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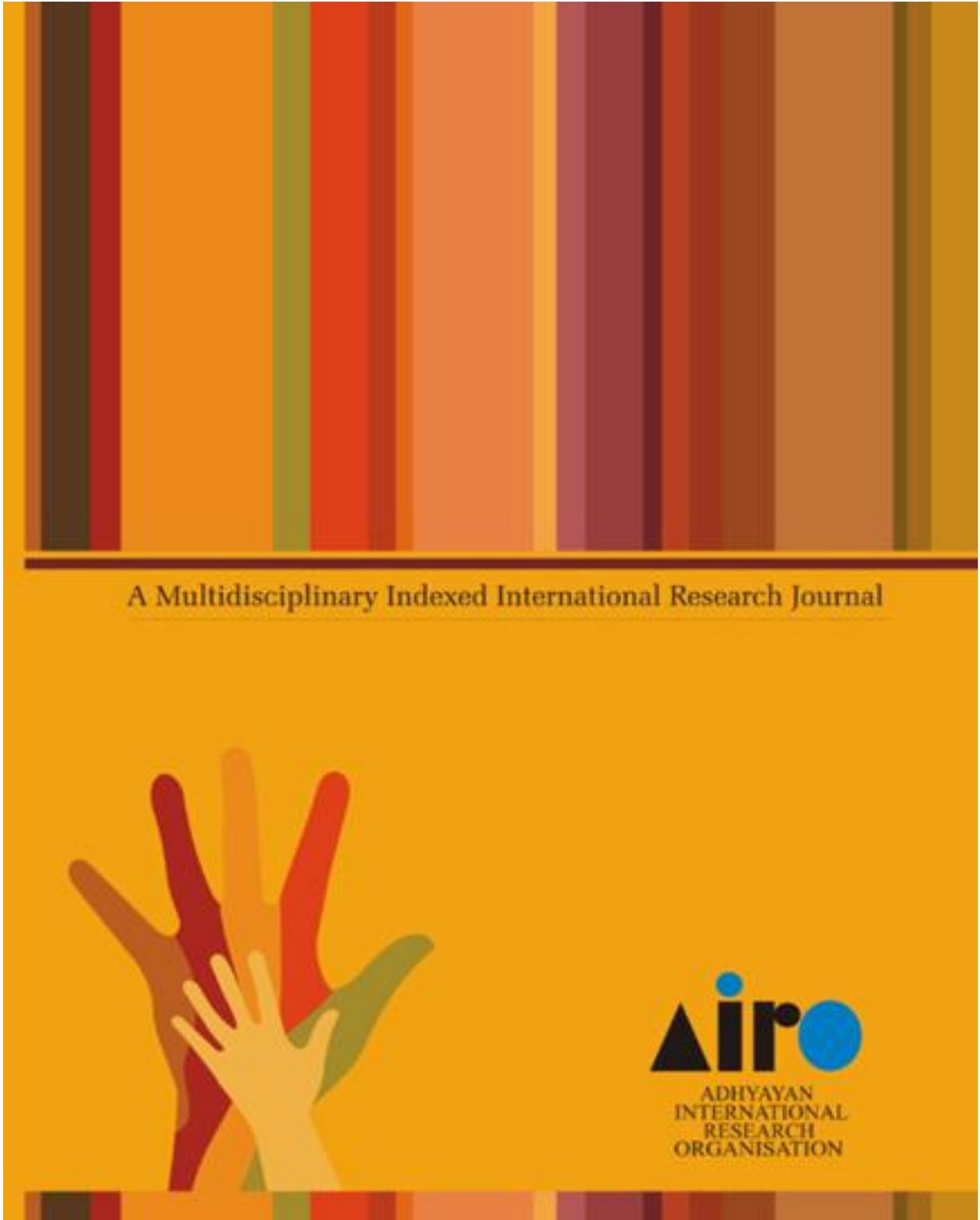
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## **PHILANTHROPIC TOURISM: A KEY TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Abstract**

Integrating philanthropy in tourism using various practices including volunteer tourism, NGOs, and socially conscious tourists is an emerging way for motivating the tourists to aid people of developing economically weak economies, heritage sites, communities and nations. This paper is aimed at finding the roles and impacts of tourist philanthropy on developing nation's Philanthropic gifting, that is the bringing of gifts by tourists to give to local people of developing nations/tourism. This study also examines the knowledge and prevalence of philanthropic attitude among tourists and travel agencies and analyzes the possible implications of philanthropic tourism on the economies of developing nations including India. This study has been conducted through a mixed research approach and select case analysis where philanthropic tourism is prevalent.

