

## A study on tourists perceived sacrifices at rural destination

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### Abstract:

Rural tourism has gained a sudden prominence in India in the last decade and still much more is left to be explored. The importance of rural tourism as a part of the overall tourism market depends on each country's tourism resources, infrastructure image, market access and the presence of other types of tourism products. The development of tourism in a rural area is not simply a matter of matching tourist demands with local product supply but a matter of evaluating local suitability and acceptability. Many successful experiences in development countries prove that tourism can become a leading sector for the people who conserve natural resources and live on it. The results of the study reveal that the rural tourism sector has specific characteristics that tourists greatly value and that other specialist tourist markets cannot offer, as highlighted in the contribution made by rural tourism enterprises to rural sustainability. This knowledge can help tailor product development and destination design to suit specific demands of rural tourists and influence communication and promotional activities, hence will try to reduce the level of their sacrifices.

**Keywords:** Rural tourism, Perceived sacrifices, Rural destinations

### Introduction

Rural tourism has gained a sudden prominence in India in the last decade and still much more is left to be explored. The importance of rural tourism as a part of the overall tourism market depends on each country's tourism resources, infrastructure image, market access and the presence of other types of tourism products. The development of tourism in a rural area is not simply a matter of matching tourist demands with local product supply but a matter of evaluating local suitability and acceptability. Numerous agencies and academic researchers have identified tourism as a potential economic development tool, particularly for rural communities (Wilkerson, 1996; Prosser, 2000). Community based tourism enables tourists to discover local habitats and wildlife, and celebrates and respects traditional cultures, rituals

and wisdom. Local participation in tourism has been regarded as a positive force for change and passport to development. This, however according to (Mowforth & Munt, 2009) represents an over-simplistic conclusion. The principle behind local participation may be easy to promote, however the practice is far more complex. Generally, it is often assumed that members of a community are willing and able to participate equally (Hall & Jenkins, 1995). This has been a continuing debate and issue within community development studies. Participation of local people is criteria often agreed on as an essential condition for development and sustainability of any new form of tourism (Poon, 1994). Yet, it is the combination of the two words local and participation that is paradoxically implying local residents being so often left outside of the planning, decision-making and managing of tourist development (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). Clearly, the ideal would be for communities to decide the form and function of tourism developments and have full control over any tourism schemes in their location. In reality however, local residents often lack the experience, resources and hence even interest, needed to establish successful tourism ventures (Scheyvens, 2002).

Rural Tourism is increasingly being used as a development strategy to improve the social and economic well being of rural areas. Many successful experiences in development countries prove that tourism can become a leading sector for the people who conserve natural resources and live on it. Local people of these countries jointly cooperate in Community Based Tourism and this gives not only economic benefits for them but also becomes an example of community involved decision making. Rural tourism is promoted by the government of Ireland, a country 40% of the population lives in towns and villages, as a tool for rural development. In the same way Spanish rural tourism took place in the late 1980's and early 1990's with government funding for small scale accommodation. Although Rural tourism is not a large sector of the Spanish rural offering yet growing slowly and expanding in agricultural regions as a means to address the over concentration of the tourists on the coasts in the sun, sea and sand sector. It is primarily farm based and therefore family-run, although there is also increasing of urban-incomers setting up rural tourism businesses.

### **Issues of definitions**

The definition and concept of 'rural' varies from one context to another. While no single definition of rural is available, unfortunately, the word 'rural' has a slightly negative connotation. For many it means 'backward', 'unsophisticated', 'rough' or 'boorish'. Interestingly, recently a favorable image of rural has began to emerge which conveys 'ruggedness', 'home like rural charm' and 'rustic simplicity'.

There is no unambiguous way of defining 'rural' (Cloke & Park, 1985). For 'rural tourism', rural areas are places where visitors come to 'consume rurality' in one form or other. Many argue that rurality has both spatial and socio-cultural connotations. While purely spatial-geographic explanations may fail to explain 'rural', it may find some justification as a socio-cultural formation. It is exotic but familiar, and is shaped as an antithesis of industrialism.

