

Perceptions of Tourism related Responsibility of the Stakeholders in a Tourist Destination: Empirical Evidences

Prof. Nandakumar Mekoth

Dean School of Management Studies,
Goa University Goa
nmekoth@rediffmail.com

Mr. Edgar D' Souza

Assit. Professor of School Management Studies,
Goa University, Goa, India.
edgardsouza@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

There are multiple stakeholders who have varied interests in relation to tourism industry namely the host community, business organizations, tourists and the government. Responsible tourism endeavors not only to minimize the negative impacts but to maximize the positive impacts of tourism on these stake holders. While doing so, responsible tourism, as opposed to sustainable tourism, tries to fix responsibility for the achievement of defined objectives through specific measures on these stakeholders. It is quite possible that specific stakeholders view responsible tourism measures as more or less the responsibility of particular stakeholders. These perceptions are of importance in fixing the responsibility. This paper is an attempt to identify responsible tourism measures and their relation with specific stakeholder groups as perceived by the stakeholders themselves and subgroups within each category of stakeholders. The study has been carried out by analyzing primary data collected using a questionnaire from various stakeholders in Goa, a tourist destination. The findings show that highest responsibility is placed on government followed by business, host community and tourists in that order. The order in which responsibility is placed on different stakeholders is unanimous by all the stakeholder groups. There are no significant differences in responsibility placed on a particular stake holder either by stakeholder groups themselves or demographic subgroups. The findings are of theoretical, managerial and policy implications.

Key Words : Responsible Tourism, Stakeholders, Destination, Dimension, Environment

Introduction: Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. UNWTO forecasts international tourism to continue growing in 2012 although at a slower rate. Arrivals are expected to increase by 3% to 4%, reaching the historic one billion mark by the end of the year. Emerging economies will regain the lead with stronger growth in Asia and the Pacific and Africa (4% to 6%), followed by the Americas and Europe (2% to 4%) (UNWTO, 2011). The industry is credited with sizable contribution to employment generation. It is also one of the least polluting industries. Tourism has been characterized by the involvement of multiple businesses such as hotels, restaurants, transport operators, tour operators, travel agents and so on. Although tourism provides economic and social benefits to the participants it is not without any negative impacts (Bojanic David, 2011).

The impact of tourism, be it positive or negative, is experienced by all the elements in the society. Rising prices in destinations is one of the economic impacts which negatively affect the residents of the destination. Similarly degradation of physical environment and degeneration of local culture are also the negative impacts of tourism. It is also not necessary that the spending by tourists benefit the local community so also it may not lead to the reduction in economic and social disparity. Preservation of local culture and heritage is an important concern for tourism. Tourism should be developed in a way so that it benefits the local communities, strengthens the local economy, employs local workforce and wherever ecologically sustainable, uses local materials, local agricultural products and traditional skills. Mechanisms, including policies and legislation should be introduced to ensure the flow of benefits to local communities (Hwansuk Chris Choi & Murray Iain 2010).

Tourists themselves are an integral part of tourism and they need to have an enjoyable experience. The safety of tourists is of paramount importance and they need to be protected against economic, social, physical and emotional exploitation. Responsible tourism is a concept that not only tries to minimize the negative impacts of tourism but endeavors to maximize the benefits of tourism. Local business organizations in general and tourism related business organizations in particular are the beneficiaries of tourism as well. They are either benefitted directly or indirectly through the multiplier effect.

The revenue and expenditure of governments in destinations are influenced by state of tourism industry. Government is also concerned with economic and social measures for reducing the negative impacts and enhancing the benefits of tourism in as much as it is concerned with the wellbeing of the local community, local business and tourists themselves. In destinations the problems faced by the government and the concerns of the government are shaped to a great extent by tourism. Since these stakeholders are affected by tourism to different extent and they have varied interests, their perceptions are of importance in fixing responsibilities, framing policies and procedures and implementing measures to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive effects.

Responsible Tourism: The 2002 Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism in Destinations defines Responsible Tourism as follows:

"Responsible Tourism is tourism which:

- minimises negative economic, environmental and social impacts

- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well being of host communities
- improves working conditions and access to the industry
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage embracing diversity
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues
- provides access for physically challenged people
- is culturally sensitive, encourages respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence"

A comprehensive and useful definition of the term responsible tourism is that of the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), which defines the term as 'tourism that promotes responsibility to the environment through its sustainable use; responsibility to involve local communities in the tourism industry; responsibility for the safety and security of visitors and responsible government, employees, employers, unions and local communities' (DEAT, 1996:4)

