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Integrating Archaeological Tourism And Ecotourism: Experiences From Egypt And India

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ABSTRACT

Tourism, especially sustainable tourism is considered to be the foremost engine of the post-industrial growth phase in both the developed and developing countries. In countries that possess rich natural and cultural heritage, ecotourism along with archaeological tourism has enormous potential and implications for sustainable development. This paper highlights the different concepts of tourism tied together with a common underlying philosophy of promoting *travel with a purpose*. Further, developments in view of promoting ecotourism along with archaeotourism in Egypt and India are examined by undertaking a case study of an Oasis in Egypt and a National park in India, and carrying out a SWOT analysis to summarise the experiences and suggest the way forward..

1. Introduction

As an industry, tourism has been one of the worst hit on account of the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is also an industry

whose recovery will make significant contribution towards economic recovery across countries. Recognising this potential, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has called for concerted efforts from international leadership to address the challenges posed by the pandemic for this tourism industry along with “sound judgement and proportionate measures” (www.unwto.org).

Well managed tourism value-chains can stimulate growth in local economies through backward and forward linkages. Strategic private, public and community partnerships empower the host population to derive tourism related benefits while protecting their tourism assets. It creates opportunities and spaces for development of hospitality infrastructure and private businesses such as hotels, tour-guiding, sale of tourist crafts etc., which generate income and employment for rural communities. In the process, visitor experience is also enhanced. The contribution of travel and tourism to gross domestic product (GDP) is significant in several countries. For example, tourism share in GDP was as high as 72% in Macau in the year 2019, with the World average for the same year being 10.4% (World Travel and Tourism Council Data from www.wttc.org).

2017 was declared as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development by the UN. While tourism directly figures in 3 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it can contribute towards attaining all 17 goals. As global tourism picks up post the ongoing pandemic, the need to push for sustainable tourism cannot be overemphasised. All concerned stakeholders will have an important role to play in ensuring that tourism remains true to its promise of improving livelihoods while protecting the environment.

In this paper, we investigate the impacts and potential of tourism in two developing countries, namely India and Egypt. Both countries share much in common, spanning back to the flourishing Indus Valley Civilization around 2,500 BC which was home to ancient urban civilizations of both countries. Yet, one finds little mention of this shared history. The two countries are not only replete with natural and scenic beauty, they also have a repository of remains of an old civilization at archaeological ruins and artifacts such as the Egyptian pyramids and the Indian temples.

This paper focuses on the potential of integrating archaeotourism and ecotourism by recognising the fact that the central dimension of both concepts is the need for co-operation amongst the concerned stakeholders including the host (local) community, tourists, governing agencies (authorities) and the tourism enterprises. Developments in view of promoting archaeotourism and ecotourism in India and Egypt are examined by undertaking a case study of a National park in India and an Oasis in Egypt, by carrying out a SWOT analysis to summarise the experiences and suggest the way forward. Section 2 of this paper delves into different concepts of tourism and the common underlying philosophy of purposeful tourism. Section 3 presents the case study of the Siwa Oasis in Egypt and

the Ranthambhore National Park in India. Section 4 presents the findings using the SWOT framework and section 5 concludes.

2. Guiding Principles of Travel with a Purpose

The activities of persons travelling for various purposes and staying in places outside their usual place of residence for not more than one year constitute tourism. Tourism has been one of the fastest growing sectors of the global economy. Developing countries attempt to cash in on this expanding industry in an attempt to boost foreign investment and financial reserves. With growing awareness and knowledge about the fragility of the environment and its adverse impacts on the economy, ecotourism as a concept has become very popular, even as a clear understanding of its diverse dimensions and what it stands for remains elusive. Ecotourism, sustainable tourism, responsible tourism etc. are similar notions with a common underlying philosophy of promoting *travel with a purpose* (purposeful tourism).

In keeping with the ‘triple bottom line’ essence of sustainability, sustainable tourism takes account of current and future impacts of tourism on the environment and the socio-economic fabric of host countries and communities. Visits for being close to nature, to enjoy its enormous creations, both biotic and abiotic, in an environment friendly manner, without any adverse impact on the ecosystem, are known as ecotourism (Khan, 2004). Ecotourism only slightly differs from sustainable tourism in its emphasis on travel to natural areas and conservation, including urban environments. Responsible tourism as a philosophy emphasises the need to fix the responsibility of the positive as well as negative impacts of tourism on the concerned stakeholders including the tourists, tour operators, host communities, hoteliers and governing agencies. While the scope of each concept / definition varies, what is noteworthy is the common embedded philosophy of fostering ‘green’ forms of tourism which is more important than the semantics.