However there is no universal definition for 'rural' as national governments use country specific criteria. For example, rural in Australia is defined as parishes of less than 5000 people while in Denmark and Norway towns of fewer than 10,000 people are considered rural areas (Sharples & Sharples, 1997). In India, defining rural gets even more complicated as it is a state subject. However for a general understanding we could use the definition as illustrated in the (Census of India, 2001), rural location – is a location with a population of less than 10,000 persons.

Hence, the concept 'rural tourism' may need to evolve as a robust tourism product that offers 'rurality' as a tourism product. A rural tourism experience can be very educating and interesting for a visitor. However, the challenge is that the visitors may have little or no excess to the life and culture of a rural community. Tourists might have a superficial glance through the tangible assets of the rural community; but there might be little opportunity for the visitor to immerse in host (rural) culture and have an experience of life. Further, creating an authentic rural experience for tourists will require taking on board all stakeholders at the destination.

The six characteristics that define rural community tourism are: integrates natural beauty and the daily life of rural communities, promotes productive sustainable practices within its tourism offerings, adapts itself to the dynamics of rural life and preserves the welcoming, relaxed, rustic atmosphere that characterizes the rural areas of the country, maintained by local initiative and participation, and strengthens local organizations, which are made up of various families or of the community as a whole, integrates the locals in this economic activity, distributes the benefits evenhandedly, and supplements farming income and promotes land ownership by the local population.

### **Tourist satisfaction and perceived sacrifices: conceptual underpinning**

According to Andre Siegeried, "Travel is the Fourth Dimension of Modern Economics". The tourism industry can be termed as a limitless industry with immense growth potential around the globe. Tourism has a tremendous positive impact the economic and social aspects of the host country. The tourism industry is currently highly fragmented, with many different participants, starting from one-person operations selling home-made souvenirs or offering guided tours, to large multi-billion dollar airlines. Travel is one among the oldest activities. It had existed even before the recorded history, when the human was roaming in search of food and shelter. The travelers of the past were merchants, pilgrims, scholars in search of ancient texts and even a curious wayfarer looking forward to new and exciting experiences. Modern age of travel however seems to be started about 4000 B.C. after the invention of money by the Sumerians. Early travel within the Orient specifically in India and China was also mainly focused on trade and commerce. It is on record that long before the Christian era, travelers visited India in search of fortune. During the Medieval Ages of tourism people started for religious purpose. The powerful influences of a crusading religion that slowly penetrated a foreign land, such as Christianity in Europe and later in America and Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism in Asia happened to allow an assimilation and perpetuation of very distinctive

languages, literature, music, art, architecture, philosophy, and sort of government. Therefore, Religion played and continues to play an essential part in travel. The word “tourist” is taken from the term “tour”, which, according to Webster’s International Dictionary means, “a journey at which one returns to the starting point; a circular trip usually for business, pleasure or education during which various places are visited and usually for which an itinerary is prepared”. A tourist is defined by World Tourism Organization (WTO) as “any foreigner who does not spend less than 24 hours and not more than six months in a country other than his native country and stays in hotels and spends money in his own currency”. From a supply side perspective, the tourism industry can be defined as “the aggregate of all businesses that directly provide goods or services to facilitate business, pleasure, and leisure activities far away from the homely environment” (Smith, 1998). O’Driscoll and Ernest Parson’ defined tourism as “an activity that is concerned with leisured and comfortably off travelers who were content to enjoy scenery, works of art and the general atmosphere of being ‘abroad’ has been replaced by something totally different”. The following definition of tourism provided by Swiss Professors can be described as the most acceptable one. It has been already adopted by the International Association of Scientific Experts on Tourism (IASSET). “Tourism is the sum of phenomenon and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity”.

