

Case study of taman negara malaysia tourism essay



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In this report I will be studying a tourism site with specific ecological importance to it. For this I have focused on selecting a region with rainforests as I feel they are an important factor of ecological balance in the given global warming environment with increasing pollution in the atmosphere. After my initial search on looking for rainforests, I narrowed down on Asia specifically to Malaysia given its developed economy with a rich history of thousands of years old rainforests still preserved without any intervention. I feel this would be an important factor in my selection as being a developed country it would be easy to understand more about the country's rich geographic region as there would be lesser language barriers with more research and knowledge along with ease in reaching these places. Since the rainforests are more than thousand years old, it would be quite imperative for the global ecotourism to maintain this place in the best possible management. It would also have an important place in eco tourism as its one of the few places remaining on earth which still has flora and fauna dating back thousands of years back.

Tropical rainforests provide a rare and valuable view of evolution and ecology. It is a place where there is age old species along with diversity of species which coexist in this environment to provide ecosystem services like water, nutrient, energy cycling which is quite critical for our planet. Of all the ecosystems, rainforests are one of the most due to their large number of species and carbon stores.

Rainforests are directly responsible maintaining local ecological and social conditions, if not well managed it will cause deterioration of regional weather and species distribution would deviate. Over the years, quite little has been

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achieved by rainforest preservation movements, efforts made to reduce both rainforest deforestation and diminishment have achieved little. Existing environmental and political groups have shown to be of little help to ecology as there is still a large number of rainforest loggers operating for commercial interests.

Rainforest loss and diminishment is depleting the Earth of its life-giving mantle and hence it is important that the ecological sustainability movement commit itself to ending primary forest logging and protecting and restoring rainforests.

2. Academic evaluation

Architect Ceballos-Lascurain was one of the initial researchers to come up with definition of ecotourism. He stated that:

“ We may define ecological tourism or ecotourism as that tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects found in these areas.” (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987: 13)

During the time when he came up with this definition, ecotourism already existed in various parts of the earth. For example in the 1960's there was heavy over-use in the North American national parks with traffic congestion and resulting impacts, such as erosion. During this time, Yosemite National Park attracted 1. 7 million visitors per annum (Johnson, 1967). In the recent years, other ecological researchers have modified, extended and developed

numerous ecotourism definitions including Blamey (1997), Fennell and <https://assignbuster.com/case-study-of-taman-negara-malaysia-tourism-essay/>

Eagles (1989) etc. Definitions are mostly based on the importance of literature with the definition of ecotourism. Various researchers advocate that the various definitions of ecotourism, in various national and regional contexts, are important to both the supply and demand sides of the ecotourism phenomenon. Contributions to the literature addressing the definition of ecotourism are broad in scope and varied in merit. However, it is important that it is defined in order to foster robust and widely recognised industry standards (supply side) while also serving visitor interests in achieving the ecotourism experiences that they seek (demand side).

From my review of various ecotourism definitions, I can infer that some mention of conservation, education, local ownership, sustainability etc while other definitions focus on key aspects, such as ' host community participation', ' natural areas' etc. The above definitions provide a platform to base or develop further operations of ecotourism accordance with definition. Here we will consider 2 definitions by researchers to further understand the scope available in ecotourism.

In 1994, Ballantine and Eagles researched some tourists to Kenya based on a specific definition consisting of three criteria. This criterion was put in place so as to know a tourist's status as an ' ecotourist' and his or her classification based on three dimensions: the social motive; the desire to visit ' wilderness/undisturbed areas'; and a temporal commitment.

In another research in 1992 by Butler he developed a more comprehensive checklist of criterion for the ecotourism status. This criterion focused on the other side of the definitional scale. While it contained quite a lot of aspects of

definitions found throughout the literature, these points place certain constraints on ecotourism operators. For example in the case of New Zealand where ecotourism operators go through various criteria for operating which was identified by Warren and Taylor (1994). They infer that most of the ecotourism operations are small-scale and family-owned thus hardly feasible commercially. These criterion and definitions also make it mandatory for ecotourism operations to limit the development and growth of their commercial operations and thus focus on the ideals of ecotourism. Another interpretation of this definition by Orams (1995), is to assume that ecotourism is not possible or that no ecotourism can meet the criteria of purist definitions.

