

TOURISM BUSINESS: AN ETHICAL DIMENSION

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Abstract

The immense growth of both manufacturing and service industries has flagged off critical issues particularly related to the adverse impacts they are bringing upon the environment and societies. The realization of negative impacts has prompted the evaluation of business ethics in the interest of sustainability and has led to the evolution of concept of corporate social responsibility of business. The discussion in this paper revolves around the various critical ethical issues that are emerging in tourism, with respect to the tourism business and tourists.

Keywords: Tourism, Business Ethics, Ethical Consumerism;

Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry has become a major driving force for economies all over the world. Covering a wide range of independent yet interdependent sectors like transport, accommodation, travel services, food and beverages, recreation and entertainment, this service business is an ideal conglomeration of a diverse product under a single umbrella that caters to guests. The growth of this industry has been commensurate with the growth of the flourishing travel market and increasing demand for leisure and recreation. Though this service industry has been identified as golden goose in terms of bringing multifarious benefits, it has also become one of the partners with other manufacturing industries in taking the blame for causing destruction along with development. Regardless of being a service industry the tourism and hospitality sector is being held responsible for

adverse impacts and irreparable damages to the physical environment and societies.

The adverse consequences of blind development for profit alone can no longer be ignored and this threat has flagged off the prominent issue of 'Ethics' and accountability of businesses in the interest of environment and societies. The emergence of concepts like 'Corporate Social Responsibility' (CSR), 'Sustainability' and 'Triple Bottom Line' (TBL) approach, have been a result of the realization that has dawned upon societies about the grave adverse consequences of industrial operations upon the physical environment and communities. These require immediate attention in the interest of sustainability. In the context of tourism and hospitality such responsibility is not applicable to the service providing business organizations and related stakeholders alone, but also applies to tourists as consumers and the local host communities as well. Keeping in view the

growing importance of accountability of both businesses and consumers, the discussion in this paper identifies and addresses the wide nature of ethical issues that pertain particularly to the tourism industry, embracing tourism product providers, consumers, indirectly related stakeholders and the newly emerging forms of alternate / special interest tourism.

Ethics, CSR and Triple Bottom Line

Ethics is explained as differentiating between 'good and bad', 'right and wrong' or 'morally correct and incorrect'. The word is derived from the Greek word 'ethos' that signifies character, morality, honorable code of conduct/ behaviour. Ethics are imbibed by the individual, groups in society and businesses/organizations. As ethics encourage responsible conduct and accountability, they need to be embedded into every sphere of an individual's life and every aspect of an organization's operations for the interest of universal welfare.

Ethics (Blowfield, 2005; Fennel 2006; Jovicic, Pivac, and Dragin, 2011; Smith & Duffy 2003) are closely associated with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR is adopted by organizations to maximize positive impacts and minimize the negative impacts of its operations on society and determine success of business (Ferrell and Fraedrich, 1997; Ferrell & Ferrell, 2008; Holden, 2009; Labbai, 2007; Lynn, 2009; Schwartz, Tapper & Font, 2008). Ethical conduct of business is geared towards enhancing profits, public image, employee relations and credibility. However ethics are usually not codified into law. CSR is based on the premise of adopting voluntary initiatives and includes responsibility towards society, communities, abiding by legal regulations and accountability for environment protection. Like other industries the concept of CSR is gradually becoming pertinent to the tourism sector as well. However, as CSR is not mandatory, tourism businesses have been lagging behind in adopting the concept. Mowforth and

Munt (2003), rightly note that ethical leadership is conspicuously lacking in tourism. Tourism being a vast sector comprising several sub sectors, there is need to identify and assess the dimensions to which ethics apply in this industry and consider their implicit importance for the general good of tourism destinations and communities.