According to Alister Mathieson and Geoffery Wall (1982), “tourism is the temporary movement of individuals to destinations outside their usual places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay at those destinations and the facilities and services created to cater to their needs”. According to Tourism Society of Britain “Tourism is the temporary short-period movement of individuals to destinations outside their places where they normally live, work and perform activities during their stay at those destinations”. This definition includes movement of individuals for all purposes. Technically, tourism is a set of activities undertaken by the tourists to satisfy their respective urges during in and reroute their destinations and the tough systems within which tourism industry works (Chand, 2000). “Tourism can be defined as a composite phenomenon that embraces the incidence of a mobile population of travelers who are strangers to places they visit “(Bhatia, 1982). Travel, as adventure had existed from immemorial time while tourism is relatively a new concept and is the major product of the rapid mean of modern communication, amenities, facilities and refinements that Science and Technology has provided. Modern Tourism is the most striking phenomenon of 21<sup>st</sup> century and offers us a chance to learn, enrich humanity and to spot what can be termed as goal for a better life and better society. As an industry the impact of tourism is manifold. Tourism industry nourishes a country’s economy, stimulates development process, restores cultural heritage, and helps in maintaining international peace and understanding. Tourism is highly fragile and competitive industry and calls for people’ involvement at all levels. At the start of the twenty-first century, tourism as an industry had probably achieved a better profile within the public consciousness of the developed world than ever before. There has been a steady growth in the numbers of tourists over several decades, but the critical reasons were the impacts on international tourism of (1) the terrorist attacks of 9/11, 2001, (2) the American led invasion of Iraq, (3) airline financial failures, and (4) government and traveler responses to the SARS virus (Lew et.al., 2004). Tourism does not

happen in isolation. It has certain basic components without which it cannot be operational. These three basic components of tourism are as follows: 1) Accommodation, 2) Attractions and Amenities, and 3) Transportation. While elements of tourism include 1) Scenic attractions, 2) Pleasing weather, 3) Cultural and historical factors, 4) Reach ability, and 5) Amenities. The foremost significant characteristic of this industry is that it is least pollutant for which it is named as “Smokeless Industry”. The importance of this industry can be well understood because it promotes national integration, builds better international understanding besides generating a huge employment opportunities. In fact, the entire economy of many countries like Singapore, Thailand, and France etc. are solely supported by tourism.

In the sociology of tourism, tourism is viewed primarily as a social phenomenon (Apostolopolus, 1996; Dann, 1996), with the consumption and social behavior of tourists being legitimate areas of research and study (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2001). ‘Tourist satisfaction’ is one among the foremost discussed concepts in the field of tourism marketing and sociology of tourism. Tourist satisfaction has been considered as a tool for increasing destination competitiveness (Adriotis et.al, 2008). Satisfaction or dissatisfaction is more than a reaction to the actual quality performance of a product or service. It is influenced by prior expectations regarding the extent of quality. According to the expectancy disconfirmation model, tourists form beliefs about services performance or destination based upon prior experience with services/destination and/or upon communications about the destination/services that imply a particular level of quality (Solomon, Michael R., 1996). According to Olson and Dover (1979), an expectation that the perceived likelihood a product possesses has certain characteristics or attributes, or will cause a particular event or outcome. In this view Oliver (1980) said that expectations are belief probabilities of attribute occurrence, which perform two functions: provide the foundation for attitude formation and function as an adaptation level for subsequent satisfaction decision. The expected level of performance can range from quite low to quite high. Expectations and perceived performance are not independent. To some extent, consumers tend to perceive performance to be in line with their expectations (Hawkins et. al., 2007). Perception is the critical activity that links the individual consumer to group, situation, and marketer influences (Hawkins et. al., 2007). Perception is that process by which stimuli is selected, organized, and interpreted (Solomon, Michael R., 1996). While receiving tourism services tourists evaluate tourism services based on “who” delivers as against the nature of the services (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1994). Tourist perception comprises of exposure, attention and interpretation about destination (Hawkins et. al., 2007). Hunt (1977) described satisfaction, as an evaluation that the product experience was at least as good as it was expected to be. An individual’s expectations are positively disconfirmed when performance exceeds expectations, negatively disconfirmed when performance is less than expected and confirmed when performance is approximately equal to expectations. According to the disconfirmation paradigm by Hill (1986), the important key elements of the satisfaction/dissatisfaction process are supposed to be form on a prior basis of evaluation (e.g. expectations of product performance) and compare the perceived performance with expectations in order to arrive at an outcome. Gronroos (1983) suggested that perceived performance is composed of two qualities: first technical quality that has to do with what the consumer receive from purchase and second functional quality that has to do

with how the consumer receives or purchase. The perceived performance level could be noticeably above the expected level, noticeably below the expected level, or at the expected level. Satisfaction with the destination is primarily a function of the initial performance expectations and perceived performance relative to those expectations (Gupta, K. and Stewart, D., 1996). Expectation of visiting on outbound destination has direct effect on motivation towards visiting the destination; motivation has a direct effect on attitude towards visiting the destination; expectation of visiting the outbound destination; expectation of visiting on outbound destination has direct effect on attitude toward visiting the destination; and motivation has a mediating effect on the relationship between expectation and attitude (Hsu, Cai and Li, 2009).