Thus it is seen that there is positive as well as negative impacts seen on the 'softest' form of ecotourism. In 2001, architect and ecotourism researcher Ceballos-Lascurain stated that he believed in ecotourism and not in 'eco purism'. The goal is to match as many of the criteria as possible while Lindberg and McKercher (1996: 65) suggest, sustainable tourism is 'postulated from a positive overall balance in environmental, experiential, sociocultural and economic impacts'.

The various contrasts which exist in the definitions of ecotourism give out the general inoperability of this concept. These varieties in definitions could possibly be viewed with a focus on the economic and environmental dimensions of ecotourism. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of sustainable tourism development, economic viability is the bottom line of sustainable tourism operations.

Other ecotourism operators also face challenging barriers to commercial viability. By definition they should be small-scale, resolute in limiting the growth of commercial operations (Butler, 1990) and, by implication, blinkered to economic theory relating to economies of scale. The recommendation that visitors are managed by maintaining an appropriate ratio of guides to visitors again brings with it economic challenges relating to pricing and commercial viability.

3. Case study

Taman Negara National Park

Source: www.tamannegara.org

The case I would specifically choose would be on Taman Negara National Park of Peninsular Malaysia which is one of the largest protected area in Malaysia covering an area of 434, 350 hectares of rain forest. It is one of the oldest rainforest in the world, estimated about 130 million years old. It is said to have about 14500 flowering plants and trees, 600 species of birds, 200 species of mammals, 350 species of reptiles and numerous species of insects and other life forms.

I would like to examine here how is this place prepared from the crisis of commercialization and possible steps it can take to enhance the same. There has been previous research which has focused mainly on different factors for sustainable tourism however there is not much research on the relevant aspects like social factor apart from commercial benefits. Social factor would include the safety and security of the tourist whilst touring in such regions.

Taman Negara must make its own definition of crisis by understanding its <https://assignbuster.com/case-study-of-taman-negara-malaysia-tourism-essay/>

own environment for possible dangers and evaluating events which would have direct impact on the accomplishment of its goal. It is also critical to have a base for the implementation of structures, rules and regulations within an organization; to coordinate efforts with the government to mitigate effects of such disasters.

Similar to other business activities, ecotourism industry has to generate revenue to financially sustain whilst providing unique experience and attractions to compete in this blooming industry (Weaver, 2008). Business scholars and practitioners alike have argued those crises are inevitable (Perrow, 1994).

An overview of the research on Taman Negara shows that service providers are generally unaware of any formal structure or system to handle crisis situation (Hayati, D, Noryati A 2010). This lack of awareness could mean that in case of an emergency or crisis situation the caretakers of the place would be unable to respond in a positive manner. Also, the knowledge of basic crisis management was seen to be less amongst the service providers. Most do not give priority to crisis management as there have not been frequent cases while success in previous such cases provides them with a sense of confidence.

Another breach of regulations here was found to be the lack of attention on registration of tourists, where a number of tourists got away without registering themselves. Since tourist numbers are recorded which help in case of casualties, maintaining a balance on the number of tourists at a particular time in the park and other emergencies, it should be ensured that

such records are enforced accordingly. There could be also illegal refuge from neighboring countries or acts of terrorism.

An organization may therefore be over planned but under prepared (Dahan, 2005; Mitroff). Thus I conclude that crisis management requires different planning, procedures and activities than routine management. Also I feel that advance preparation for such unforeseen circumstances would be in the best interest of a critical place like Taman Negara.