Another concept that has emerged in corporate vocabulary, closely related to both Ethics and CSR is the 'Triple Bottom Line' (TBL) approach (Elkington, 1997). The TBL too has been conceived with the idea of increasing transparency and responsible business. It is centered on measuring and reporting corporate performance against economic, social and environmental parameters, emphasizing that the business operations of any sector should be conducted in such a way as to yield i) maximum profits ii) preserve and enrich the physical environment and iii) provide maximum welfare to communities and society. Alternately the TBL approach aligns with the 3 P's i.e. 'Profit, Planet and People' that correspond to economic, environmental and social dimension, respectively. With respect to tourism and hospitality several scholars have studied the significance of TBL (Darcy, Cameron and Pegg, 2010; Hede, 2007; Stoddard, Pollard and Evans, 2010; Tyrrell, Paris and Biaett, 2012). Faux and Dwyer (2009) suggest that the TBL approach to hospitality and tourism management offers several benefits including efficiencies and cost savings, better market positioning, enhanced stakeholder relationships, improved strategic decision making, wider destination benefits and competitiveness. In essence, TBL is geared towards sustainability. As the concern for our environment is a universal concern, even customers are now being attracted towards using services of those organizations that carry out their business in a responsible manner.

Importance of Ethics in Tourism

Ethics gained importance in tourism more than a decade ago particularly in the interest to sustain the physical environment. It was identified that the fast flourishing tourism trade geared at quick profit earning started to cause significant damages to the environment

and there was an urgent need to reflect upon introduction of some business ethics in the interest of sustainability. The concern was taken upon as a wider cause and to develop tourism in responsible and sustainable manner, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) initiated a pioneer measure in 1999 by approving the 'Global Code of Ethics for Tourism' (GCET) with the idea of voluntary adoption and implementation. This code has been widely adopted by travel and tourism organizations and businesses, ever since. GCET is aimed at maximizing the positive impacts and minimizing the negative impacts of tourism. It is also aimed at respecting human rights and encouraging international understanding.

The GCET outlines 10 Principles (covered under 10 Articles), for all participants of tourism. The principles are as follows:

1. Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies.
2. Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfillment.
3. Tourism, a factor of sustainable development.
4. Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and contributor to its enhancement.
5. Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities.
6. Obligations of stakeholders in tourism development.
7. Right to tourism.
8. Liberty of tourist movements.
9. Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry.
10. Implementation of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

All together, the GCET is geared at multiple stakeholders (administrations, enterprises, business associations, NGOs, host communities, tourists, etc) and is aimed at maximizing the benefits of tourism in a responsible manner. The UNWTO further affirms that imbibing ethics

could encourage responsible tourism that respects the tourism destination, the natural, built and cultural environment, and the interests of all.

Ethical Component in Tourism and its Application

The applicability of ethics in tourism has been garnering wide attention (Fennel and Malloy, 2007; Goodwin and Francis, 2003; Holden, 2003; Holjevac, 2008; Jamal, 2004; Kalisch, 2002; Payne and Dimanche, 1996). To understand the ethical component in tourism, it is important to understand the complex nature of the tourism industry. The tourism industry does not exist strictly as an independent entity in itself. It comprises of several sectors, small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) other directly and indirectly related industries and stakeholders, all of whom exist in a mutually interdependent relationship to create a unique service sector. This makes the supply chain in tourism very vast and complicated and even further difficult to manage ethics in the complex supply chain (Keating B, 2009).

The stakeholders in tourism can be understood in light of the view of Freeman (1984) who explains two kinds of stakeholders, i.e. primary and secondary. In tourism the primary stakeholders for a business comprise the service providers, employees, suppliers, customers, government planners and policy makers, shareholders etc., while secondary stakeholders are local communities, media, non government organizations, environment groups, indirectly related industry players and general public.

Hence considering the vast and complex integration of suppliers knit into the supply chain of this service sector and acknowledging the fact that the activities of one segment of business cannot be executed in pure isolation from other stakeholders, it is evident that understanding the issue of ethics can be rather complicated in the tourism sector. While some industry players may be practicing ethics in their

operations, other indirectly related organizations or stakeholders may not be doing the same.