The concept of ecotourism is based on three essential principles. The first major principle of ecotourism is that it must be ecologically sound. As an industry based mainly on the beauty and diversity of nature, it should not deplete/ degrade those resources and prejudice its own future. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines it as “responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of the local people.” Considering nature without recognising the link with people, compromises sustainability. Responsible ecotourism which pays full attention to local needs and improving local welfare may thus be termed the second principle of ecotourism.

The World Tourism Organisation defines it as “tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas, with the specified objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants

and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (both past or the present) found in these areas.” To be truly sustainable, ecotourism needs to fulfil the ambitions and expectations of all stakeholders, not just of tourism enterprises but also the needs of tourists and the host community. A visit to an archaeological site or a walk through a rainforest is not ecotourism unless it somehow benefits that environment and the people who live there. This may be termed the third major principle of ecotourism.

Ecotourism can take many forms and magnitudes and can include activities as diverse as visiting National Parks (wildlife tourism), cultural festivals (cultural tourism), trekking, snorkelling etc. (adventure tourism), watching tribals living in forest land or participating in tribal festivals (heritage tourism), observing marine life or simply walking along the beach or sand dunes (Nature tourism), etc.

If ecotourism embodies the three essential principles listed above, symbiotic relationships between varying interests should follow resulting in sustained visitor attraction and revenue for conservation, continued profits for the tourism industry and higher conservation and environmental protection resulting from higher incomes of the local community (Wally, 2001). Tourism income may be captured locally through revenue sharing schemes, through entrepreneurship and labour. Tourism can also act as a catalyst for improvement of essential services. It has been recognized that as people realize the benefits of ecotourism, support for conservation increases. Ecotourism can thus be a very powerful engine for sustainable development in any country because it can lead to:

- An increase in employment opportunities, both primary (in the tourism industry itself) as well as secondary (in related industries).
- An increase in income.
- A better development of infrastructure (roads, electricity, safe drinking water, health facilities, and a general improvement in the standard of living).
- Development of local handicrafts industries.
- Higher conservation of forest, nature and archaeological reserves.

It goes without saying that all of these benefits are possible if and only if the local community is actively involved in all aspects of tourism right from the planning to the implementation stage. Greater local involvement makes practical sense as improved understanding of local circumstances is likely to improve project efficiency through lower costs, reduced leakages, and higher local multiplier effects.

However, sometimes revenue sharing schemes may neither benefit the neediest or the most adversely affected as they get siphoned off by the intermediaries or the elite. Traditional methods of livelihood are removed but are often not replaced with viable alternatives. Many institutional and practical obstacles to effective ecotourism management also exist especially in the form of vested interests who are more concerned with short term profits than with the long term. Over time, rapid growth rates in the number of visitors may lead to a breach in the physical, psychological and cultural

carrying capacity of a site and visitor satisfaction may be seriously compromised.

Falling within the broader category of sustainable tourism, is Archaeological tourism, also referred to as *Archaeotourism*, which focuses on visits to sites of archaeological value such as archaeological ruins, forts, museums etc. with the desire to gain better understanding of historical past of the site, region and community. Globally, the development of archaeotourism has been very skewed. Some architectural sites are on the verge of being ruined because of increasing pressure of tourist visits, while there are several others which are yet to figure on the tourism radar. The untapped archaeological sites present opportunities of reaping benefits from promoting tourism to such places. What is noteworthy here is the fact that there is growing interest among tourists in exploring local culture and heritage and greater awareness among them of the importance of being close to Nature, preferably closer to archaeological ruins of the ‘enigmatic missing civilizations’. Packaging archaeological sites as tourism products can help cash in on such demands ‘to peep into the past through material remains’. With growing archaeotourism, the local hospitality industry flourishes and these places become embedded within local and regional political economies. Archaeotourism can be integrated with ecotourism to increase the potential of tourism to act as a driver of economic change in a region.

