

ECOTOURISM POTENTIAL OF SALHER FORT, NASHIK DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present paper is to study the ecotourism potential of Salher Fort and to study the physical and biological features of the study area and to find the role of stake holders in sustainable tourism and environment friendly development. Ecotourism is defined as 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of local people.' The domestic tourists visiting Maharashtra doubled during the last decade, from 41.29 lakhs in 1991 to 84.8 lakhs in 2001, whereas the number of foreign tourists visiting Maharashtra increased from 7 million 1991 to 8 million in 2001. (Tourism Policy of Maharashtra – 2006, DTCA). Field visits and semi-structured interviews in an informal manner have been organized to collect the primary data. Target group has been set for an action plan in the form of the tourists and then comes the hotels, forest department and local indigenous people of the area. Salher fort is one of the hill forts in Western Ghat of Maharashtra. Salher is located at 20° 43' 50'' N latitude and 73° 56' 45'' E longitudes. It has the distinction of being the highest fort in the Sahyadris. This site has a great ecotourism potentiality. The environment and culture of this place is undisturbed by unchecked growth that observed in city area. Tribal people of this area have their own culture and traditions. The researcher summed up the results like Period of Stay, Tourist disliking about the area, Transportation used, Occupation, Age and sex wise distribution, local food, craft and culture, season wise inflow of tourists to the area, benefits from tourism, expectations of local people from the ecotourism, etc have been studied thoroughly. The researcher is finally concluded that, the Salher fort is still unspoiled natural place. This site is an ecotourist attraction having good biodiversity, pleasing beauty of nature and ruggedness of physical landscape along with rich social and cultural heritage. The researcher tries to expose the ecotourism potentiality of Salher fort in the present paper. The present paper will be immensely helpful to the students, scholars, researchers, tourists, and the Government and will be a modest contribution in this field.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Salher Fort, biodiversity, Tourists, Tribal People.

INTRODUCTION:

The term ecotourism was coined by Hector Ceballos Lascurian in 1983 (Bhattacharya A.K., 2005). Defined as 'responsible travel to natural areas, that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of local people,' Epler Wood, 1996 (TIES), ecotourism fundamentally reshapes the basic precepts behind tourism, which is quite simply traveled undertaken for pleasure.

The growth of tourism in India has been rapid in the last five years despite a late start. Tourist arrivals have gone up by more than 25 per cent and foreign exchange earnings has jumped by 40 per cent. (Tourism Policy of Maharashtra – 2006, DTCA). The domestic tourists visiting Maharashtra doubled during the last decade, from 41.29 lakhs in 1991 to 84.8 lakhs in 2001, whereas the number of foreign tourists visiting Maharashtra increased from 7 million 1991 to 8 million in 2001. (Tourism Policy of Maharashtra – 2006, DTCA).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In the national as well as in the international level there are many case studies related to the ecotourism and community based ecotourism are published. One research titled "Developing a Sustainable Eco-Tourism Framework For the Cordillera Region of the Philippines" by Arthur Joseph Paul D. Alipio clearly mentioned the impact of Natural resources, pollution and physical impacts on Ecotourism. In his project he described the socio-cultural impacts of tourism activities also economic impacts of tourism. One of the research paper was published by "Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies", Bond University (2005) on the "Development of eco-tourism in tribal regions of Orissa: Potential and recommendations" which was written by Nilakantha Panigrahi, NKC Centre for Development Studies, Orissa, India. In the particular research paper it is explained very clearly the treasure of tourism and the tourist potential in the State of Orissa. One of the case studies was published in the, "The Hindu," (2006) magazine on the "Periyar tiger reserve and community participation", which was written by prominent ecologist Ashish Kothari and Neena Pathak. In the particular article it is explained very well how once the local people of the forested area were involved in stealing of wood and poaching activities and how the local people after being involved in the ecotourism activities as a part of Global Environmental Facility (GEF) funded Eco-development Project helped to control over the cases of poaching and how they were later benefited from the project. Another article was published by the same author Mr. Asish Kothari in, "The Hindu", magazine (2007) on the topic- "Tourism, wildlife and communities", explains how the successful ecotourism ventures are facing threat due to unclear policies. Two successful ecotourism from Uttarakhand and one from the Rajasthan were discussed here. Another case study published in, "The Hindu", magazine (2007), titled, "Andaman and Nicobar Islands – dangerous tourism" explains how the unplanned tourism can cause great threat to the biodiversity hotspots and other natural environments. One case study published in "Current Science", Volume – 95 No. 11(Dt. 10th Dec, 2008), titled, "Ecotourism in wetlands causes loss of biodiversity" by S. Sandilyan, K. Thiyaagesan and R. Nagarajan – explains that wetlands might be adversely affected by ecotourism.