Besides adopting ethics to account for their actions on the physical and socio cultural environment and furthering the cause of sustainability, tourism organizations have come to realize that adopting an ethical position can also be in the interest of business profitability, enhancing management effectiveness, improving employee relations and strongly influencing the public image of the company (Hudson and Miller, 2005). Ethical principles can also become a key to competitive advantage for operators (Goodwin & Francis, 2003). It is important to understand that in the tourism sector ethical responsibility no longer remains an obligation of suppliers alone but has also spread over consumers/tourists, whose behaviour has started coming under the scanner to be judged for being ethically correct or incorrect, pointing out to the fact that tourists as consumers are equally accountable as suppliers, in terms of responsible behaviour.

The following discussion elaborates upon the various areas that are covered under the umbrella of ethics in tourism. Drawing upon some examples from over the globe, the ensuing discussion also flags emerging ethical concerns related to new forms of tourism and makes reference to measures adopted by tourism stakeholders in the interest of ethical operations and behaviour.

Ethics and Industry Operations

The concern for ethics in relation to tourism sector operations has arisen with respect to composite industry sectors like accommodation, transport, recreation providers and even the catering businesses. Damages to our physical environment with regard to these businesses are the major issue. Improper effluent disposal, unchecked exploitation of scarce energy resources, deforestation, destruction of flora and fauna, environment pollution (air, water, noise, sewage and visual), CO₂ emissions through industry

processes and transport fuel emission are all blamed for global warming and climate change. These have emerged as some of the prime issues that plague ethical concerns related to industry operations. Ethical operations also extend to the suppliers in the context of delivering what they promised and satisfying the consumers or else providing due compensation to customers on failure of provision of services.

Recycling of waste, use of energy efficient fuels, alternate energy resources, rain water harvesting, use of solar energy for heating, cooking and even operating vehicles, are some ways in which accommodation, transport and tourism related suppliers are trying to incorporate ethics in their operations in the interest of the environment and society. For protecting the interests of consumers, suppliers have become conscious of abiding by the consumer protection laws and be prepared to duly compensate for any flaws or shortcomings in terms of misleading promises made with regard to delivery of services.

Hence ethics with respect to the sub sector industry components of tourism cover a wide number of constantly debated issues.

E.g. British Airways has been one of the lead airlines to adopt environmental practices in the interest of climate change, improvisation of air quality, reduction of aircraft noise, waste management and fuel efficiency. Some of the measure include carbon saving initiatives, developing the potential for low carbon fuels, recycling of physical products and purchasing of new fleet, among others..

E.g. In the accommodation sector, the concept of 'Green Hotels' draws an interesting example of Scandic Hotels, the largest Nordic Hotel Chain that adopts the best pro environment practices.

E.g. Meaningful Tours, a tours company in Seattle, U.S. is an ideal example of a company that promotes ethical and responsible travel, using its tours to financially support issues of, poverty, health, education, hunger and women's empowerment in communities.

Organizational Ethics towards Workforce

Being a service sector tourism industry is labor intensive. Host and guest interaction is extremely crucial in this people oriented service sector, as the service is directly affected by the manpower that delivers it. However, employment in this industry is characterized by long working hours, low wages, tough working conditions and usually an obscure job profile. Hence manpower management is a critical and difficult component of the tourism sector which suffers from a high and frequent employee turnover. Tourism being a seasonal industry is also often known for laying off employees during low tourist season. In terms of the manpower employment the industry is also blamed for gender discrimination, and gender segregation of jobs (Campossoria, 2009). Though having a high demand for female employees, it is noted that women are least paid in this industry and simply treated as objects of beauty to allure tourists, raising questions about the dignity of the fair sex. These are some of the many problems that have highlighted the need for the tourism sector to be ethical towards its employees (Becker and Gao, 2010; Fleckenstein and Huebsch, 1999). Taking in view the particular characteristics of employment in the tourism sector, the ethical dimension towards the workforce includes respecting workers rights, providing job security, equal opportunity for genders, provision of safe working environment, protection against sexual harassment, forced labor and child labor, and providing education, training and capacity building to the workforce to be absorbed in jobs. In terms of manpower recruitment ethics come into question when outside labor is provided employment rather than training and recruiting of 'local workforce'. It is further questioned that lower level jobs are given to locals while outsiders are absorbed in higher managerial positions (Inskeep, 1991).