Dimensions of Responsible Tourism

Economic Dimension: Economic benefit to local community is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of responsible tourism. This would involve enhancement of income to the local community. Income to the local community is through capital projects which employ local labor and purchase local products. Also the capital projects could be awarded to local organizations. *Economic impact of project on local community needs to be studied before accepting and implementing such projects.* The revenue expenditure of government, business organizations and tourists could also benefit the local community. The spending by all the participants should also favor weaker sections of the local community such that economic disparity at destinations will be reduced. Ensuring quality goods and services to all is also part of economic dimension of responsibility. To ensure economic justice factors of productions such as labor needs to be compensated equitably and fairly. Selection of an appropriate form of tourism to complement the above objectives is of paramount importance. Assessment of economic impact, developing linkages, preventing leakages, adopting pro-poor strategies, favoring small and medium businesses, involvement of local communities are the guidelines suggested by Capetown Declaration (2002) for ensuring economic responsibility.

Social Dimension: Although economic justice and social justice are closely related the latter has its own parameters. Health and education parameters are the most important as far as social status of a society is concerned. Health and education should percolate to the socially weaker sections of the society. Inclusive growth with the participation of all the sections of the society is required for social development and alleviation of disparity. Physical (including sexual), emotional and economic exploitations of the disadvantaged need to be stopped at destinations. Social and cultural fabric of the host community needs to be pro

ected. Participation of the local community in tourism related decisions is one of the ways to ensure social justice to the host community. Education of tourists on socially and culturally desirable behavior is also of importance in social and cultural protection to host community. **Environmental Dimension:** The physical environment in the destination gets degraded by irresponsible behavior of stakeholders including tourists. Protection of environment for future generations is an important aspect of responsible tourism. Clean air, water and other natural resources needs to be preserved in destinations. Sustainability of tourism is judged by its capability to conserve environment and other natural resources. Reducing waste and reusing material are important requirements of environmental dimension. Promoting and conserving natural diversity adds to the sustainability of environment. Lifelong environment impact assessment of tourist organizations, sustainable use and reduced waste of resources, managing natural diversity sustainably, and promoting education and awareness are advocated by Capetown Declaration (2002) for positive environmental impact of tourism. Managing the volume and type of tourism also contributes to this end.

Roles of Stakeholders: Tourism involves the interests of multiple stakeholders. Government, business, local community and tourists are the major participants who share the benefits as well as the detriments of tourism in destinations. (Blackstock, Kirsty L., 2008)The concept of responsible tourism assigns responsibility to each of these participants to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive impacts of tourism in destinations. In most tourist destinations,

Government will be concerned with formulation and implementation of policies directly and indirectly related with tourism. Government has got power to come out with legislations and has resources and organization to implement the law. Government is also directly involved in making and implementing many of the major decisions that affect the lives of people and organizations in significant ways. Land use and development decisions are consistently among the most important decisions at the local level because they have direct linkages to resident quality of life. One of the larger challenges for tourism development is its integration with local land use planning and political decision-making bodies where actual zoning and development approval decisions are made (Raymond, Christopher & Brown, Gregory, 2007). Government actions also represent the aspirations of other stake holders also to a great extent since they look forward to the government as their representative with legislative and executive powers (The Kerala Declaration on responsible tourism 2008).

Local community plays a significant role in making the experience of the tourist an enjoyable one through participating in the tourist experience, preserving and sharing the local culture and contributing to the safety and wellbeing of the tourists. The community also guides the government and business in establishing and fulfilling their roles. Tourism activists should respect the ecological characteristics and capacity of the local environment in which they take place. All efforts should be made to respect traditional lifestyles and cultures. (Hwansuk, Chris Choi & Murray, Iain, 2010).

In the case of visits to remote host communities, for example by ethnic tourism and by some forms of ecotourism, the possibilities of obtaining good contact with local people depend on the skills and the social positions of the tour guide (Jensen, 2009). Among the main advantages of local guides, beside their detailed knowledge of their domestic areas, is their capac

ity to enable their customers to obtain close contact with people in the local communities and to develop personal social ties with them (Jensen, 2009). This effect of representation can be assumed to have a positive influence on the psychological empowerment of the host society by increased self-esteem and capacity-building through the sharing of their experiences and knowledge with the visitors. Through close contact between the local guide and the hosts, a favourable environment for appreciating the voice of local community in decision-making on local tourism development, with reference to the two-dimensional view of community decision-making could be facilitated (Oystein, Jensen, 2010).

Tourists are also vested with their own share of responsibility being a major stakeholder in the area of tourism. The actions of the tourists should be justifiable from economic, cultural and social points of view for preserving the local culture, heritage and economic and social fabric. Respect for the values of host community, encouragement of local business by judicious spending and preservation of the destination's physical environment are primary responsibilities of the tourists. Responsible tourism suggests proactive contemplation and judgment by both tourists and tour operators (Hall & Brown, 2006).