AIM & OBJECTIVES:

Aim: To study the ecotourism potential of Salher Fort

Objectives: To study the physical and biological features of the study area and to find the role of stake holders in sustainable tourism and environment friendly development.

METHODOLOGY:

1. Site selection has been done keeping in mind the importance of a project.
2. Field Visits: At first the physical and biological features of the area were identified and it was done first to be familiar with the area.
3. The primary data has been collected from the semi-structured interview and field survey. The secondary data has been collected from various sources like: Nashik District Gazetteer, local government offices, Gram Panchayat, and Department of Forest etc.
4. The semi structured interviews: are partly structured and mostly unstructured depending the person or groups who have been interviewed. The interviews were in informal manner and free to probe and subsequently frame questions according to the concerned aspects.
5. Target group analysis for action plan: In the whole study the main target group was the tourists and then comes the hotels, forest department and local indigenous people of the area.

STUDY AREA:

Salher fort is one of the hill forts in Western Ghat of Maharashtra in Nashik District. The height of this hill fort is 1567 m which makes this fort the highest fort in Maharashtra. Just as Kalsubai boasts to be the highest peak in the Sahyadris in Maharashtra, Salher has the distinction of being the highest fort in the Sahyadris. Salher comes under the administrative boundary of Baglan Tahsil, Nashik district. Salher is located at 20° 43' 50" N latitude and 73° 56' 45" E longitude.

CLIMATE:

In winter temperature has been recorded as low as 4°C. The hottest month is May with temperature touching 43°C. Average rainfall is approx. 650mm most of which is during the Period of June-September. Evenings are cool even during summer as hilly areas surround it.

GEOLOGY, ROCK AND SOIL:

This hill comes under western ghat. The river Mousam originates from the Salher hills. The crest line of the Western Ghat is not continuous but dissected by streams. Lithologically, Western Ghat is composed of the rocks in the Deccan Trap Formation. This part of western ghat is made up of Trap rocks called as Deccan basalt. The black soil contains high alumina and carbonates of calcium and magnesium with variable amounts of potash, low nitrogen and phosphorus. The red soil is less common and is suitable for cultivation under a heavy and consistent rainfall.

CURRENT STATUS OF SALHER:

Salher Gram Panchayat has 2547 population (Accd. to 2001 census). Tribal population accounts for 90% of the total population and most of them are under poverty line. Festivals like Holi, Dongra Dev (Kartiki Pournima) and Patlyachi Pooja (Chaitra Pournima) are celebrated by these people. Salher village is having one Primary Health Centre. Educational facilities are available. The total area of Salher village is 2410 Ha. There are 110 number of families resides in Salher. Leading crop Rice occupies 171 ha (47.76%), out of the total 358 Ha agricultural land.

ECOTOURISM POTENTIAL OF SALHER:

Salher fort's significance is its ruggedness. The environment and culture of this place is undisturbed by unchecked growth that observed in city area. This site is having good biodiversity. Tribal people of this area have their own culture and traditions. The site is also having historical significance. One can see some dilapidated structures of temples and water cisterns after reaching the top. From the top we can see the complete Baglan region and the most fabulous scene of the surrounding region. Not a single hotel available for accommodation in study area. But one can stay at the three caves on the top of the fort. There are 31 plant species observed in the region.

MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS OF NMWS:

MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS OF SALHER:

TOURISTS:

Salher fort is mainly visited by the tourists who like climbing and trekking. Mainly in winter vacation period and during monsoons many tourists visits to Salher fort. Tourists from Maharashtra and Gujarat States visits this fort as it is on the border of these two states. But tourists do not have much information about history and ecology of this place.

LOCAL PEOPLE:

Very few local people from Salher village engaged in tourism activity. Local people do not know the significance of tourism. The economy of Salher largely depends upon agriculture. The local people basically engaged in primary activities.