Attributes whose perceived performance fails to confirm expectations usually produces dissatisfaction. In these cases of dissatisfaction, tourists may complain or create negative word of mouth communication. When perceptions of performance match expectations that are at or above the minimum desired performance level, satisfaction occurs as a result. Similarly, performance above the minimum desired level that exceeds a lower expectation tends to produce satisfaction. Service performance that exceeds expected performance will generally result in satisfaction and sometimes leads to commitment. Core service failure, service encounter failures, pricing, inconvenience, responses to service failures, attraction by competitors, ethical problems and involuntary switching are the main determinants or factors that cause dissatisfaction (Keaveney, S. M., 1995). Dissatisfaction is caused by failure of instrumental performance, while complete satisfaction also requires the symbolic functions to perform at or above the expected level (Swan, I. E. and Combs, L. J., 1976). Tourist satisfaction/dissatisfaction is determined by the overall feelings, or attitude, a person has about destination/services after it has been visited/used (Solomon, Michael R., 1996).

Staff Service Quality has the foremost important effect on tourists' level of satisfaction with tourism product/ destination followed by Product value and Product reliability (Heung and Cheng, 2000). The satisfaction derived through the scenery and meals has the largest effect on the overall satisfaction (Hasegawa, 2010). That personal, situational and product factors influence the attitude – performance – satisfaction – relationship (Matzler, Fuller, Renzl, Herting and Spath, 2008). Quality dimensions have an impression on perceived value, which, in turn, affects satisfaction and loyalty (Yoon, Lee & Lee, 2009). Preconceived image of the destination influences expectations and tourist loyalty (Del Bosque and Martin, 2008). Satisfaction is considered as a direct antecedent of short-term revisit intention, but not of midterm or long term revisit intention and novelty seeking is an important antecedent of mid-term revisit intention that has been linked to long-term revisit intention (Jang and Feng, 2007). Disconfirmations are relatively good prediction of overall satisfaction with a destination (Pizam and Milman, 1993). Tourists' level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction during various stages of travel affects their overall satisfaction with travel and tourism services (Neal and Gursoy, 2008). Destination image directly influence attribute satisfaction. Destination image and attribute satisfaction were both direct antecedents of overall satisfaction, and overall satisfaction and attribute satisfaction had direct and positive impact on destination loyalty (Qing Chi and Qu, 2008).

Satisfaction of inner-directed values and motivations depends on classes of objects and to

satisfy this, planners got to follow specific parameters in their product design and resource management as they are expressed in tourists' motivations, whereas outer-directed values target specific objects and to meet later, planners can choose from substitutable products and product configurations (Gnoth, 1997). Visitor's perceptions about the standard of a tourist destination, satisfaction with their experience and the resulting behavioral intentions are important for successful destination management and marketing (Zabkar, Brenvic & Dmitrovic, 2009). Policy makers in 'Destination area' and 'Provider countries' can construct more creative marketing policies, also as tourism structures and infrastructures by Sociological analysis of 'Tourist satisfaction' in stronger and more competitive manner (Tuna, 2000). The component of equity, one among the aspects of consumption behavior, which is getting affected by cultural background, is found to have a greater effect on tourist satisfaction than people had thought, even though it was kept hidden by tourists when they were on the tour (Chang, 2008). Cultural approximation also plays a significant role in tourist satisfaction as different nationalities have different satisfaction levels, the more similar the languages and cultures, the higher the satisfaction levels (Tuna, 2000).

