

Branding Eco tourism Destinations towards the use of Eco Friendly Practices and economic sustenance in tourism Industry

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(Received 11 February, 2023; Accepted 27 April, 2023)

ABSTRACT

Creating a brand for eco-friendly tourism places is important because it attracts visitors who care about the environment and help protect the area from negative effects of tourism. This study looked at how branding eco-tourism destinations compares to not branding them, and how using eco-friendly practices and products can benefit the tourism industry economically. The researcher collected data from hotels and tourism organizations in Jammu and Kashmir and analyzed it using mean, standard deviation, and frequency analysis. The study found that branding eco-tourism destinations has a positive impact on the environment and helps with economic sustainability. Using eco-friendly practices also requires less resources and energy. Overall, branding eco-tourism destinations is important for economic sustainability and preserving the environment.

Key words: Branding, eco tourism, Environment preservation, Economic Sustenance

Introduction

Many developing countries are using tourism as a way to help their communities develop. Ecotourism, in particular, is seen as a sustainable way to support local communities while also protecting the environment (Scheyvens, 1999). However, there is debate over whether or not ecotourism is truly sustainable. To achieve sustainable outcomes, it is important to involve local people in the planning and management of tourist sites. Sustainable tourism development is viewed as a sensible strategy to generate economic benefits and enhance livelihoods in local communities (Cheer and Lew, 2018; Zielinski *et al.*, 2020). The concept of sustainable livelihoods is based on having enough resources to cope with and recover from stress and shocks, and to preserve a

way of life. Despite criticism, sustainable tourism has become a prominent discourse and is being applied to various types of tourism. In Jammu and Kashmir, ecotourism has become popular and there is potential for this type of tourism in the state (Shen *et al.*, 2008; Tao and Wall, 2009a, 2009b). Beaches, Hill station, Backwaters, Heritage and Culture have been the centre of attraction for most of the travelers but specific nature-wildlife based and low impact tourism, also called as Ecotourism has grabbed the attention in recent times. A quick visit to the sanctuary, as being practiced now cannot be called ecotourism. It is only mass tourism into a sanctuary as the learning aspect and sensitization towards nature is missing. However, it is important to have a focused strategy that involves the local community and promotes awareness of nature. The objective of

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developing ecotourism in Jammu and Kashmir is to create community-based and commercial-oriented ecotourism. The study aims to examine the role of branding in developing ecotourism at potential destinations in the valley and analyze the contribution of eco-friendly products in promoting sustainability.

Literature Review

Most tourists are attracted to destinations like beaches, hill stations, backwaters, heritage, and culture. However, ecotourism, which focuses on nature, wildlife, and low-impact tourism, has gained popularity in recent times (Khondkar and Anis, 2016). Simply visiting a sanctuary for a short time does not qualify as ecotourism because it lacks the learning aspect and sensitivity towards nature. This type of tourism is more like mass tourism, and it does not promote the goals of ecotourism (Alfian, *et al.*, 2016).

Structure of Ecotourism



Source: Fennell (2015)

Ahmed and Mollah (2014) opined that ecotourism is not only confined in touring sites of natural beauty, it can also be of archaeological, and recreational tourism. The types of ecotourism sites are identified in Table 1.

Destination Branding

Destination branding is a crucial management process in the tourism industry that aims to create a desirable image of the destination to attract tourists and differentiate it from its competitors. The success

of a destination branding strategy depends on the congruence between the perceived image of the destination by visitors and the brand identity intended by the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO). (Risitano, 2005). Effective destination branding can lead to increased customer loyalty, economic contributions, and the management of the destination’s image (Park and Petrick, 2005).

Top of Form

Moreover, it is essential for destination branding strategies to incorporate elements related to social identity, community, and sustainability of the destination. The branding or rebranding strategy put in place by a DMO needs to capture the essence of the destination. Destinations are moving towards more universal stereotype strategies, and their branding strategy should adopt an ambidextrous approach by combining elements based on the identity and history of the destination and elements that are more marketing and aesthetically based. Seraphin *et al.* (2018) and Seraphin *et al.* (2017). It is also important for the branding strategy of the destination to be a co-creation activity involving all stakeholders (Stubbs, 2012)