The findings of this study revealed that philanthropic tourism surely aid in the developing economies like Cuba, however, motivation for contributing in philanthropic tourism needs to be developed. Further study shown that, though philanthropic tourism is prevalent in some places, benefits are not distributed equally among host groups in society, the people who are working within the tourism sector receive more of benefits. The main conclusion of this study is that philanthropic tourism is likely to be proved a great source of economic assistance for poor or developing tourist places for their sustainable development.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, philanthropy has become a very noticeable area of the today's world. Many researchers are studying the levels of philanthropy that have been performed done using financial aid, non-profit organizations working in field of the emerging world and volunteer tourism. This form of philanthropy has been observed and its impacts on nations in the developing world are being examined. Impact of Philanthropic Tourism of individual tourists on local populations of the developing world has still to be quantified, and its impacts on the livelihoods of locals mustbe assessed.

The travel and tourism industry has been striving hard to expedite and inspire

'Philanthropic Tourism', however, a lot more can be done. We hope that this study will elaborate the various aspects of this trend will be inspire many people to do more. "Travel philanthropy refers to the donating of money, in-kind resources (office equipment, flights, accommodation) or time (mentoring or volunteering), occasioned by or facilitated by travel."

There are some trekking and expedition tour operators and they are unique among other group adventure travel operators as some of them inspire philanthropic tourism that gives back to people of the place, communities and as well as the environment. Philanthropic tourism goes beyond sustainable tourism that



can be called transformative travel. Each visit pays backs to local communities and conservation. This help tourists connect with people and help in many ways. Tourists may choose to do a charity trek, which includes fundraising for charity of natives, tourist companies offer the most economical packages that are possible and many of them do not make a profit. The prime purpose is helping the community than making money, so the travel agencies involved in philanthropic tourism believe strongly that those who are helping community should pay reasonable travel costs. Some such travel agencies contribute a handsome amount out of their annual profits to local charity organizations to support rural schools, libraries, hospitals, and community development projects in rural villages of such tourist places. Most philanthropic tourists have stated that they have created unforgettable travel experiences while having a positive impact on the communities.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study will be to evaluate the prevalence and possible impacts of tourist philanthropy on local economies with reference select developing nations. The objectives of the study may be given as:

- To find out the knowledge and prevalence of philanthropic tourism in select countries.
- To evaluate variants in the motivations for, prevalence of, and kind of philanthropic activities amongst tourists.
- To examine the social and economic impact of philanthropic tourism.

- To identify the challenges for philanthropic tourism.
- These objectives will be addressed through a mixed-methods research study, and will be explored using select case studies.

## 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH GAP

In recent years, philanthropy and social responsibility is becoming prominent in many areas life of today's world. Many thinkers have started to study upcoming concept of philanthropy in the field of tourism that is happening through financial aids from various sources, in fact even NGOs are also working in this area philanthropic tourism. This form of philanthropy has been gaining attention of many thinkers and some studies have also been conducted on impacts that the philanthropic tourism may have on economic development of nations in the developing world.

Philanthropic tourism, however, has not yet been evaluated or studied much and the impacts of individual tourists on local populations of the undeveloped tourist places have not been so far quantified, further the impact of philanthropic tourism on the livelihoods of these tourist places have not been evaluated. Available studies exhibit that philanthropic tourism is evolving in some part of the world, but most researchers did not study it directly. For example, in Cuba, the government has outlawed locals from accepting these forms of gifts from tourists (Sixto, 2006; Taylor and McGlynn, 2009). This itself shows that the philanthropic tourism is creating a substantial impact on Cuban society on both social and economic.



It is evident that tourist philanthropy is taking place and creating enough impact to improve the economic conditions of the place, however, it needs to be further studied and its impacts needs to be evaluated and we are sure that this study will narrow that gap.