4. Challenges to tourism industry

According to a research done on the environmental industry by Lindberg and Hawkins, they define ecotourism as a “ responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of the local”.

Taking into account this statement there is a high level of possibility that due to infrastructure development or other reasons for development in the tourist spot some or the other part in this region would be affected in a negative way like getting depleted of its flora or fauna life. In addition, an ecotourism spot which is not monitored well would not achieve its goals to enhance the overall standard of living of the local community residing in the tourist region. All such factors need further focus and development to be done especially in reserved and rare spots like Taman Negara National Park.

Being an area under special protection, one of the main attractions of the ecotourism industry is its rich environment and rare species found in it. Thus there is likely to be conflict whenever there is a plan to develop the area for tourist commercialization and to conserve the environment in such areas. I feel that if ecotourism in Taman Negara is not well maintained on time, it

could lead to negative reactions on the environment. Also as discussed before, the rare species of life would also become extinct without ever being discovered. Recently there are several initiatives taken by ecotour operators to conduct their activities in a more holistic way by introducing concepts like recycling and using renewable energy in their process. Tourists at the National Park are also communicated via sign boards and tour operators to carry minimum necessities when arriving in such regions and be careful whilst disposing waste, so as to not litter the place. Other rules and regulations imposed are to observe all park rules to avoid damage to its biodiversity.

The management should particularly be keener on communicating with group visitors as this would prevent potential large damages to the region. Since this industry is mainly based on nature, group visitors could possibly cause larger damage to the biodiversity of an area.

A relevant example I have found in the near vicinity would be that of Payar Island and Sipadan Island in Sabah. Recently both these regions observed a high volume of tourists visiting these places which in turn is said to have caused irreversible damage to the corals on the islands. There have been cases where tour operators have over exceeded the limit on the capacity of these regions.

Management of Taman Negara should take into account such examples and protect the region from damages due to over load of tourists. Authorities will need to apply strict rules regarding the number of tourists entering the

region and close guard their activities to minimize any damage to the biodiversity.

Some other potential pitfalls I have come across through research would be the construction of resorts and hotels near the entrance area of Taman Negara to accommodate higher volumes of tourists expected in peak seasons. These actions will most likely affect the nearby environment in ways such as migration of species, soil erosion and water pollution. This whole process will determine the prospects of sustainability in the area. Another aspect of ecotourism which needs to be considered is the potential problems faced by locals and their social life with the increase in tourism.

5. Conclusion

From the research done, I can infer that there needs to be a more proactive approach in managing potential risks in regions such as Taman Negara rather than depending on the zero disaster records maintained yet. In such a crucial place which needs to be preserved for the next generation, we need to consider its value not only to the country but globally. Taking into account the research by Pearson and Clair (1998) wherein they state that the attitude towards risk is as important as awareness to risk. While the awareness to risk may be same in a case but a proactive attitude could help in warding off potential cases of negative incidents.

From my research through journals and white papers on Taman Negara, I have found that the area lacks an official crisis management team to counter any such disasters, based on previous incidents such teams are formed solely on adhoc basis between the various social elements in the region like

service providers, locals etc. While there is no official crisis management office in the region, the authorities should not be complacent about the fact that no disaster has ever damaged the image of Taman Negara as an ecotourism destination as most minor cases were well handled by the ad hoc teams thus eliminating any disaster or crisis cases.

In order to achieve a long term strategic objective of maintaining its environment and image as a safe ecotourism place the authorities at Taman Negara Park will need to refresh its outlook on managing future risks including direct ones like landslides, fires as well as indirect in form of overcrowded tourists. There is a critical requirement for them to consolidate its crisis management programme into all eco-tourism related regions. Few important steps to be taken which I feel would be helpful could be:

Research and identify loss exposures, digitize and record past incidents.

Monitor and analyse current procedures for crisis management and their effectiveness and if they are on par with modern technology.

Creating a centralized information bank for information sharing related to crisis management which can be accessed by other similar ecotourism spots as well.