Ecotourism in Jammu & Kashmir

There is a lot of potential for ecotourism in Jammu & Kashmir, both for domestic and foreign tourists. However, the government has not taken any action on a proposal to create an Eco-Tourism Board or involve stakeholders in the development of this sector (Bhat, 2015). To make ecotourism successful in the state, there needs to be a better understanding of the concept and a combination of conservation and business perspectives (Mansoor, 2013). Protected areas in J&K should implement a planning framework to guide and manage ecotourism, including management strategies for visitor impact, income

S. No	Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Destination has enough potentialities (Natural Landscape, Natural Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries) to be an Ecotourism Destination.	4.1	0.16
2	Usage of Eco-friendly practices at a destination generates local employment	3.8	0.71
3	Local supplies promote use of eco-friendly products at a destination	3.7	0.62
4	Use of Eco-friendly products at a destination promotes local community support	3.5	0.19
5	Creating a separate logo for eco-friendly destinations helps to promote a destination	3.9	0.70
6	Usage of eco-friendly products at a destination makes a destination a branded one	4.2	0.81
7	Providing Eco-friendly taglines to destinations helps in destination identity	3.9	0.69

generation, infrastructure, and naturalist guides to promote viable business partnerships.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study about Eco-friendly practices used at a destination.
2. To study the role of branding at destination to promote it as Eco-friendly destination.

Research Methodology

This study focuses on hotels and tourism destinations in Jammu and Srinagar districts of Jammu and Kashmir. It explores the benefits of branding a destination as environmentally friendly, which can lead to economic sustainability. The findings of this study can be useful for practitioners, researchers, and academics in the hospitality industry, as it examines not only eco-friendly practices but also the economic aspects of the industry.

Sampling

The sampling of this research paper took place in hotels, and tourism destinations in order to find out the use of branding a destination as eco friendly tourism destination. The sample size of 200 sample was taken from above destinations in the month march 2023. This sample size was calculated with the help of formula given by Krejcie and Morgan, 1970.

Research Instrument

The structured questionnaire on the basis of two aspects like branding eco tourism destinations and environmental friendliness was formulated after applying the 5-Point Likert’s Scale instrument. While as secondary data was collected from published journals, books and articles.

Research tools

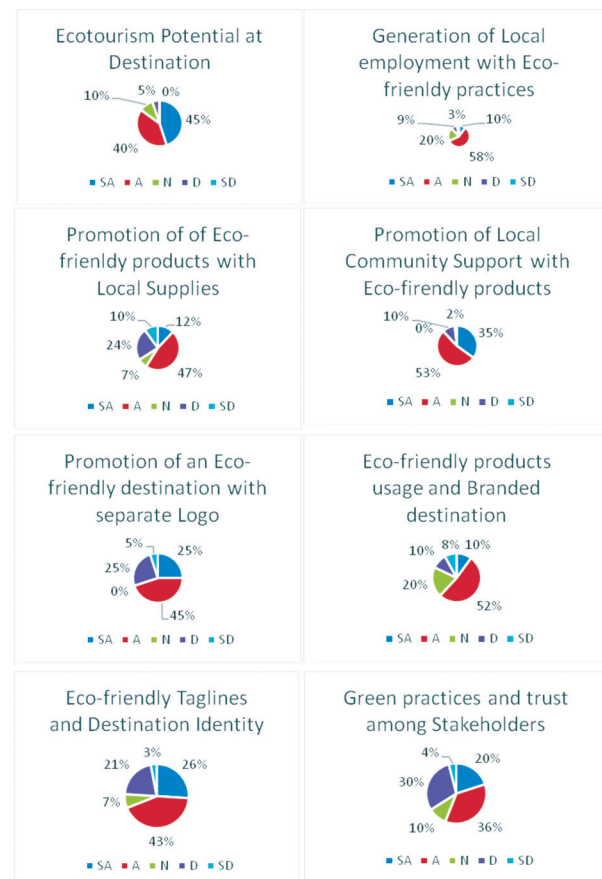
In order to go for the descriptive analysis (the mean, standard deviation) and frequency analysis, were applied.

Data Analysis and Results

A preliminary analysis of the data reveals that the sample is composed of about 200 tourist destination stakeholders and hotels from Jammu and Kashmir regions of J &K state comprising of 100 each. In this sample it was found that 66% were males and 34% were females. In the context of this research paper,

the mean and standard deviation of variables such as eco-friendly products, organizational usage, safety and security, branded additives, and socio-economy of chemicals were calculated to understand their effect on branding eco-tourism destinations and the subsequent impact on brand value, environmental preservation, and economic sustenance. By analyzing the mean and standard deviation, the researchers can identify which variables have the most significant impact on these outcomes and develop strategies to improve them. The mean value and standard deviation itself clears the below statements is discussed in Table 1.