The concerns of working conditions of employees, discrimination and exploitation, all are deeply

manifest in the tourism sector and prompt ethical dilemmas.

E.g. Shangri-la Hotels and resort is a good example form the tourism industry that under its corporate social responsibility, is an equal opportunity employer against any discrimination between the employees and enforces strict regulations and zero tolerance with respect to indentured labour, trafficking, slavery or child labour.

Ethics in the New Forms of Tourism

In the last decade a number of new innovative forms of tourism have emerged. These new forms reflect the burgeoning special interest/ niche tourism, and have developed on account of diversifying interest of the tourists who are on the lookout for unconventional unique experiences. Some of these new forms that have brought ethics into question are as discussed as follows:

Sex tourism: In their GCET the United Nations World Tourism Organization explains sex tourism as trips organized from within the tourism sector with the primary purpose of effecting a commercial sexual relationship between the tourists and residents at the destination. According to the United Nations, nearly 10% of international tourists choose their destinations based on "sexual opportunities". Countries like Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, Brazil and Netherlands are known hot spots for this kind of tourism. However the moral dimension of sex tourism has always been questioned (Bandopadhyay, 2010). The major concern for sex tourism is that it flouts human rights. Particularly women and children are victims of this kind of tourism that also engages child prostitution, child pornography and the trafficking of particularly women and children for sexual purposes. Sex tourism also uses sexually explicit advertising images (particularly of women) for promotion of destinations. Whether legal or illegal in countries, the morality that this form of tourism questions is whether such tourism should be promoted by providers and whether it is morally correct for tourists to travel for

sex tourism which results in exploitation of host population.

Advocates of sex tourism (i.e. promoters, providers, and consumers) argue that they are financially helping the sex providers while feminist groups, child protection groups and human rights organizations blame sex tourism and those who promote the same, for encouraging illicit sexual exploitation of adults and children.

E.g. ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking), is a global network of organisations and individuals working together to eliminate child prostitution, child pornography and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes. While sex tourism flourishes in Thailand, it is seen that against the same, many accommodation properties in Bangkok display the sign “sex tourists not welcome”.

Regardless, sex tourism remains highly controversial in terms of ethics, questioning if it is right for consumers to exploit people who might be in the trade for some personal monetary compulsion.

Dark Tourism: Dark tourism is gaining quick popularity amongst the special interest tourist market. Also known as Thanatourism (originating from the Greek word ‘Thanatos’, meaning death) it revolves around visiting places where tragedies have taken place. Death is the primary tourist appeal. Sites like the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, ground zero in Hiroshima, the site of World Trade Towers in US, the Tsunami affected destinations of Asia Pacific countries, the areas that suffered the triple whammy in Japan, sites of major accidents (Paris Tunnel where Lady Diana was killed in an accident), battlefields, prisons and other disaster stricken areas become the tourist product in this kind of tourism. Regardless of whether the tourists engage in this form of tourism out of some emotional association, sympathy, curiosity, or simply for pure tourist purpose, dark tourism makes death /

disaster a spectacle to be enjoyed. Hence the ethical question raised here is ‘should death/ tragedy become an attraction to be enjoyed? Should the suppliers of this kind of tourism lead to ‘disneyfication’ and ‘commodification’ of tragedy for mere profit making? Is it morally correct for tourists to take trips to gaze at the tragedy of the victims or their kin, as a spectacle to be enjoyed?