HOTELS:

Only two hotels observed here and they just provide tea and snacks. They do not provide any kind of

information useful for tourism. But people who work here are helpful in nature. They treat each and every tourist as a guest, it is their tradition.

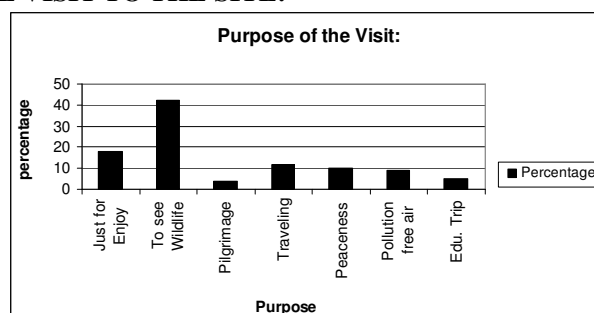
FOREST DEPARTMENT:

This area comes under the Taharabad Range. Forest department has proposed Eco-Tourism Development Project (2008-09 to 2012-13) which cost around Rs. 1, 45, 53,000. They have defined their objectives like, to educate people about the benefits of the forests and medicinal plants, to create awareness about forest and wildlife conservation and protection, to enrich forest biodiversity and to beautify the area, to develop accommodation and camping sites for nature lovers and also provide jobs to tribal people of this area. But still forest department has not done much work in the area.

RESULTS OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS:

TOURIST GROUP:

1. **PERIOD OF STAY:** 84% people interviewed came here for 1 day trip and 16% people only came here for staying more than one day. When inquired about the reason, majority of them replied that one day trip is enough to see wildlife of this area.
2. **TOURIST DISLIKING ABOUT THE AREA:** Majority of the tourists (54%) had complained of road and communication system of the area. The other disliking of the tourists were accommodation and food problem (23%), lack of information about the area (11%), drinking water problem (7%), waste disposal (3%) and hygiene (2%).
3. **LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF THE TOURISTS:** 65% of tourists interviewed were unaware about the history or ecology of the area. Only 22% of tourists had idea and 13% had little information about the area.
4. **TRANSPORTATION USED FOR THE TRIP:** Use of state transportation were very low (18%). The maximum 46% of tourists used rented car/jeep for the trip. 13% of tourists came here by their own car; 1% by rented buses and 20% of the tourists came here by motor cycles.
5. **OCCUPATION OF THE TOURISTS:** 44% of tourists interviewed were students, young people and others while the 32% of tourists were from private organizations and 24% are from Government Organizations.
6. **AGE GROUP AND SEX-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF TOURISTS:** It was observed that 53% of the tourists interviewed belong to the age group of 18-30 and followed by the age group 31-50 (34%). It is observed that male population is very high in all the age groups compared to the female population.
7. **PURPOSE OF THE VISIT TO THE SITE:**



8. **INTERESTED IN LOCAL FOOD, CULTURE AND CRAFT:** 64% of the tourists interviewed were interested in the local culture, food and local craft.

LOCAL PEOPLE GROUP:

1. **SEASON WISE INFLOW OF TOURISTS TO THE AREA:** 77% of tourists came to the area during the winter season and 7% in the summer season and 16% tourists come in the monsoon season.
2. **BENEFITS FROM TOURISM:** 76% of the local people interviewed believed that they were benefited by tourism and only 9% of people believed that there was no gain from tourism. Remaining 15% of local people cannot say anything about the benefits.
3. **EXPECTATIONS OF LOCAL PEOPLE FROM THE ECOTOURISM:** 48% of people interviewed had expected that transportation facilities should be improved and also 18% of the local people expected that hotels should be improved whereas 13% water, 11% education and 10% agriculture.

4. **SOURCE OF ENERGY FOR FUEL:** It was found that 55% of people were at present dependent on traditional fuel wood as an energy source and 34% of people were using Kerosene and only 11% of people were using LPG for their energy requirement for cooking.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The area doesn't have facilities for accommodation. Ecolodge will be good alternative for employment and it secondary source of money for local people.
- There is a need of providing market for local crafts like "Bhilpai".
- Workshops and meetings should be arranged by the forest department.
- More frequency of public vehicles should be arranged with some tools to provide information of site.
- Information centre should be developed by forest department.
- Infrastructural facilities should be provided to study area.

PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENT:

The Table 5 has indicated that the intrinsic motivation (IM) is significantly related with organizational commitment (OC), affective commitment (AF), continuance commitment (CC) and normative commitments (NC). The significant values for OC, AC, CC and NC were indicated 0.000, 0.000, 0.012 and 0.000 respectively. The result indicated that the OC, AC, CC and NC were significant positive related with IM, which the significant values are less than p-value 0.05. At the same time, there is a weak positive correlation of IM with CC ($r = 0.159$) and NC ($r = 0.250$). However, there is a medium positive correlation of IM with OC ($r = 0.325$) and AC ($r = 0.356$). Thus, hypotheses 2 were fully supported. The increase of IM will subsequently enhance academics OC, AC, CC and NC within an institution.

Table 5: Correlation Between Factors Scores Of Intrinsic Motivation And Organizational Commitment

		Organizational Commitment	Affective Commitment	Continuance Commitment	Normative Commitment
Intrinsic Motivation	Pearson Correlation	0.325	0.356	0.159	0.250
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.012	0.000
	N	247	247	247	247

SIMPLE LINEAR REGRESSION:

At the initial stage of simple linear regression analysis, there are few assumptions test has to conduct, that is called outliers, normality and error terms. As revealed from Table 6, the residual value was in between -2.512 and 2.666. Therefore, there are no any outliers exists in the data set. Further to this, the mean of standard residual and standard predicted value are 0.000. This means that the residuals or error terms can be considered independent and normally distributed. Thus, the data are normal and the model is valid. Thus, all the assumptions of simple linear regression have been fulfilled.

Based on Table 6, the overall result for the regression model was significant ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) with the F-value of 28.961. The result posited that intrinsic motivation can be used to predict the organizational commitment model. From the R-square value ($R^2 = 0.106$), intrinsic motivation was able to explain 10.6% of the variation in organization commitment. The significant value was 0.000 with t-value of 5.382.

The following is the multiple regression equation for the current study:

Organizational Commitment = $2.586 + 0.290$ (Intrinsic Motivation)

Based on the equation and Table 4, the values of un-standardized Beta coefficient among the variable were used to formulate the simple linear regression equation. For every unit increase in intrinsic motivation, organizational commitment will go up by 0.290 units.

Table 6: Result of Assumptions Test And Regression Analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	2.586	0.329		7.850	0.000
Intrinsic Motivation	0.290	0.054	0.325	5.382	0.000
R-Square = 0.106 Adjusted R-Square = 0.102 F-Value = 28.961 Sig. = 0.000 Standard Residual = -2.512 to 2.666 Mean of Standard Residual = 0.000 Mean of Standard Predicted Value = 0.000					

DISCUSSION:

The result of the current study has indicated that academicians perceive organizational commitment, affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment and intrinsic motivation within an institution. Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported in this study. The result was consistent with Chan (2003). Chan (2003) has highlighted that normally employees will perceive higher affective and normative commitment, but low in continuance commitment. As referring back to the result of the study, academicians perceived continuance commitment with slightly lower than affective and normative commitment. This might due to the continuance commitment does not guaranteeing an organizationally beneficial attitude (Chan, 2003).

As for hypothesis 2, the result speculated that intrinsic motivation has significantly positive correlated with organizational commitment and its components namely: affective, continuance and normative commitments. Hence, the proposed hypothesis 2 has fully supported. The significant positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and organizational commitment is in line with Ingram, Lee and Skinner (1989). Apart from this, the present result has posited that the correlation between intrinsic motivation and affective commitment is strongest ($r = 0.356$). This was followed by normative commitment ($r = 0.250$) and continuance commitment ($r = 0.159$). Intrinsic Motivation has the least correlation with continuance commitment. This is because continuance commitment is not an organizationally beneficial attitude (Chan, 2003). In order to increase continuance commitment, it must ensure the benefits of continuing to remain in the organization is better than the perceived cost of leaving the organization. According to Chan (2003) and Meyer, Allen and Smith (2003), the main reason to attract employees to remain with their respective organization is material needs. However, Intrinsic Motivation is more on inner motivation, such as opportunities for promotion and enhances self-esteem. Therefore, the correlation and significant of the test between intrinsic motivation and continuance commitment is the weakest. Based on simple linear regression result, it is confident to prove that intrinsic motivation can be used to predict organizational commitment. Therefore, the hypothesis 3 is supported. By intrinsically motivated academicians, this will promotes higher commitment within an institution.

