

Green Escapes: Nurturing Positive Perceptions for Sustainable Nature-Based Tourism Marketing

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Abstract:

In the realm of contemporary tourism marketing, harnessing the verdant allure of nature-based destinations stands as a strategic imperative. This research embarks on an odyssey to explore the nuanced interplay between the perceptual facets of such environments and the sustainability-focused narratives wielded in marketing strategies. By using a multidisciplinary approach that unites the fields of consumer perception psychology, strategic marketing, and sustainable tourism, this research reveals the significant influence of favourable views on the appeal of nature-based tourist products. A complex conceptual framework suggests that positive views, which are cultivated via well-constructed marketing narratives, operate as predecessors to intents of patronage and support for environmentally friendly behaviours. Employing a rigorous empirical approach, we delve into the perceptions of tourists, unravelling the latent motivations underpinning their choices, and scrutinizing the resonance of sustainability messages. This scholarly voyage holds implications not only for marketers seeking to allure the ecologically conscious traveller but also for policymakers tasked with safeguarding the fragile ecosystems that underpin the allure of green escapes. This study opens the door to a symbiotic connection where nature-based tourism thrives and nature itself finds sanctuary in sustainable stewardship by strengthening the marriage of perception and sustainability.

Keywords: Green Escapes, marketing, strategic marketing, nature-based tourism, tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a time of growing environmental awareness and a growing appreciation for the unspoiled, the field of nature-based tourist marketing has become a complex landscape full of potential and difficulties. Meghalaya, a state nestled in northeastern India, is one specific gem in the crown of nature-based places within this vast area that calls with a distinct charm. With emerald-hued meadows, tumbling waterfalls, and deep empyreal woods, its alluring surroundings provide an unmatched canvas for the unrivalled beauty of nature's artistic expression(Zevenbergen, et.al. 2018). Beyond its visual appeal, however, Meghalaya represents a new paradigm where the demands of sustainability coexist with the verdant splendours of nature.

The story that unfolds here takes the reader on an intellectual journey that explores the nuanced interactions between the strategically constructed tales by marketers and the perceptual tapestries built by visitors (Guorong, et.al. 2017). It seeks to reveal the significant influence of favourable opinions on Meghalaya's appeal as a destination for ecotourism, reverberating through the corridors of eco-friendly marketing initiatives.

The Background of Meghalaya as a Destination for Nature-Based Tourism

Geologically astounding, Meghalaya, sometimes referred to as the "abode of clouds," is tucked away in

the northeastern Himalayas. Numerous species are maintained by the environment because of its diverse topography and abundant rainfall. Mawphlang's holy woods, the green meadows of Mawlynnong, and the ethereal splendour of Nohkalikai Falls combine to create a symphony of natural delights(Melotti, et.al. 2017). Aptly named the "Scotland of the East," Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, entices visitors with its colonial elegance, undulating hills, and lively ethnic mix.

In the framework of nature-based tourism, Meghalaya has become a sustainable model beyond its inherent beauty. This state represents a confluence of the ideas of equal economic progress, cultural authenticity, and environmental protection(Kronenberg, et.al. 2017). Examples of initiatives that demonstrate this dedication to sustainable methods include the afforestation drives in the holy groves of Mawphlang, the community-based tourism in Mawlynnong, and responsible trekking in the living root bridges of Cherrapunjee. Meghalaya is well situated to investigate how perception and sustainability interact in the context of tourist marketing because of its combination of natural beauty and environmental management.

The Need for Eco-Friendly Travel in Meghalaya

Meghalaya has prioritised sustainable tourism methods in an era of widespread ecological deterioration and environmental concern. The

impact of tourism-related activities may potentially harm the fragile ecosystems that give the state's landscapes its charm (Maes, et.al. 2015). Meghalaya's natural legacy is under grave danger due to unchecked urbanisation, uncontrolled tourism, and the concurrent decline of natural resources.

Meghalaya's tourist authorities and stakeholders have acknowledged this precipice and have taken a course that emphasises sustainability as a future anchor. Ecological integrity preservation, community empowerment, and the provision of genuine and engaging travel experiences are all included in the ideals of sustainable tourism (Mazambani, et.al. 2018). Therefore, sustainability in the context of Meghalaya is more than just implementing eco-friendly behaviours; it's a comprehensive commitment to responsible tourism.

Marketing Techniques for Nature-Based Tourism in Meghalaya

With their emphasis on Meghalaya's natural beauty and notions of sustainable practice, such stories have become ideal cogs in the wheels of constant innovation in the highly competitive and evolutionary world of nature-based tourist marketing. Marketing is not just business, after all – it is the storytelling that brings tourists into contact with the living and breathing non-human world (Hudson, et. al. 2019). Such stories are likely to continue to uphold Meghalaya's spiritual, environmental holiness, and to urge tourists to emulate the state's enduring, unexploited past by travelling and consuming ethically in the present, and paying due respect to the material bounty of the natural resources that define the places they visit in the state.