Even if tourists do not mean any pleasure purpose, another issue that still remains is whether there should be a minimal amount of time between the occurrence of a tragic event and the ‘touristification’ of the place where death/tragedy has taken place. On one hand it can be argued that it may be acceptable to visit the site immediately after the event (to show respect, pray, or commemorate) but then, on the other hand, one could also debate that the creation of a tourist experience, provided by travel companies should not follow right away till the pain of the tragedy subsides and emotional wounds start healing. In this case the ethical dilemma raised with the tourists is, if they should be part of such tourism / experiences at all, and when? E.g. Tourists visiting Rwanda or Cambodia, New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, or Royal Caribbean Cruises to Haiti right after the earthquake of 2010, all bring into question the collapse of humanist values (where tours operators continue to exploit tragedy, profiting from loss, and tourists participate in spectatorship of death and tragedy).

Space Tourism: Man’s curiosity and desire to explore new places has been eternal. Having familiarized himself with the places on the planet earth, now outer world / Space piques the curiosity of man. Earlier, reaching out to Space was only a part of scientific endeavors, but now Space has started attracting the interest of tourists for pleasure purposes. Hence Space tourism is a new form of tourism coming into vogue, especially for elite and rich tourists. The main ethical questions regarding this form of tourism stem from the concern of negative impacts on our own planet earth on account of mass tourism. As it cannot be denied that mass tourism has resulted in significant destruction of the environment on earth,

there are genuine concerns that in due course of time and increasing travel to Space could result in mass tourism there as well and could become a destructive force for the Space environment as well (Williamson 2003). This would imply that man would not spare either his planet earth or outer Space from destruction out of his curiosity. Already the signs of dirt pollution are becoming evident due to excessive garbage left behind through expeditions alone. Though on the planet Earth we can adopt corrective measure to mitigate or undo some environment damages, carrying out cleaning expeditions to Space may not be possible or feasible. Hence travelling up to Space raises plenty of ethical questions, both for the travelers and for the promoters of Space tourism. Is it ethical for humans to colonize Space? The extra-planetary entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson is soon to launch his 'Virgin Galactic' Spacecraft, to blast off into Space in late 2013, transporting tourists to the outer world. If his venture succeeds, soon entrepreneurs and service providers follow building infrastructure in Space as well. All ready six hundred elite personalities have enlisted to fly in the first two years of his service. Branson states that the initial flights will be sub-orbital, which will give people a taste of Space. He further voices his plans saying 'from there we'll go into orbital flights and maybe one day hotels in space' (CNN, 2013). Hence the ethical question is posed again, if it is ethical for man to commercialize Space? Livingston (2000) rightly voices the fear of whether it is correct to allow the frontier of space to turn into another 'Wild West' where large corporations and a few enterprising individuals take all? Besides, medical concerns for travelers to Space also come as a part and parcel of Space travel with a fear of endangering the lives of tourists. Hence it seems there are more questions than solutions to taking tourism to Outer Space.

Slum Tourism: Slum tourism has been fast mushrooming bringing countries like Brazil,

South Africa and India on the travel map. Also known as 'poorism' this activity of slumming attracts tourists to have a look into the lives of the impoverished living in slums. While Mumbai slums in India gained wide publicity through the Oscar winning film, *Slumdog Millionaire* and started attracting slum tourists over the last few years, the slums of Favela da Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro, and those of Cape Town, South Africa have since long been a hub for tour operators to bring in tourists who are unfamiliar with poverty and curious to have a glimpse into the same.

On ethical grounds Slum tourism attracts a lot of criticism and controversy regardless of arguments put forth by tourists and tours operators who justify their participation in this kind of tourism on the ground that it is in the economic interest of the poor and helps alleviate poverty, being rightly termed as 'Pro poor' tourism. Operators and tourists participating in this form of tourism, argue that slum tourism makes the rich more compassionate and understanding of the poor. However even if such tourism is bringing benefits for the poor, the poor communities feel that they become a spectacle for the rich and they find it demeaning and disrespectful for themselves. Such tourist gaze, where the poor are looked upon like animals in a zoo, further undermines their dignity. The poor also feel that slum tours are only for profit making of tour operators and the benefits do not percolate down to the communities. Hence they argue that they would rather have livelihoods and employment than charity or alms through such tours.