3. Tourism in Egypt and India: Case Study of Siwa Oasis and Ranthambhore National Park

In this section, we present the findings based on (i) exploratory research of literature on tourism in Egypt, particularly pertaining to tourism activities in Siwa, Egypt and (ii) primary data collected from Ranthambhore in India in 2017. Secondary data sources include the World Bank’s World development indicators, UN WTO tourism statistics and the Heritage Foundation.

Both India and Egypt are developing countries with rich history and an abundance of natural beauty and archaeological traces. India boasts of thousands of years of cultural and natural heritage with 86 National parks, 448 wildlife reserves, more than 2.4 million temples, mosques and churches, magnificent forts and palaces, the towering Himalayas, and a large coastline and various other attractions. A large number of sites of historical or archaeological interest lie within legally declared Protected Areas or National Parks. On the other hand, Egypt as the ‘cradle of civilisation’ offers a walk down the history lane as one visits the pyramids of Giza, Museum of ancient Egypt with the largest collection of pharaonic artifacts, the Giant Sphinx or the Aby Simbel temples. Clearly both countries offer amazing tourism options. Nearly one-tenth of their GDP is derived from tourism (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Key Statistics: Egypt and India*

Statistic	Egypt	India
Population (million)	97	1300
GDP (PPP, \$ trillion)	1.3	10.5
5-year compound annual growth (%)	4.2	7.6
Share of Tourism in GDP (%)	11.99	9.34
Unemployment rate (%)	11.4	2.6
Inflation (Consumer price Index, %)	20.9	3.5
FDI Inflow (\$ billion)	6.8	42.3

Source: The Heritage Foundation, 2020

The trends in international tourist arrivals in these two countries over the last decade (2010 to 2019) are interesting. While the two countries have together accounted for an average of 2 per cent of all international tourist arrivals, their respective shares have changed and almost reversed. Egypt's share in total tourist arrivals has dropped by nearly 50 per cent while that of India has nearly doubled (see figure 1). In absolute numbers as well, the number of tourists fell significantly in Egypt during the decade, only to show some signs of recovery towards the later years of the last decade. Over the same period, total number of international tourists has grown three-fold in case of India (see figure 2).

The ten-year average annual growth in arrivals has been negligible in Egypt while for India, this figure stands at 13 per cent. The combined share of the two countries in total number of international tourist arrivals has remained stagnant at a meagre 2 per cent, despite the abundant tourism options that these countries have to offer. This motivates the case studies of the Ranthambhore National Park in India and the Siwa Oasis in Egypt, with the objective of identifying the factors that keep these tourism locales from realising their full potential.

The relevant literature review on how to use Cultural Heritage for ecotourism development in Siwa Oasis was minimal. Most studies are partial, dealing separately with either the cultural aspects of ecotourism or with using the natural heritage assets for ecotourism. Similarly, for the Ranthambhore National Park, a number of case studies have been done but most of them relate to very specific conservation issues. In other words, they deal largely with the ecological issues alone. There are virtually no studies relating to the impact of tourism on the other major stake holders- the local community and the tourists.

