



Integrating Non-Governmental Organizations with Tourism Enterprises

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ABSTRACT

Over the past years, it has become clear that there is a need for training programs, workshops and internships as part of capacity building and professional development for staff working in different segments of tourism industry & supporting services have become essential for development of tourism. Integration of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with Tour organizations has been a very successful phenomenon in the developed countries and it is often promoted by United Nations World Tourism Organizations also. In India it was need of hour to start such associations for the sustainable development of tourism industry.

Both NGOs and Tour organizations happily accepted the idea of collaborating to showcase developmental activities to inbound tourist visiting NCR. It resulted into many fruitful associations between members of both categories. They were identified after a rigorous and in depth survey by the innovation teams. A very successful work shop was organized to conclude the research project in which hundreds of stakeholders participated. In long terms a new dimension in tourism of NCR has emerged which will cater a very aware segment of tourists who will bring enthusiasm among small but effective NGOs willing to collaborate internationally to achieve their goals.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, NGO, Delhi NCR, Tour organizations.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is important almost in every area of life. NGO's are voluntary organizations that are recognized by the state, as and created by businesses or private persons. It is seen that these NGO's are acting as a watch-dog in the society.

They act as critics and awareness agency for the govt., other organizations and the common people. There is need for integrating NGOs and Travel companies catering to inbound tourists visiting India. As an number of international tourists is increasing, there is a demand to experience the developments taking place in India in different social sectors, so travel companies need to collaborate with NGOs actively in different developmental sectors to show case their innovations. Integration with NGOs is going to be helpful to tour organizations in the following ways:

1. In creating a new product line for the inbound visitors.
2. To explore the newer locations of NCR.
3. In identifying deserving NGOs/Tour agencies for financial assistance.
4. To facilitate researchers in their field work.
5. To create a demand amongst tourists for a new dimension.

- 6.To increase the number of tourists in NCR.
- 7.To contribute in social welfare of NCR.
- 8.To improve the corporate social responsibility among tour organizations.
- 9.To promote sustainable tourism in NCR.

Role of NGO's in NCR

The NGOs are playing a very vital role in promoting sustainable tourism in NCR region, There are various kinds of developmental issues going on in NCR, which can be solved by the active participation of both tour organizations and NGOs. The NGOs working in various sectors like poverty alleviation, education, literacy, old age welfare, environment, health, conservation etc. were contacted to contribute in the development of sustainable tourism. These NGOs have already contributed in welfare of the region and was actively looking for international collaboration and exposure to enhance their capability and contribute in the field of tourism also.

By and large NGOs in capital region are working on traditional areas like health, sanitation, social sectors, education etc but by linking them with tourism organizations their scope of activities will be more diversified and lead up to multiple benefits like employment generations, poverty alleviation and tourism promotion.

METHODOLOGY

Identification and survey of suitable NGOs, Tour Operators, Policy makers and relevant trade organizations from tourism industry as well as developmental sector. A wide range of NGOs were identified on basis of location, uniqueness in their ideology and approach. A study of visitors profile for NCR was conducted. It was observed that most of the tour agencies were ignoring this field considering it as a niche and unprofitable market. So, an extensive workshop was organized in the college where hundreds of leading tour organizations and NGOs participated and actively took part in the deliberations.

Apart from above the concept note of project was sent to many organizations to get their feedback regarding this concept. Many of them responded telephonically and asked for detailed information. A group of students and teachers formed in 3 different groups met the desirous organizations to discuss the further possibilities. A detailed presentation was also given to further describe the utility of the project.

The representatives of these organizations were short listed and provided opportunities to show case their work to representatives of tourism enterprises. Later on basis of mutual consultation both identified possible common areas of working together. The following research methodology were adopted to gather the information:

1. Literature review
2. Interviewing
3. Participant observations
4. Survey
5. Questionnaire

During one year of rigorous exercise the following numbers of Tour operators and NGOs were contacted and brought into collaborations in Delhi and NCR

Table- I Travel agents contacted

| Delhi | Gurgaon | Faridabad | Noida |
|-------|---------|-----------|-------|
| 162 | 72 | 21 | 24 |

(Source- other's own source)