E.g. Reality Tours and Travel is a tour company that operates slum tours in Mumbai, India and is committed to giving 80% profits to local charities for welfare and reinvestment for betterment of communities.. It limits its groups of travelers in the tours and also prohibits photography in the slums, having won a responsible Tourism Award as well. Though the company acknowledges that all locals are not completely happy with such tours, it aims to bring positive benefits to slum areas.

However, Slum tourism poses enough questions particularly for the tourists.

Medical Tourism: Medical tourism is creating a strong niche in the tourism industry. It has strengthened its roots at a very fast pace in the last two decades particularly due to skyrocketing costs of health care in the developed countries (Cohen, 2010a; Cohen 2010b). It involves the travel of rich people (from U.S. and Europe) to countries that offer low cost medical treatment (Meghani, 2011). This kind of travel is predominantly to the poor countries of South America and South Asia. On the map of medical tourism are countries like Mexico, Turkey, India, China, Thailand Philippines etc. that offer relatively inexpensive treatment. Medical tourism is largely in demand for treatments like cardiac surgery, cosmetic surgery and organ replacement among others. Though this form of tourism has originated for all for worthy causes, but for ethical reasons it has started attracting critical attention. It is blamed for creating a divide between wealthy and poor patients. The issue is raised that it is biased towards the rich patients for whom good infrastructure, high quality and expensive medical services are created through private hospitals. Medical tourism is also blamed for ‘brain drain’ and migration of good doctors to private hospitals in the urban cities/areas, leading to the growing deficit of specialized health care professionals in the poor and rural areas that cater to the masses of middle class and poor population.

There is also a controversy about legal and illegal medical procedures. Medical tourism is questioned for offering certain medical procedures and treatments (e.g. abortion, organ sale/transplant and euthanasia etc.) which may be illegal in the home country of the patient and may at times be illegal in the destination country too. These come to be questioned as medical ‘malpractices’. Hence the issues raised is that, must there be any rules or regulatory interventions when it come to international medical tourism? How can certain medical treatments be justified in view of diverse

international health care laws and moral philosophies? Moreover, while promoting medical tourism, though the governments argue that increased revenue from foreign tourists can be used to strengthen public healthcare, others argue that the benefits of this form of tourism do not percolate down to strengthen the roots of public health care. Questions are also raised about the reputation of health care facilities in the home country of patients. Ethically, there are also concerns of post treatment care and complications that may arise once the patients return to their home countries.

It is therefore evident that medical tourism as a flourishing form of tourism prompts ample ethical questions to do with life and existence of both the rich and poor, i.e. humanity itself.

Ethics and Consumers

Ethical behavior is not a responsibility of suppliers alone. ‘Ethical Consumerism’ has emerged as a new buzzword in trade. With regard to tourism, the concept of ethics has evolved as a result of adverse impact to destinations on account of mass tourism. Tourists not only leave behind their footprints on the physical environment but even on the highly sensitive socio cultural environment. Tourist inflow is often blamed for harming flora and fauna, causing waste pollution, disturbing local communities through loud behavior, photography, tourist gaze, encouraging crime, begging etc. The formation of ‘Enclave Tourism’ that creates ‘golden ghettos’ whereby a different superficial world is created for facilitating the tourists, is blamed for reinforcing the gap between rich tourists and poor locals (e.g. in Egypt as stated by Mitchell, 1995). Hence ethical behavior on part of the tourists is very important. As consumers, tourists need to distinguish between right and wrong behavior (Tearfund, 2001). Tourists should consider their role to be proactive in educating and sensitizing themselves about the destination and culture prior to their visit and should also have realization of the impact of their visit. Is it ethically correct for tourists to disturb the environments they visit? Besides minimizing any negative impact through their travel and creating Xenophobia for locals, tourists also need to understand

the concept of 'responsible travel' with regard to use of services and facilities during travel. The question of ethics pertaining to consumers in this regard is that should the consumers be conscientious to use services of ethical operators alone and should they be willing to pay the high charges for using services of only those operators who adopt/ provide sustainable practices for common good, rather than choosing to opt for inexpensive travel that can be damaging for the environment.