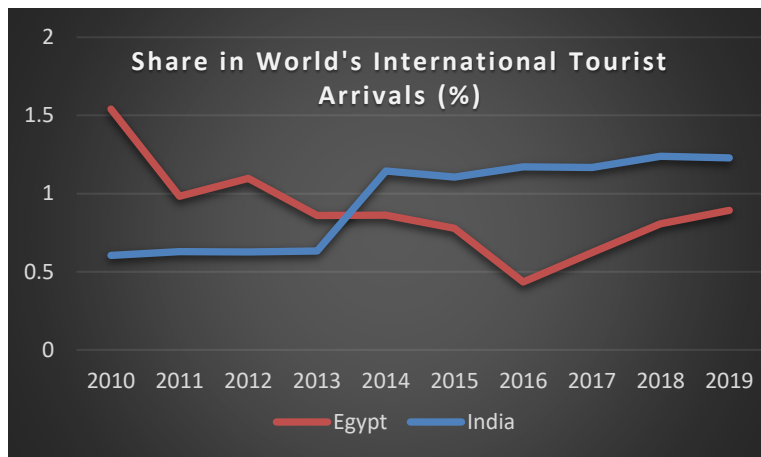


Figure 1. Source: UN WTO tourism statistics, 2020

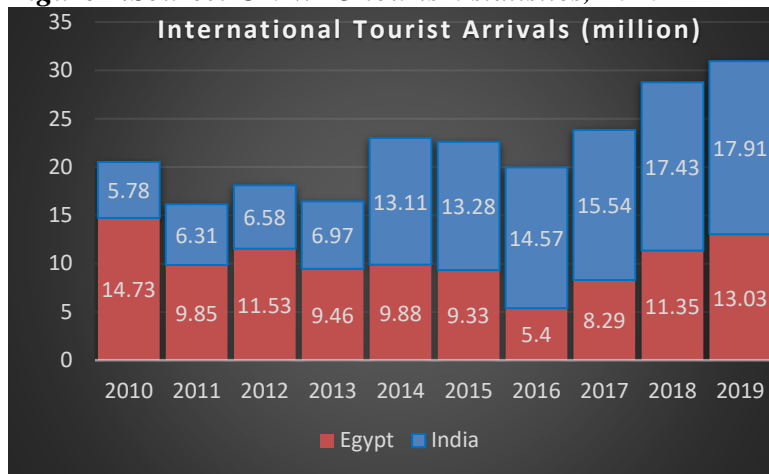


Figure 2. Source: UN WTO tourism statistics, 2020

3.1 Brief history of Siwa Oasis in Egypt and the Ranthambhore National Park in India

Siwa oasis is one of 5 major oases situated in the Egyptian desert, the other four being Bahariya, Farafra, Dakhla and Kharga. All Oases contain monuments dating from different periods of Egyptian history. Temples, painted tombs, remains of towns, fortresses and Christian monuments exist in all, pointing to a flourishing past at different periods of Egyptian history. Siwa continues to be the most fascinating and mysterious of all the oases, not only on account of its history, but because of its natural beauty, culture and traditions. Siwa has been settled since prehistoric times: the Palaeolithic and Neolithic eras. During the World Wars, Siwa was a vital military base, and for almost 20 years, the link between Siwa and the outside world was restricted. Tourists, visitors and non-residents were not permitted to enter the oasis. These restrictions were finally lifted in the 1980s, after which the destiny of Siwa finally started to change (Abd El Ghani, 2012). While the changes themselves were a challenge, they fortified the Siwan customs and traditions (Vivian,2007).

The Ranthambhore National Park is in Rajasthan, which is the largest state by area in the Republic of India. It boasts of 38 Protected Areas, out of which the Ranthambhore National Park and Sariska are recognized as significant tiger reserves. The Ranthambhore fort was established in 944 AD. Around the fort are ruins of old palaces, temples, cenotaphs, step wells and houses. Together they are a heritage site within the park. During the 19th century, the forests of Ranthambhore were the private and exclusive hunting reserves of the Jaipur and Karauli royal family. By the end of the 1920s, the need for conservation was being increasingly felt all over India. The Rajasthan Forest Act, enacted in 1953, gave these forests some legal protection and in 1955, they were declared as “Sawai-Madhopur” sanctuary. In 1973, a part of this sanctuary came under the Project Tiger Scheme, funded by the WWF. In 1980, it was finally declared a National Park.

3.2 Tourism in Siwa Oasis and Ranthambhore National Park: Similarities and differences

Both Siwa and the Ranthambhore National Park fall in the arid zones of their respective countries. The tourism in both is seasonal: with the best time in Siwa being spring or Autumn. The Ranthambhore National Park is closed during the monsoon season, restricting the tourist visiting time from October to July.

The Siwa destination is considered to be a hybrid of very attractive natural and cultural heritage assets including salt lakes, bird habitats, desert areas, hot and cold-water springs, thick groves of palm and olive trees, sand dunes, sand baths and fossil remains. While the Ranthambhore National Park has a rich biodiversity of birds and animals, there is only a single iconic flagship—the Royal Bengal Tiger, that really draws tourists to it. The heritage areas—the Ranthambhore fort situated inside the park is visited largely by local pilgrims who go to the famous Ganesh temple built in its premises. The other major fort the Khandar fort as well as the Kameshwar temple are not even mentioned as a tourist attraction and remain largely unknown and unexplored.