#### **4. IMPACT OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

In today's global world, tourism industry has been estimated as the fourth largest industry (Honey & Gilpin, 2009) and it has got a great impact on the economic conditions of most tourism oriented nations. In his study Harrison (1992) exhibited that tourism industry has great impacts on developing nation's ecosystem socially, economically, politically, culturally and environmentally.

One of the major impact of tourism industries on people of that area is that people who are working in other industries are likely to leave their jobs in order to protect a good position in the better-paying tourism industry.

Lumsdon and Swift (2001) noted the case of Buenos Aires, Argentina where the city became a large tourist hub where development occurred in infrastructure while other areas of the country underwent little development. Lumsdon and Swift stated that these booming tourist hubs —act as magnets, drawing in development funds and encouraging migration, usually at the expense of other areas of the country as —companies inadvertently contribute to the imbalance that exists between the capital and the rest of the country, in particular the poorer northern regions (2001, 192).

A study conducted by Zhang, Ding and Bao (2008) showed that in Xidi, China, tourism increased the average income of villagers and families. The growth, however, was not mirrored in the seven villages surrounding

Xidi, because those villages were not areas of tourism development.

Zoomers (2008) conducted a study examining tourism and poverty in the Andes. The study showed that the potential for tourism to spark development and alleviate poverty in Andean villages is small. The majority of Andean villages do not have the structures, services or goods to offer tourists and the desires of tourists and villagers are different. For example, tourists wanted aesthetically pleasing vistas whereas locals wanted long periods of rain to cultivate crops. Zoomers (2008) also showed that only a small minority of villages in the Andes could offer tourists a locale to spend their money; the majority of the towns would not benefit from tourism, further increasing the disparity between tourist locales and those without anything to offer tourists.

Philanthropic Tourism can also create a dependency in local communities of developing nations on the products, goods or services that have entered their nation because of tourism. Being dependent on tourism in general, as a form of GDP, is also common, especially for nations with a booming tourism industry (Sharpley & Knight, 2009; Cabezas, 2008).

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) noted that in 2010, the Caribbean travel and tourism economy is ranked first of thirteen regions in the world for its relative contribution to national economies, yet last in absolute size worldwide.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) discussed the dependency of nations on tourism and the problems that are associated with this. The UNEP (2009) stated that, in regard to the percentage of the workforce directly or indirectly depending on tourism, —in small island developing states,



percentages can range from 83 percent in the Maldives to 21 percent in the Seychelles and 34 percent in Jamaica (41).

## 5. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF PHILANTHROPIC TOURISM

Tourist philanthropy is not a very new concept and has been in existence for quite a long time. Philanthropy may be defined as voluntary or organized offering that may be through commercial, Non-commercial or even individually (Sanborn & Portocarrero, 2005). The focus of this study is to analyze the philanthropic tourism and its social, economic and political impacts at Latin America.

### 5.1 Social Impacts

There has been a great social impact of tourism philanthropy especially on underdeveloped and developing countries. The social impact has been comprehensively studied in the various researches available on the chosen topic of philanthropic tourism. The interactions between tourist who are visiting such tourist places and the local people in these places, have indicated in many studies that there is a social impact of philanthropy on development.

Some tourists make a direct connection with the local communities and work on some works to improve living standard of native localities, help in various programmes related to animals, building homes or many other philanthropic activities.

The capability of tourists to interact directly with the native population to improve their lives is a major motivator for participating in philanthropic tourism. This allows tourists to have better integration into the society of the place, which is encouraging for philanthropic tourists as they do not want to have simply a typical tourist experience only; they desire to

understand the place as a native person, these tourists are not interested in merely five-star hotels, all-inclusive resorts (Brown, 2005). Philanthropic tourism not only allows the tourist to observe the place more genuinely but also enables them to offer to contribute back to the place, or an individual community. This attitude will also instill a sense of self-satisfaction to the tourists as they support those communities who are deprived (Brown, 2005).

Philanthropic gifting also has the social impacts. Philanthropic gifting directly impacts an individual's position in society. Gifts and tips received that the local people receive from philanthropic tourists assist poor natives to get daily need items and avail medical facilities that they might not get otherwise (Elliott and Neirotti, 2008). Gifting and Tips by Philanthropic tourists can also better the social position of the society.