IMPLICATIONS:

In this study, intrinsic motivation can be used to predict the organizational commitment. Besides to this, the study finding has shown that intrinsic motivation is significantly correlated with organizational commitment and its components namely; affective, continuance and normative commitments. This finding is another great contribution and theoretical implication towards management study. Chan (2003) has speculated that organizational commitment and its components are considered to be attitudinal consequences of intrinsic motivation. An academic has the choice of doing their activity which it will motivate intrinsically rather than for some separable consequences. Intrinsic motivation has the potential to have great influence other aspects of employee behavior such as commitment within an institution (Grabner & Speckbacher, 2009). By intrinsic motivate academics, this will subsequently enhance the sense of all aspects of commitment within an institutions.

Faculty or University is advice to provide adequate training or workshops that are related to the academics job scope. The purpose to have training, workshops, seminars or conference is to improve academics skills and knowledge. Through this training and workshop, academics might have better understanding on how to do research, to have effective teaching, write a research proposal and paper. Besides that, the human resources department, deans or head of departments should provide some training in appropriate behavior, such as the technique how to participate in decision making. Ingram, Lee and Skinner (1989) have suggested the human resource department of the university should conduct socialization programs for new comer or new academics. Eventually, this will increase academics role-conflict and role-ambiguity in order to increase commitment within an institution. According to Thomas and Velthouse (1990), the human resource department should offer some suitable professional development program to academics. All of this might increase academics intrinsic motivation within an institution.

LIMITATIONS:

Generally, there are two common limitation has to acknowledged. The raising concerns about common mono-method bias. Although, there is more than one measure of the particular variable (organizational commitment and intrinsic motivation) has been adapted, but, using the same method (self-administrative questionnaire) which does not mean that it is provide strong evidence to measure the variable correctly and sufficiently. Secondly, the nature weaknesses of cross-sectional study have imposed another limitation to the current study. By adopting a cross-sectional study, it limits the researchers to assess the respondents' opinion in different point

of time. Apart from this, it does not allow investigating which variable causes a change in another variable. Therefore, it might affect the accuracy of current study result.

FUTURE RESEARCH:

In future research, more research is needed to further investigate and seek for others potential antecedents of organizational commitment among Malaysian Private Universities academicians. Hence, this will boost up Malaysian Higher Education Institutions sectors. Furthermore, it is encouraged to further extent the research by examine the relationship on non-academics instead of academicians. And, it is worth to conduct a comparative study in between academics and non-academics in Malaysia Private Universities. Besides, a kind of similar research can be conducted on Malaysia Public Higher Education Institutions sectors or private colleges' academicians. In addition, it is encourage adopting a longitudinal study in future research. So, it might provide a powerful results and findings. Thus, this might provide strong benefit towards Malaysian government and Ministry of Higher Education.

CONCLUSION:

The main objective of this paper is to examine the relationship between intrinsic motivation and organizational commitment among academicians in Malaysian Private Universities. This paper has also encapsulated the relationship between intrinsic motivation and the three components of commitment namely; affective, continuance and normative commitments. The finding has speculated that the intrinsic motivation has significantly positive correlated with organizational commitment and its components. Further to this, the paper also tested the intrinsic motivation has significantly contributed towards organizational commitment.

The Universities, Faculties and even Ministry of Higher Education are encouraged to improve and enhance academicians' intrinsic motivation within an institution. The Heads of Management and Human Resource Management should provide adequate and useful training, workshop, seminar and socialization program for the new comers as well as existing employees. By doing this, universities and faculties will be able to further enhance the academicians intrinsic motivation within an institution. Subsequently, this will strengthen the academics organizational commitment and organizational reputation and status. Eventually, it will be able to attract more foreign students enroll their study in Malaysian Private Universities. And, consequently it will assist in transforming Malaysia from middle-nation income to high-nation income with both inclusive and sustainable.

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