Figure -I: Travel agents contacted

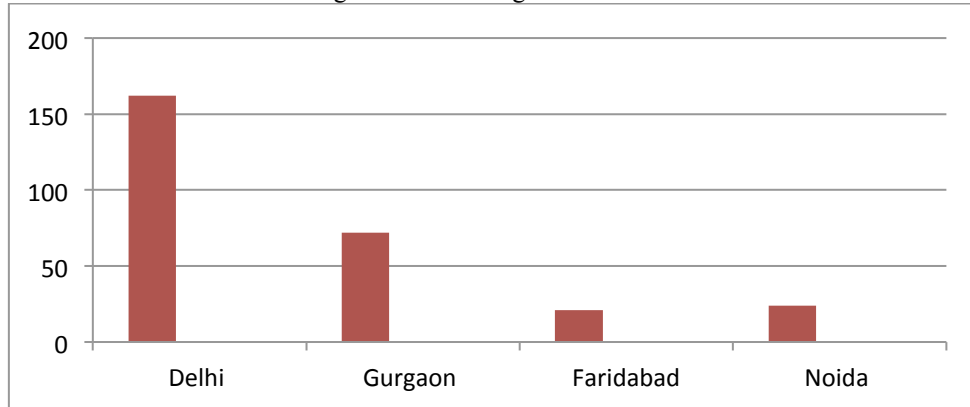


Table-II NGO's contacted

| Delhi | Gurgaon | Faridabad | Noida |
|-------|---------|-----------|-------|
| 96 | 18 | 14 | 7 |

(Source- other's own source)

Figure -II NGO's contacted

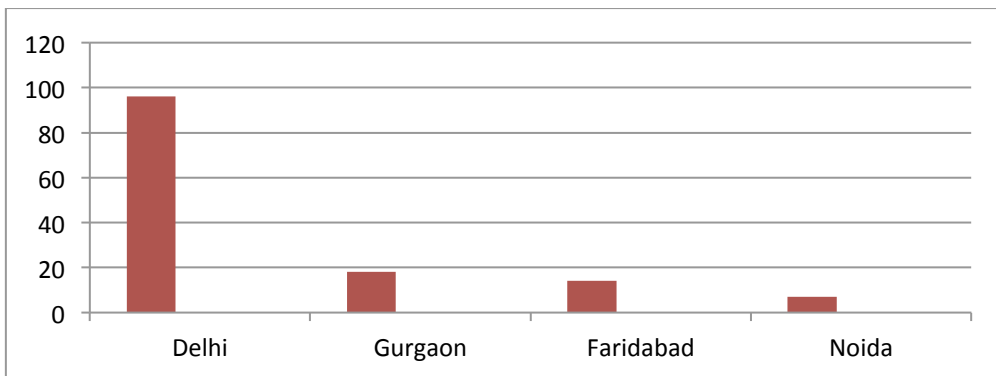
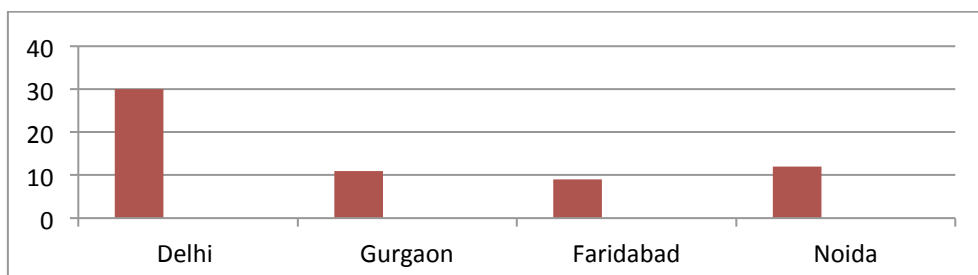


Table-III No. of collaborations

| Delhi | Gurgaon | Faridabad | Noida |
|-------|---------|-----------|-------|
| 30 | 11 | 9 | 12 |

(Source- other's own source)

Figure -III Number of NGO's collaboration



RESULTS

A large no of stakeholders were contacted by the innovation team to execute our plans into reality. A total 162 tour operators and travel agents were contacted against 96 NGOs in Delhi region. They were well described about this project through meetings, workshops, literature and audio video presentations. Many of them didn't have any idea about this concept and hence initially didn't show much interest. Despite an initial cold response we kept on reinforcing our thoughts on them without losing our aim and heart. Ultimately, we brought them together by organizing a workshop in our college which resulted into 30 collaborations through MOUs and rest of them assured to continue the dialogue in this direction. In Gurgaon 72 tour operators and travel agents were contacted out of which 11 collaborations resulted in an MOU. The no of collaborations in this region was also not very high as both the stakeholders agreed to start up with just one collaboration with listed tour agencies and NGOs rather to have many collaborations simultaneously. Organizations like Help Age India, Kuoni travel who are comparatively bigger organizations also had the similar view to have a single collaboration than to have multi level at the same time. They were of the opinion that it's a new but interesting concept and may take some time to nurture and instant result should not be accepted. In Faridabad region 21 tour organizations and 14 NGOs were approached by our team.

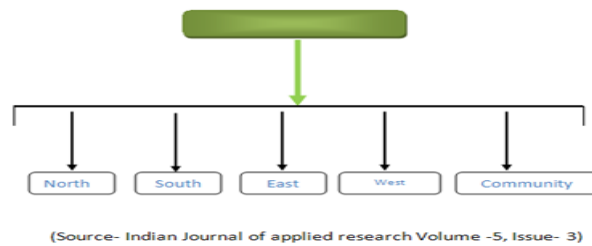
Most of them were small organizations by nature but showed keenness on this issue and actively took part in all our efforts. 9 collaborations took place in this region again through MOUs and further they agreed to extend their cooperation by visiting each other's offices and meeting time to time. In Noida region we approached 24 tour organizations and 7 NGOs. However the no of collaboration in this region was 12 as a few of NGOs opted to have multiple collaborations at the same time.

