tourism Impacts and Their Participation in Tourism Planning: A case study of Ramsar, Iran. *ASEAN Conference on Environment-Behaviour Studies* (pp. 333-341). Bandung, Indonesia: Elsevier.

- Goranczewski, B., & Puciato, D. (2010). SWOT Analysis in the Formulation of Tourism Development Strategies for Destinations. *Tourism: The Journal of University of Lodz* .
- Haywood E (2000). *Love in Excess, or, The Fatal Enquiry*. (2nd edn. ed D Oakleaf). Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press.
- K. M. (2000). Responsible and Responsive Tourism Planning in the Community. In C. Ryan and S. Page (Eds). *Tourism Management: Towards the New Millennium* (p. 167- 182). Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science Ltd.
- Kreag, G. (2001). *The Impacts of Tourism*. Univeristy of Minnesota.
- Min, Z., Xiaoli, P., & Wu, B. (n.d.). Research on Residents' perceptions on Tourism Impacts and Attitudes - A Case Study of Pingyao Ancient City.
- Pike, S. (2008). *Destination Marketing: An Integrated Marketing Communication Approach*. Simmons, D.G. (1994). *Community Participation in Tourism Planning*. *Tourism Management*, 15(2): 98-108.
- Snaith, T., and Haley, A. (1999). *Residents' Opinions of Tourism Development in the Historic City of York, England*. *Tourism Management*, 20: 595-603.
- Vodeb, K. (2014). Sustainable Competitiveness of Destination AND Residents' Attitude towards tourism. *Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija. Biennial International Congress. Tourism & Hospitality Industry* .
- World Tourism Organisation. (2002). *Tourism Highlights*. UNWTO.