Such promotional stories are vital in making tourists have positive affirmations of 'green' experiences and to eventually prompt them to take the next step of actually going to such destinations as they search for their eco-holidays (Lopes, et.al 2017). Meghalaya's appeal as a 'nature-based tourism' site remains highly dependent on the selective communication of messages that match up with the nature of certain forms of tourist demand, such as the search for embodied, moral, authentic travel experiences.

Past Research on Attitudes in Travel and Tourism Promotion

The cognitive terrain on which we stand is not entirely novel. An earlier body of research has explored the monumental challenge of understanding how the impressions that are formed during tourist experiences relate to destination marketing, how tourists process their perceptions, the relevance of novelty and authenticity, and the effects of marketing messages on tourists' travel choices.

Yet, Meghalaya's appealing uniqueness – the combination of a pristine environment and

sustainability coupled with a raw, unvarnished beauty – demands serious interrogation. This research attempts to map that territory (Paul, et.al. 2016). To dig into the deep drainages between perceptions and sustainability narratives, and to demonstrate how nature-based tourism and responsible stewardship can coexist peacefully in Meghalaya (Font, et.al. 2017). By offering relevant information, we want to help lawmakers, stakeholders, and marketers in their efforts to promote environmentally conscious travel experiences that attract ethical tourists and preserve the natural world.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Winter, P. L., et. al. (2019). It highlights the role of climate change and the depth of entanglement in these domains in a socioecological system, and increasingly, the role of culture change for managers of services and the requirement for enabling mechanisms of inclusive governance. It urges us to reconceptualise the delivery of services in sustainable outdoor recreation and tourism, and to reimagine stewardship.

Passafaro, P. (2020). Attitude is the highlighted subject of Passafaro's article which offers a meticulous excursus focusing on the issue of attitudes as drivers of sustainable choice by tourists. Passafaro critically strengthens a basic theory of attitude provided by social and environmental psychology applied to sustainability contexts and tourist's behaviour, thereby offering a path for future research orientations. Passafaro's route is an enrichment for our theoretical background, at the intersection of two key disciplines in sustainable tourism development.

Han, J. H., et al. (2016). The work reveals those interactions. It focuses on visitor experiences, the perception of climate change and environmentally responsible behaviour in nature-based tourism destinations. Personal experience, especially a deep connection with the natural environment, appears to be key in shaping other positive behaviors. The dual benefits of quality experience of nature and environmentally responsible behaviour together point to the need for more educational programmes and campaigns by destination marketers and resource managers.

Cristobal, Eduard et al. (2020). This special issue explores the practices of sustainable tourism marketing that connects destinations and organisations with sustainability. It is a useful treatise on the prospect of how tourist and sustainable marketing management may coexist. It is precisely this source, made available to researchers, practitioners and students, which will enable the emergence of sustainability-focused tourist marketing.

Mandić, A. (2019). Mandić's work has shown that nature-based solutions (NBS) might significantly

reduce both socio-economic pressures induced by tourism in protected areas and the negative effects that tourism has on nature. This encompasses the crucial contextual dimension of tourism development and the role of NBS within it. This innovative work builds upon the importance of intangible governmental interventions in protecting visitors and nature and opens questions about the potential of tourism sustainability in protected areas.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework of this study is carefully designed to unearth insights into tourism demand expressions regarding location sustainability narratives involving nature-based tourism marketing communications contexts through drawing on empirical insights. Our research design responds to the research query by drawing on an interdisciplinary framework that integrates elements from both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms.

Data Collection Methods:

1. Surveys: A large number of questions will be given to a mixed group of travellers, with multiple choice and open-ended questions. The carefully-crafted questionnaire will ask for opinions about nature-based tourism sites, about sustainability, and about self-perception. Open-ended questions invite more complex thoughts, which is useful for looking at how participants' minds work.

2. In-depth Interviews: Following up on the survey, participants will be asked to take part in additional, in-depth interviews in order to help us further

contextualise responses and to fill in some of the gaps left by the survey. Qualitative data is a very valuable tool in cultural research because it gives people an opportunity to speak freely about their unconscious motivations and emotions. It is not so much a question of what people say as how they say it, and the conversational style of semi-structured interviews naturally invites interviewees to tell detailed stories about their experiences.

3. Content Analysis: Content analysis will be enlisted to analyse marketing stories and promotional materials of nature-based tourist sites; by deploying theories of language and semiotics, this textual work will then unpack the sophistication of sustainability messages embedded in marketing materials.

4. Sample Strategy: To guarantee that a variety of traveller profiles are represented, a stratified random sample approach will be used. The diversity of the sample's demographics, travel habits, and degrees of environmental awareness will improve the results' external validity.