During the last twenty years many tourism and hospitality researches (Albayrak and Caber, 2016; Chand and Kaule, 2016; Khuong et al., 2016; Tsai, 2016; Bagri and Kala, 2015) indicated that tourist arrivals largely hooked in to the composition of tourism product offered by the tourism suppliers and vendors. Moreover, what the tourists expecting and what they are getting are the important questions that may have a profound impact on the tourism satisfactions and wiz-a-wiz tourist traffic in any nation or destination. Zineldin, (2000) stated that tourist satisfactions as "overall tourist attitude towards a service provider" or an emotional reaction to the difference between what tourists expect and what they receive. Whereas, Hunt (1977) defined satisfaction as "it is a critical evaluation that the product experience was at least as good as it was alleged to be". Solomon (1996) described that the tourist satisfaction/dissatisfaction is directed by the overall feelings, or attitude, an individual has about destination/services after it has been visited. Similarly, Gupta and Stewart (1996) suggested that tourists' satisfaction with the destination is primarily a function of the initial performance expectations and perceived performance relatives to those expectations. Most of the researchers have identified numerous determinants that govern the tourist satisfaction and motivate them to choose a specific tourist destination (Chand, 2010; Kozak, 2001; Minfang, 2010; Andriotis, 2008; Kozak and Rimmington, 2000). Keaveney (1995) suggested that core service failure, service encounter failures, pricing, inconvenience, responses to service failures, attraction by competitors, ethical problems and involuntary switching are the main determinants or factors that leads to dissatisfaction as a result. Similarly, Hill (1986) described that attributes of destination whose perceived performance fails to verify expectations of tourists generally reflects dissatisfaction with tourists experience. Further, Minfang (2010) stated as tourists evaluate services performance on the idea of their expectations and therefore, the expected level of tourists regarding performance can range from quite low to quite high. Moreover, expectations and perceived performance are not independent. To some extent, tourists tend to gauge performance of services within the accordance of their expectations (Hawkins et al., 2007). Over the years many behaviour scholars have demonstrated that tourists' satisfaction has been considered as a tool for

increasing destination competitiveness (Andriotis et. al., 2008) as satisfied tourists tend to transmit their positive experiences to third persons also as repeating their visit (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000). By Sociological analysis of 'Tourist satisfaction' in stronger and more competitive manner policy makers in 'Destination area' and 'Provider countries' can construct more creative marketing policies, also as tourism structures and infrastructures (Tuna, 2000). For a destination reputation satisfied tourists are essential as a high level of tourists' satisfaction leads to an increase in repeat patronage among current tourists and aids tourists recruitment by enhancing a destination reputation and cause tourist retention and positive word of mouth. To enhance the destination's reliability and reduce tourists' perceived risk importance of positive word-of-mouth can never be overemphasized in the tourism industry, since tourists prefer personal information sources. It has been verified that loyal tourists indeed create positive word-of-mouth and make recommendations to others for the visit. Loyal and satisfied tourists are crucial for tourism business. The way to create loyal and satisfied tourists is deemed universally an essentially important task for destination managers. For successful destination management and marketing Visitor's perceptions of the quality of a tourist destination, satisfaction with their experience and hence, the resulting behavioural intentions are vital (Zabkar et.al. 2009). Tourists' satisfaction, in the monetary terms, is important because Destination Managers should realize that having satisfied tourists is not good enough; they must have extremely satisfied tourists. Moreover, a little increase in tourist satisfaction boosted dramatically. Additionally by getting advantage from the extremely satisfied tourists' repeat patronage, the destination managers can save their marketing expenses due to extreme satisfied tourists marketing power. It can be drawn from the above literature that Tourists' Satisfaction is important for the Destination Loyalty, increase in destination competitiveness, tourists' positive word-of-mouth creation, positive destination image, tourists' retention, decrease in perceived risks and marketing power. Positive magnitude of tourists' satisfaction always enhances the destination loyalty that further constructs the tourists' intentional behaviour for revisit, recommendation to relatives and friends and future destination selection process.