One interesting trend was noticed that NGOs were more enthusiastic to enter into collaboration than tour organizations. When we tried to know the reason behind this a tour manager revealed that this concept is a win- win situation for both the stakeholders albeit NGOs are likely to be more benefitted as they just have to facilitate us and we as a tour organization have to put some extra effort to bring the tourists up to their offices and also to market this concept in a very niche yet unexplored market.

Some special outcomes are as below -

- A large number of Tour operators were agreed to develop a product line known as "Welfare Tourism".
- Relevant NGOs were highlighted by the research team in different groups.
- The prospects of this special interest tourism were discussed with a large number of industry stakeholders.
- The development of a special interest tourism venture got started after the completion of research in NCR region.
- Many travel organizations found this initiative extremely innovative and included such activities in their itineraries.
- The staffs of NGOs became aware of different sustainable issues prevailing in NCR and committed themselves to contribute into it.
- Many MOUs were signed between NGOs and Tour organizations to strengthen this concept.
- The outcome was a catalyst for the policy makers to create special publicity material for this sector.
- Lot of volunteers expressed their willingness to serve both the tour organizations and NGOs in their spare time and to help in execution of this concept.

Figure IV: Role of NGO's played at different level in NCR



DISCUSSION

It promoted a dialogue between tourism industry and developmental sector in first place, which was by and large lacking. The project strategically makes tourism sustainable, where-in an understanding of issues pertinent to growth, development etc. obviously are to be part of final objectives of promoting tourism in NCR region. This particular linkage chosen is to undertake in-depth and applied studies on the quality of tourism experience in Indian context by taking NCR as entry point

A new type of tourism i.e. "Special Interest Welfare Tourism" has been promoted through this research and both travel agents and NGO's are helping it to spread. It's a win-win situation for both the sectors as travel agents are able to cater this type of special interest tours and tourists also are finding a convenient way to approach NGO's and helping them to further strengthen the social sector. It is also noteworthy to mention that both the partners found this idea truly innovative and one of its own kind. Several representatives of NGO's found this product line is really new and attractive. This concept is innovative and an European NGOs worker stated that "working on this theme is very pleasant but still it's a sector where a lot need to be done and I am pleased to see the terrific enthusiasm of travel agents, NGOs, teachers and students". He further said that, there is a need for specific interest programme for tourists visiting to see developmental work and volunteer in social service sector. NGOs depend on grants for their projects and it can be a good way of attracting foreign donors to participate in developmental activities in NCR region of India. A representative of FCM travel opined that the success of India tourism will depend on our ability to integrate NGOs with travel agencies. Representative of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India was also very enthusiastic about the project and assured all possible help in this direction. Students were greatly inspired by this project and many of them took an oath to work for the welfare of the country even in their later stage of career.

CONCLUSION

The role of NGOs in tourism sector is very important because they facilitate development. These NGOs create awareness among the people regarding resources and tourism assets in relation to tourism development. They also show the right track in which the development should take place.

These NGOs also help in sustaining culture, conserving environment, land etc. due to tourism development. Therefore it is very important for the industry to take into consideration the suggestions and advices of the NGOs while designing new products.

Results of the study also indicate that apart from monuments there are many other possible attractions for the tourists visiting capital region. Most of the travel agencies are confined to offer the repeated monuments which do not catch the re users and become repetitive after a visit. Most of the itineraries are also full of archaeological sites and completely lacks social contact with the host population. It leads to poor interaction between guest and host community and sometimes create negative impacts on society.

Tourism is always aimed at creating meaningful links between people and promotion of NGOs among tourists will most certainly lead to such contacts. This project was aimed to link Government of India's mission to promote sustainability in tourism activity and outcome of this project will further help in fulfilling such objectives.

Experiments all over the world and resultant experiences have proved that success of a tourist destination depends upon totality of strategic efforts made by various stakeholders and careful marketing, In addition to the inherited tourism magnetism along with the uniqueness of resources, products and activities. This obviously, requires well-conceived and effectively implemented innovative steps from all the players including policy makers, practitioners, and representatives from hospitality sector and media persons to even academic institutions. Diverse preferences, priorities, wide-ranging, spending abilities & patterns, spectrum of motivations, varied socio-cultural linkages, ethics & ensuing values and customs etc. of the tourists motivates tourism promoters, practitioners and those who are involved with the management and development of destinations for adding new dimensions in product line. There is a whole set of factors like changing economic scenario, emerging developmental policies, price competition, socio-economic sustainability of any tourism system. This project discussed to integrate several socio-economic aspects of Indian life which are although high on agenda of tourists to comprehend, but unfortunately a proper system was lacking to facilitate the same.

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