Business organizations being the provider of goods and services to tourists, local community, government and other business organization, have a major role to play in enhancing the benefits and reducing the negative impacts of tourism. A study suggests tourists place a fairly high level of importance on seeing environmentally responsible practices being implemented by tourism businesses. (Andereck Kathleen L., 2009).

In 1995, following a survey of its volunteers working in developing countries who were asked about the pressing problems confronting the communities with which it worked, VSO launched a campaign on responsible tourism. VSO WorldWide advice to the tourism industry can be summarised as follows:

- **Travel agents:** Insert the leaflet raising the issues of cultural and environmental impacts dealing with photography, behaviour and dress codes, and encouraged visitors to spend time and money in the local community into ticket wallets or flight confirmation envelopes for tourists travelling to the developing world.

- **Tour operators:** give customers more information about the people and the places they will be visiting in brochures, including advice on how they can visit locally owned facilities and resorts. Develop a policy for the business on how the holidays it provides could be of more benefit to people living in the destinations it visits.

- **Hotels:** start buying more goods and services locally and reducing imports. Start an environment management programme within the hotel. (Goodwin Harold and Justin Francis, 2003).

Core to the concept of responsible tourism is the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which is defined as '...a commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources' (Kotler & Lee, 2005). Others simply describe it as being how business takes into account the economic,

social and environmental impact of the way it does business. Research amongst UK-based tour operators (Gordon, 2001) found that tourism companies have been very slow in implementing socially responsible tourism principles in their businesses and there is little evidence that India is different. Business through its financial powers and by collective efforts through associations is in an advantageous position to achieve the responsibilities of positive tourism outcomes. Many of the measures for enhancing the benefits and reducing the detriments of tourism could be viewed as corporate social responsibility by local business. Despite the global focus on the tourism industry as part of the sustainability agenda at World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), there seem to be very few tourism companies participating in globally responsible tourism or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives such as the Global Compact.

This research is primarily concerned with the role played by the above four major stakeholders in the tourism destinations.

Objectives of the Study

1. The first objective of this study is to find out the average responsibility placed on different stakeholders on the whole such that it is possible to rank the stakeholders in the order of responsibility placed on them.
2. The second objective of this study is to find out differences in responsibility placed on the same stakeholder by different stakeholder groups. It is likely that all the stakeholders may not place similar responsibility on the same stakeholder. This analysis will also help in understanding the order in which responsibility is placed on different stakeholders by the same stakeholder group.
3. The final objective of this study is to find out differences in responsibility if any perceived by different demographic groups for the same stakeholder.

Methodology: The study has been conducted in Goa, a tourist destination by collecting primary data from respondents who are representatives of the different stakeholders. A pretested questionnaire containing forty four statements indicating responsible behavior has been administered to respondents. The responses on responsible behavior have been recorded on a ten point Likert Scale. In addition to statements representing responsible behavior the questionnaire also contained questions related to demographic profile of the respondents. Convenience sampling method was employed to collect responses from a sample of forty five respondents. Care has been taken to ensure that the sample contained members of different stakeholder groups as well as members of different demographic profiles.

One way analyses of variance have been conducted for the purpose of comparison of mean values of responsibility placed on different stakeholders by all the respondents taken together as well as divided into different stakeholder groups and demographic groups. One way ANOVA was also used to compare mean responsibility placed on the same

stakeholder by different stakeholder groups and demographic subgroups. Ranking has also been employed for comparing the order in which responsibility has been placed on different stakeholders.

Hypotheses

- H1 There is no significant difference among the overall responsibility scores placed on different stakeholders by the respondents
- H2 There is no significant difference among the average responsibility scores provided to the same stakeholder by different stakeholder groups
- H3 There is no significant difference among the responsibility placed by the same stakeholder group on different stakeholders
- H4 There is no significant difference among the average responsibility placed by different categories of the same demographic group on the same stakeholders

Results

Table 1
Average Responsibility Scores for different Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Average Score
Government	5.398
Business / Entrepreneurs	2.913
Local Community	2.286
Tourists	1.183

F= 39.007 for 3 degrees of freedom between groups and 176 degrees of freedom within groups and is significant at 99%

Table 2
Responsibility of Stakeholders perceived by Stakeholder groups

To	Government	Business	Community	Tourist	ANOVA F	ANOVA p
By						
Business	5.587	2.967	2.470	1.481	9.308	0.000
Community	5.480	3.152	2.318	1.085	31.817	0.000
Tourist	4.867	2.466	1.873	0.798	6.778	0.001
ANOVA F	1.113	1.585	0.602	0.207		
ANOVA p	0.338	0.217	0.552	0.814		