In other ethical dilemmas that pertain to tourists is one that questions which destinations tourists should travel to. In view of countries particularly where human rights are not being respected (e.g. Burma, China, Nepal, Tibet), is it right for tourists to travel there or should they boycott travel to the same? This is a serious concern also being raised globally by human rights organizations.

E.g. Conscientious tourists have already started adopting ethical practices in their travel. Many air travelers are flying with airlines that are using carbon off setting. They are willingly paying voluntary flight tax that goes into climate care schemes and ventures of environment enrichment. Further, regardless of the cost of services, tourists are showing preference for responsible travel by choosing to use travel suppliers that adopt environment friendly practices.

Media Ethics and Tourism

Media plays a critical role the success or failure of tourism destinations. Media can make or break destination image. Hence media ethics are associated with responsible marketing and promotion of tourist products, services and destinations. Particularly in terms of adverse publicity media capitalizes upon mishappenings and is often blamed for exaggeration and sensationalizing incidents that end up creating fear amongst the public. In this case media ethics relate to genuine reporting and dissemination of unbiased and correct information that is not misleading for the public and does not result in

any negative impact on destinations. In its marketing and promotion of tourism destinations, products and services, media also needs to be careful of not misrepresenting reality simply to attract tourists.

Another facet of media ethics pertains to respectable advertising. Particularly in tourism, media ethics are contested with respect to gendered advertising. Tourism industry largely markets its products and services through improper portrayal of females, using women as mere sexual objects to be gazed at, in order to allure tourists. This is often responsible for sparking protests from women organizations and feminist movements. Hence media needs to become conscious of assuming social responsibility and maintaining the dignity of genders rather than strengthening gender stereotypes.

Media thus needs to adopt an ethical code of conduct acting in a responsible manner towards public, service providers and destinations.

Conclusion

In view of the above discussion, it is apparent that the tourism business covers under it's a large number of ethical concerns embracing a wide variety of stakeholders. Though the importance of ethical behavior with respect tourism has been consciously realized only in the last two decades, the concern is significant enough to have led several tourism enterprises to incorporate and implement an ethical code in their business operations. Further, as the tourists are becoming increasingly educated, aware and responsible, they too have become proactive in voluntarily adopting ethical conduct so that their travel behaviour has minimal adverse impact towards physical and social environments.

However Gibson (2010) concurs that limitations and contradictions are apparent even for the most well-meaning or best-designed ethical tourism and tourist conduct. Both suppliers and consumers still face dilemmas in differentiating between right and wrong with respect to the several dimensions of this complex business. The problems remain as there is no universal set of codes that is strictly enforced and that can ensure

accountability of the all the players in the industry. Thus debates about ethics still remain unresolved.

With the aim of addressing the myriad of issues plaguing the tourism industry, the recent '1st International Congress on Ethics and Tourism' (2011), jointly organized by the Spanish General Secretariat of Tourism and Domestic Trade and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), has been one pioneer step calling for the urgent placement of ethics at the core of tourism development, so as to achieve a truly responsible and sustainable tourism sector. The deliberations of the conference have concluded that clear and comprehensive ethical codes should not only be framed and introduced but rather strictly enforced as a form of an international legal instrument for the protection everyone associated with tourism activity and protection of the environment.

In view of the significant impact of tourism on global society and economy, it is imperative that some parameters be identified to measure ethical conduct of all involved in the tourism phenomenon. Strategies also need to be formulated that can foster easy implementation of an ethical code, universally. There is a continuous need to tackle the existing challenging ethical issues and address the emerging ones, as the industry continues to expand.

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