Siwa seems to have a thriving handicraft industry producing all kinds of items including jewellery, baskets, pottery, embroidered women’s clothing produced with colourful silk and other artifacts. In Ranthambhore there are a limited number of handicraft organizations producing mainly patchwork quilts, bedsheets, clothes and sundry other items for decoration. The Ranthambhore school of Art is famous for the quality of its tiger paintings. T- shirts and caps with the Ranthambhore National Park Logo are most popular among tourists and are sold at the gate entry

In Siwa the agencies involved in promoting tourism include -

- I. The government: which initially invested in building roads to the oasis and is supposed to provide all supporting services like transportation, communication and clean environment.
- II. The Egyptian Environment Affairs Agency is responsible for the promotion of the sustainable use of natural resources in the whole area.

- III. The Ministry of Armed forces controls access to the sites and provides security permits to all visitors entering not only the heritage site but also the desert area around it. The Protected Area staff itself is drawn from the military and border police.
 - IV. The Ministry of Defence is the agency that issues all security clearances at present. Currently, no-one is given permission to camp in the desert.
 - V. There seems to be a private consulting company (Environmental Quality International) which has been working in Siwa since 1997. It has introduced a series of community-based initiatives in Siwa that form a sustainable, private sector led development initiative titled the “Siwa Sustainable Development Initiative”. It deals with issues such as waste management, restoring traditional business techniques, introducing programmes to empower women to achieve economic self-sufficiency, revitalizing indigenous handicraft, as well as restoring Siwa’s market- place and selected historic sites
- In the Ranthambhore National Park, the main agencies involved in promoting tourism include-
- I. The Central and the state governments, who are the only agencies which can decide on what to declare as a Protected Area, as well as pass the laws relating to their preservation. The Government relocates people from the Protected Areas and decides on a suitable compensation package to be given to the relocated people.
 - II. The Ministry of Forest and Environmental Affairs deals with all issues relating to the maintenance of the forest, wildlife and environment.
 - III. The Forest Department conducts regular Animal census, keeps an eye on animal movements, takes important decisions on the number of vehicles allowed into the park, issues tickets, collects the revenue and sits in on decisions related to the disbursement of revenue. Any issues relating to human-wildlife conflict are dealt with the forest department together with the local police.
 - IV. Only if the matter gets out of hand as in cases of excessive poaching, or when tigers were translocated to Sariska, the Army was called in to help (Rao,2017).
 - V. There are a number of non-governmental organisations working at improving the welfare of local artisans, women and farmers.
 - VI. Most of the service providers- transporters, hotels, drivers are private enterprises.

4. SWOT Analysis Results

In this section, we summarise our findings from the case study using the Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – Threats (SWOT) framework, which presents a snapshot of contemporary developments and way forward.

<p>Strengths It boosts the economy in the winter months, leading to more jobs and income. Local crafts and historical sites are already present.</p> <p>Village people are hospitable.</p> <p>Beautiful natural landscape and services available only here: sand baths, hot and cold - water springs.</p> <p>Community preserves old traditions, families are close knit, and old festivals and weddings are celebrated in the traditional way.</p>	<p>Weaknesses Lack of active role played by the government.</p> <p>Environmental problems such as saltwater lakes, random digging of wells (Martinelli, 2007), water- logging, soil salinization which reduce agricultural productivity.</p> <p>Increase in industrial activities and (hence) industrial waste which drains into the oasis.</p> <p>Lack of easy access to the oasis - no public modes of transport; Absence of car services, cafeterias, toilets and high-end hotels.</p> <p>Lack of properly trained guides.</p> <p>Time consuming bureaucratic procedures such as police clearance for Egyptian and international tour operators.</p> <p>Degeneration of traditional structures which need to be fortified and saved as tourist attractions. No emphasis on archaeotourism.</p> <p>Tourists are required to act and dress in a certain way as per the traditions/customs.</p>
<p>Threats Competition from the other oases</p> <p>Corruption with the distribution of Human Development Funds (Tricia Dong, 2020).</p> <p>Resistance from the locals to accept help in development.</p> <p>Disrupting ecosystems through people and wildlife interactions.</p> <p>Saturation of domestic tourists.</p> <p>No proper plans for water conservation</p>	<p>Opportunities Building on existing connectivity and improving it.</p> <p>Providing better transport, cafeterias, toilets.</p> <p>Reducing bureaucratic delays in getting clearances</p> <p>Increase promotional advertising of the Oasis.</p> <p>Increase awareness regarding the value of the archaeological and environmental wealth</p> <p>Greater involvement of community will help</p> <p>Offer the opportunity of home-stays for tourists who wish to experience first- hand what life in an Egyptian family is all about.</p> <p>Fiscal support for those who wish to enter the tourism industry, in the form of tax breaks or easy loan facilities might act as a boost to the industry.</p> <p>Attempts should be made to make Siwa a year-round destination.</p> <p>Diversify local products that can be sold, such as packaged dates and olives can also be sold other than just handicrafts.</p>