Table 3
ANOVA for Comparison of Mean Responsibility given by different Gender Groups

Stakeholder	F Statistic	Probability	Significance
Government	0.028	0.867	Not Significant
Business	0.347	0.559	Not Significant
Community	0.001	0.97	Not Significant
Tourists	0.560	0.458	Not Significant

Table 4
ANOVA for Comparison of Mean Responsibility given by different Age Groups

Stakeholder	F Statistic	Probability	Significance
Government	0.463	0.710	Not Significant
Business	0.689	0.564	Not Significant
Community	0.878	0.460	Not Significant
Tourists	1.336	0.276	Not Significant

Table 5
ANOVA for Comparison of Mean Responsibility given by different Education Groups

Stakeholder	F Statistic	Probability	Significance
Government	1.029	0.390	Not Significant
Business	0.395	0.757	Not Significant
Community	0.959	0.421	Not Significant
Tourists	0.549	0.652	Not Significant

Table 6
ANOVA for Comparison of Mean Responsibility given by different Income Groups

Stakeholder	F Statistic	Probability	Significance
Government	0.968	0.388	Not Significant
Business	0.685	0.510	Not Significant
Community	1.299	0.284	Not Significant
Tourists	1.030	0.366	Not Significant

Findings: The results of the analysis of the stakeholder wise overall average responsibility scores provided in table 1 indicate that the highest responsibility is placed on government followed by business organizations, local community and tourists in the descending order. The results of the one way analysis of variance indicate that the differences among mean responsibility scores for different stakeholders are statistically significant with an F statistic of 39.007 with 3 degrees of freedom between groups and 176 degrees of freedom within groups. This finding leads to the rejection of H1 indicating a significant difference in overall responsibility scores obtained by different stakeholders.

The results of the analysis provided in table 2 reveal the responsibility score placed on different stakeholders by different stakeholder groups. The results indicate that all the stakeholder groups have placed different quantum of responsibility on different stakeholders. Every stakeholder group has placed highest responsibility on government, followed by business, community and tourists in that order. It may also be observed that scores placed by different stakeholder groups on the same stakeholder is similar. In order to statistically test the differences in average scores, analysis of variance test was performed among average

scores placed on the same stakeholder by different stakeholder groups. These results are provided at the end of each column of table 2. The F statistic and p values indicate that there are no significant differences in the average responsibility scores provided to the same stakeholder by different stakeholder groups leading to the acceptance of H2. In contrast, the results of analysis of variance provided at the end of each row of table 2 for testing the differences in average responsibility score provided by each stakeholder group to different stakeholders indicate significant differences leading to the rejection of H3.

Results provided in tables 3 to table 6 reveal the F statistics and associated p values for testing the differences in average responsibility placed on the same stakeholder by different gender groups, age groups, education groups and income groups. The results do not indicate any significant differences among the responsibility scores given by different categories of the same demographic groups to the same stakeholders leading to the acceptance of H4.

Conclusion: The responsibility scores placed on the different stakeholders reflect the expectations and aspirations of different sections of society related to tourism like business, local community and tourists. It can be observed that these aspirations are based on two factors as to 'who can do' and 'who ought to do'. The ability to do is the most with the government since it has got the highest power in terms of making and implementing policies, rules and regulations. As the body of elected representatives of people it has also got the highest responsibility in initiating and sustaining responsible tourism measures. It may be observed that the responsibility scores placed on other stakeholders also indicate the same pattern, business being the next in line followed by community and tourists.

It is interesting to note that there is unanimity in the case of different respondent groups, be it stakeholder groups or demographic groups, as to the responsibility placed on different stakeholders.

The findings are of policy and managerial implications. The policy implications are that the role of the government and the roles of policy, rules and regulations in the betterment of tourism scenario are underlined by the research. Similarly business organizations can fulfill the expectations placed on them by the components of society leading the reputation and acceptance in the industry leading to achievement of business objectives. The roles of host community as well as tourists are reciprocal in nature to the extent that a concern for each other is imperative in making the life of the community as well as the life and experience of the tourists better.

Directions for future research: While in this study an attempt is made to understand the extent of responsibility placed on different stakeholders by different stakeholders and demographic groups, it does not explore the relation between different types of responsibilities and different stakeholder groups. It may be interesting and useful to explore the relationship between dimensions of responsibility and stakeholders. Also importance placed on types of responsibility by different stakeholder groups will be an area for further exploration.

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