Understanding tourist satisfaction is of vital importance for the tourism industry, particularly due to its effect on their future economy. Satisfied tourists tend to speak their positive experience to others and they tend to re-buy the product (Barsky 1992; Kozak and Rimmington 2000; Ross 1993). The major question then is "What makes tourists satisfied?" or "What important constructs should be considered when analysing tourist satisfaction?" Subsequently, the following question of interest is "how does tourist satisfaction materialize?" The antecedents and consequences of tourist satisfaction is thus the focus. Tourists' satisfaction with the visit or a destination is a result of many aspects, like their perception of product elements experienced also as their expectations before and through the trip. People continue to go for a holiday to satisfy one or several of their needs, whatever these needs are. To realize satisfaction people try to behave in a rational way. For example, they choose activities that they expect to fulfil their needs satisfactorily. This tendency of rational behaviour shows that there are relationships between motives for travelling, choices made and satisfaction. The literature often portrays the potential distance between expectations and experience, e.g. "expectation-experience gaps" or "expectation-perception gaps" (Theory of Service Gap Model being given by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry

1988), as a result of customers evaluation of product elements. As a substitute of discussing tourist expectation-experience gaps, the present study explores several antecedents of tourist satisfaction with a destination such as tourist motives for travelling and their choices of activities at the destination as well as tourist perception of product elements. The idea is to analyse overall satisfaction and following consequences as predictions of the consumer buying process.

Traditional literature within consumer behaviour points out that customer satisfaction is the result or the final step of a psychological process from need recognition to evaluation of experienced products (Peter and Olson 1996). Despite this recognition of a motivational based process, researchers in the area of satisfaction including tourist satisfaction tend to solely focusing on perception of products and product elements, by that specialize in the extent of satisfaction received. Satisfaction is then defined as “a judgement that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provides a enjoyable level of consumption-related fulfilment” (Oliver 1980; Fornell 1992). MacKay and Crompton (1990) define satisfaction in a similar way by stressing on the “psychological outcome which emerges from experiencing the service”. The overall satisfaction is then the result or the sum of the relative importance and the level of satisfaction experienced of all the single attributes (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). Multiattribute attitude (Fishbein and Azjen 1975) and means-end models assume that buyers judge products based on the ability of attributes to provide positive outcomes. Satisfaction has been analysed by tourism researchers within a spread of dimensions of tourist trips. The prime goals of these studies are to develop instruments or measures of satisfaction with tourist product-elements, often with the aim of suggesting tourists’ perceived importance regarding overall satisfaction and, to some extent, making suggestions for the industry as what to specialize in regarding product developments. Ross and Iso-Ahola (1991), for example, study satisfaction with cultural tours, while Hsieh, O’Leary and Morrison (1994) study differences between packaged and non-packaged tours. Other researchers stresses upon satisfaction with certain aspects of a tour, e.g. hotels. Tourists’ shopping satisfaction is studied by Reisinger and Turner (2002). Toy, Kerstetter and Rager (2002) evaluate customer satisfaction with a leisure activity. Several researchers (Chon and Olsen 1991; Danaher and Arweiler 1996; Kozak and Rimmington 2000; Joppe, Martin and Waalen 2001) investigate tourists’ satisfaction with destinations. While the customer satisfaction literature including those within tourism has been dominated by measurement of how customers perceive products and services (Barsky 1992; Bojanic 1996; Bojanic and Rosen 1994; Chadee and Mattson 1995; 1996; Saleh and Ryan 1992), less has been done with regard to the assessment of what causes the level of satisfaction in addition to the perceived sacrifices that they encountered. Since satisfaction may also relate directly to the consumer’s needs and motives than do attributes, they should also be highly relevant, despite the recognition that evaluations are expected to be subjective in nature and often difficult to determine prior to purchase. By including tourist travel motives and choices of activities at the destination as well as perception of products into the concept of satisfaction, a better understanding of why people become satisfied in addition to how satisfied they are is possible to identify, which further includes a better understanding concerning why people intent to recommend and rebuy the trip.

## Conclusion

Expectation is the perceived likelihood that a given action will be followed by a particular consequence. This is related to the performance of a product and/or service predicted by the potential and actual consumers. Focusing on tourists' needs it is highly likely to identify the potential antecedents of perceived sacrifices. Customer satisfaction /dissatisfaction is the outcome of the difference between consumers' pre-experience expectations and post-experience evaluation; nonetheless, this conception has been criticized by few researchers as they argue that expectation and satisfaction link is context specific and depends on some other factors as well.

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