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Well established park with a large number of tigers, hotels and transport providers.</p> <p>A well- functioning Forest Department.</p> <p>Introduction of radio-collaring to keep track of tiger movements and conducting regular tiger census.</p> <p>A study on the relocation of the last of the villages existing inside the Park, shows an increase in welfare of the relocated population.</p> <p>There is a compensation scheme in place in the event of domestic cattle being harmed or killed by wild animals or crops being destroyed.</p> <p>Most villages surrounding the Park have easy accessibility to water, electricity, subsidised gas cylinders, subsidies for toilet construction, schools, banks and post office.</p> <p>On-line booking facilities.</p> <p>Government programmes for employment generation (MGNREGS)for displaced villagers or those living below the poverty line.</p> <p>Presence of farmers’ co-operative societies, Women’s’ handicraft societies for generation of employment exist.</p> <p>A Local Advisory Committee exists to facilitate greater interaction between the policy makers and the local community.</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>The compensation packages paid either for relocation or for damages caused by wildlife are considered inadequate and claims for them are time consuming.</p> <p>Corruption at the village panchayat level prevents villagers from receiving the full benefits of government introduced schemes.</p> <p>Most hotels are owned by five- star hotel chains or local elite. Local population are employed in the tourism industry only in low paying jobs.</p> <p>Most jobs in the tourism industry are seasonal and villagers have to depend on agriculture, casual labour or petty business for survival.</p> <p>Benefits of handicrafts do not accrue to the women who make them but to the middle-men. This is because there is very limited contact between the tourists and the artisans.</p> <p>Forest services are often misused by Government officials and VIPs.</p> <p>Illegal entry into the forest continues for collecting wood for fuel and grazing cattle, especially during the monsoon months, when the Park is closed to the public.</p> <p>The Local Advisory Committee is only an advisory body, whose decisions are not necessarily binding on the government or the Forest Department.</p> <p>There is a lack of transparency between the Forest Department and the local community.</p> <p>No promotion of archaeotourism despite the presence of forts and temples inside the park.</p>
<p>Threats</p> <p>Increased probability of conflict between locals and forest department as the former feel deprived of the benefits of tourism.</p> <p>Increased violation of the Tourism Carrying Capacity and Biological Carrying Capacity of the Park.</p>	<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Prevent misuse of forest resources by government officials</p> <p>Make decisions taken by the Local Advisory Committee binding on the Forest Department.</p> <p>Remove bureaucratic hurdles in the compensation process.</p> <p>Improve the existing catering and accommodation facilities of the Forest</p>

	<p>Department.</p> <p>Plough back a part of the revenue collected from entrance fees into the development of the National Park as well as the surrounding villages- especially medical facilities.</p> <p>Employ more local youth as guides and forest guards to increase their bonding with the forest.</p> <p>Develop alternative sources of entertainment to make tourism an all year- round income generator such as linking it with archaeotourism options.</p>
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5. Conclusion

The findings from the case studies presented above using the SWOT-framework highlight the following:

- (i) There is a need for all stakeholders to collaborate in order to preserve the destination's natural and cultural heritage, as well as manage the growing number of tourists.
- (ii) Simplification of regulations and the administrative set-up of tourism authorities will go a long way in improving tourism business leaders' and visitors' experiences.
- (iii) Promotion of Archaeotourism along with Ecotourism can increase opportunities for travellers and tourism businesses. serve as the backbones of the tourism industry in the two countries.

Tourism in both the Siwa Oasis and the Ranthambhore National Park do not qualify for being labelled as ecotourism sites since both of them violate at least one of the basic principles of ecotourism. However, it must be kept in mind that ecotourism in itself is a highly idealistic concept. Societies can strive to reach it, but the actual attainment of it is as ephemeral as the concept of "equilibrium" or "perfect competition" in Economics. Nevertheless, efforts can be made to promote tourism activities which keep in mind the its impact on communities as well as commerce, thereby unleashing the potential of tourism to act as a catalyst for social, economic and environmental prosperity.

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