### 5.2 Economic Impacts

The economic impacts of philanthropy tourism on native communities are more directly to financial development than social. The philanthropic tourism practices likely to make impact on various social structures like schools, hospitals, roads, hotels and also add to the overall development of the place.

Unemployment in the developing countries is one of the major issues. The tourism industry in such nations has great potential to provide employment to the unemployed or underemployed people. Lumsdon and Swift (2001) in their study have exhibited that how tourism in Latin America has provided direct or indirect employment to a large number of people. The tourism sector is mainly a people-oriented sector where interaction among locals and tourists is an integral part.



Philanthropic tourism may improve the economic condition of developing nations that are naturally, heritage wise reach through the tourism products or services for example Nepal, Thailand, Cuba, and some African countries. Many tourism companies are helping in constructing places, assisting in conservation projects of extinct species, maintaining tourist places besides many other activities. Though some tourists not spend a lot of money, or gifting during their trip, some of them provide the services of their expertise like medical, education that may be counted in terms of economic benefits.

## **6. CHALLENGES FOR PHILANTHROPIC TOURISM**

One of the major challenges in such tourism is lack of good quality infrastructure as tourists at least need a better standard of living than the local people in these undeveloped areas may provide. These developing nations with tourism possibility must provide basic standards so as to attract tourists to their places. The same problem has also been assessed by Lepp(2008) in his study.

The behavior aspect in cross cultural nations is another major challenge may involve presenting how dissimilar the philanthropic tourist is from the native persons and this may further increase the gap between developed and developing worlds. Philanthropic tourists are required to make sure that their behavior is well balanced to enhance cross-cultural understanding and should not widen it because of their behavior. (Sin, 2009; Simpson, 2004; Cousins et al., 2009; Raymond and Hall, 2008).

Gifting by philanthropic tourists can also alter the social setup. People with quite good career options in some Western world are going for jobs like taxi drivers, tourist guide because of

the tip that is given by tourists in terms of dollars and material gifts (Elliott and Neirotti, 2008). Cravatte and Chabloz (2008) also mentioned that before leaving for philanthropic trip organised by the NGOs, the NGOs ensure that the tourists do not give gifts to the local poor people as it “kills the relationship”, and encourage the begging practices among the locals.

Another major issue with volunteers of philanthropic tourism is the level of the contribution that is being provided by the tourist. The article written by Guttentag (2009) has clearly shown that that most volunteers are not well skilled to perform many services they like to provide and in somecases, distract the project rather than helping it. Sometimes while performing jobs, tourists may also take priority over local in the jobs in the host country.

With the review of available literature, we know that gifting through philanthropic tourism exists and it has got a great legal concern also. For example, the prevalence of gifting and tipping by philanthropic tourists to local people became so much evident that the Cuban government to had to pass a law against it. The Govt. had to pass this policy as lots of disparity was rising among those who had access to tourists and related activities and the counterpart who did not belong to such places in the same country (Sixto, 2006).

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

This study has examined the emerging phenomena of philanthropic tourism and the social and economic impacts on the native people. The study exhibit evidently that philanthropic tourism is prevalent in many developing countries that has got some possibility of tourism. the main conclusion derived from the study indicated that philanthropic tourism has its impact on social



and economic conditions of the places and its people.

Philanthropic tourism has the capability of improving the lives of people who are benefited by it. Many tourists with philanthropic motives are contributing not only economically but also socially. Philanthropic tourism is likely creating access to articles that native get as gifting that otherwise appear to be unobtainable to these undeveloped or developing area.

We have also seen though the philanthropic tourism is an emerging concept and may provide lots of benefits in terms of social and economic development; it is also not free from challenges and negative impacts. One must learn that while going for philanthropic tourism, how they should act so that they help rather than harming.

The future potential for philanthropic tourism to benefit a larger number of locals throughout the world and not just in tourism places, is very high. Philanthropic tourism has the potential of improving the lives of local by the gifts, direct donations, the business generated, and the voluntary services being offered by such tourists. These benefits of the philanthropic tourism may be obtained in a better way with the help of commercial or non-commercial organizations and government agencies that are continuously putting efforts to promote the tourism in developing nations.

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