It is evident from the analysis of above data that on an aggregate 85% of total respondents population agree with the opinion regarding the destination to be having the enough potentialities for being an Ecotourism destination and the remaining 15% were opposed with the opinion. Hence, it can be concluded that the destination has an immense potential to be promoted as an Ecotourism destination. Further for the Usage of Eco-friendly practices at a destination generates local employment. It has been



found from the data analysis that 58% of respondents agreed with the statement, 10% were having strong agreement with the statement while 9% of respondents disagreed, 3% presented their strong disagreement and remaining 20% were of no opinion and the local supplies promotes use of Eco-friendly products at a destination, for which the data shows that 47% of respondents agree with the statement "Local supplies promote use of Eco-friendly products at a destination", 12% agreed strongly, 24% disagreed and 12% disagreed strongly while 7% of respondents are with neutral thoughts on same. This indicates that majority of respondents supported the statement, hence it can be said that local supplies promote Eco-friendly products use, which supports the local community as 88% of respondents agreed with the statement "Eco-friendly products at a destination promotes local community support" while only 12% of respondents disagreed. On the basis of that it can be said that use of Eco-friendly products at a destination promotes local community support.

In addition to this by creating a separate logo for Eco-friendly destinations helps to promote a destination, for which the data analysis that in totality, 70% of respondents agree with the statement "separate logo for Eco-friendly destinations helps to promote a destination" while only 30% disagreed with it. On the basis of that it can be concluded that by having or creating a separate logo for an eco-friendly destination would help to brand the destination.

Providing Eco-friendly taglines to destinations helps in destination identity, for this practice the data analysis shows that 43% of respondents agree with the statement "Providing Eco-friendly taglines to destinations helps in destination identity", 26% agreed strongly, 21% disagreed and 3% disagreed strongly while 7% of respondents were with neutral thoughts on same. This indicates that majority of respondents supported the statement, hence it can be said that Eco-friendly taglines are helpful in creating destination identity, while as the green products/practices play a role in gaining trust among stakeholders? which has been supported by the above data that aggregately 56% of respondents agreed with the statement "Green products/practices play a role in gaining trust among stakeholders" 34% of respondents disagreed and remaining 10% of respondents were of neutral opinion.

On that basis, it can be concluded that green prod-

ucts play a crucial role in gaining trust among stakeholders which can be explained by the factors involved in promotion of eco tourism that is from the data analysis that 40% of respondents considered eco-friendly practices and facilities as an important factor for ecotourism promotion at a destination followed by 25% with accessibility factor, 17% with distribution of flora and fauna, 13% with possible outdoor activities and just 5% with detailed maps. Hence, it can be summarised that maximum respondents have expressed mutually eco-friendly practices and facilities and accessibility to destination as important factors and thus both of them need to be present at a destination for promoting ecotourism destination.

Conclusion

This study looked at how branding eco tourism destinations affects the environment and the value of the brand. The researchers looked at different factors that affect environmental preservation and found that using branding can have a positive effect. This can help eco tourism managers improve their service and meet international eco friendly standards. The study used statistical analysis to show that using branded eco tourism products can be cost-effective and beneficial for the environment. The study also found that using branding can improve the value of the brand. The researchers suggest that eco tourism managers should consider using branded eco tourism products and branding at their destination to help preserve the environment and improve their brand value.

In addition to this, it is clear from the models used above that environmental preservation further depends on eco friendly products, organizational usage, safety and security and also brand value of organization further depends upon branding and socio economy usage of destinations.

Managerial Implications

- 1) The study found that eco-friendly products, organizational usage, safety and security, branded additives, and the socio-economy of chemicals have a significant impact on branding eco-tourism destinations. This, in turn, affects the brand value of the organization and environmental preservation, which helps to sustain the economy. Therefore, eco-tourism managers should follow these strategies when purchasing

eco-tourism products: always buy branded products because they require less maintenance cost, help maintain standards and specifications, create a highly hygienic and sanitized environment, are effective for both the organization and employees, help prevent the environment, and are economical to use. Additionally, using branding at a destination helps to increase its brand value

- 2) Always purchase the branded eco tourism products for eco tourism, because of following:
 - a) They needs less costs of maintenance for organisations.
 - b) Eco products help to promote local produce.
 - c) Effective in usage for both organisation and employees.
 - d) Environmental preservation

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