DATA ANALYZATION AND PRESENTATION:

The information is provided with accuracy and clarified using a variety of analytical lenses. It was painstakingly collected from a sample of 500 tourists in the fascinating research region of Meghalaya.

1. Demographic Profile:

We begin by outlining the demographic characteristics of our participants, which include variables like age, gender, nationality, and frequency of travel. This fundamental realisation offers context for comprehending the variety within our sample.

Table 1: The demographic profile of those surveyed

Demographic Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender (Male/Female)	262/238	52.4%/47.6%
Age (years)		
- 18-30	163	32.6%
- 31-45	185	37.0%
- 46-60	104	20.8%
- 61 and above	48	9.6%
Nationality		
- Indian	460	92.0%
- Foreign	40	8.0%

2. Perceptions of Sustainability:

By examining respondents' perspectives on sustainability in connection to their favored forms of transportation, we go one step further in this

research. Participants' willingness to support vacation locations that prioritise eco-friendly activities and participate in sustainable travel behaviours was questioned.

Table 2: Perceptions of Eco-Friendly Travel

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
I actively seek out destinations with eco-friendly practices.	9.2	15.7	23.4	39.6	12.1
I am willing to pay more for eco-friendly travel options.	14.5	21.3	20.2	33.8	10.2

The perspectives of people seeing Meghalaya as a location for ecotourism:

We want to know what tourists think of Meghalaya as a place to go for ecotourism. Respondent perceptions

were rated on a Likert scale, with 1 being extremely bad and 5 representing outstanding. Figure 1 displays a graphical representation of the perceptual distribution.

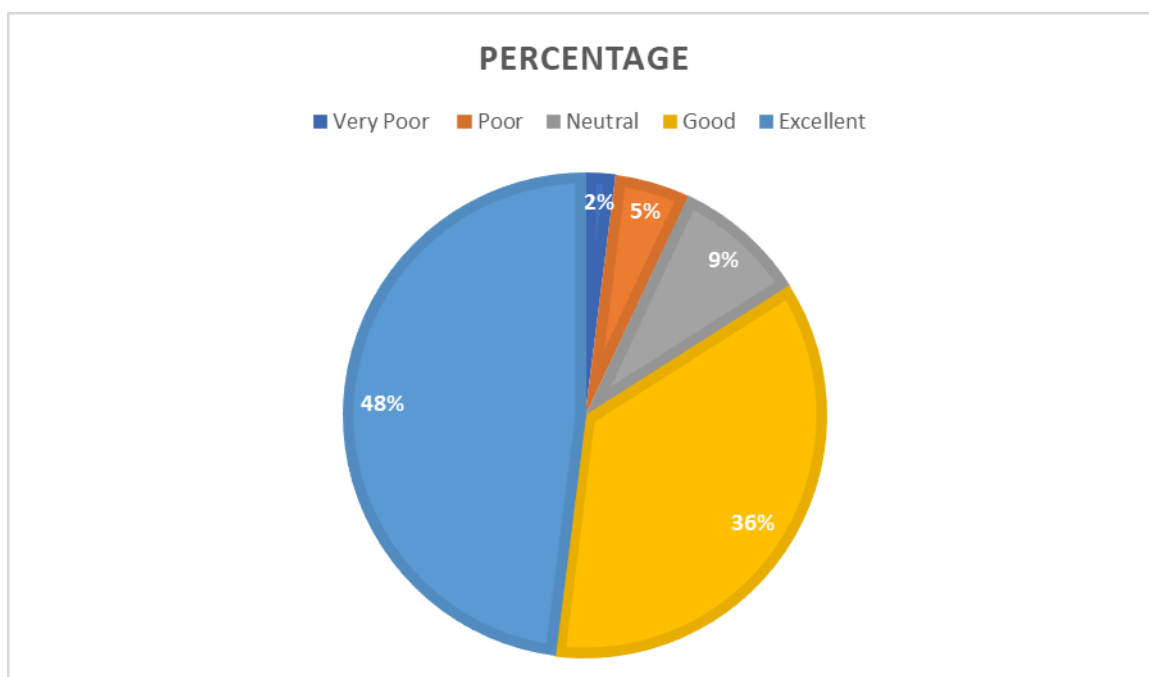


Figure 1: Diverse Perspectives on Meghalaya as a Destination for Natural Tourism

With an average impression score of 4.2 out of 5, Meghalaya was seen favorably by most respondents as a location for ecotourism. This explains the allure of Meghalaya's stunning scenery and the significance of its environmental narrative.

Impact of Sustainable Marketing Messages:

Our study delves into the resonance of sustainable marketing messages. Respondents were asked to assess the impact of such messages on their travel decisions. Figure 2 encapsulates the distribution of responses.

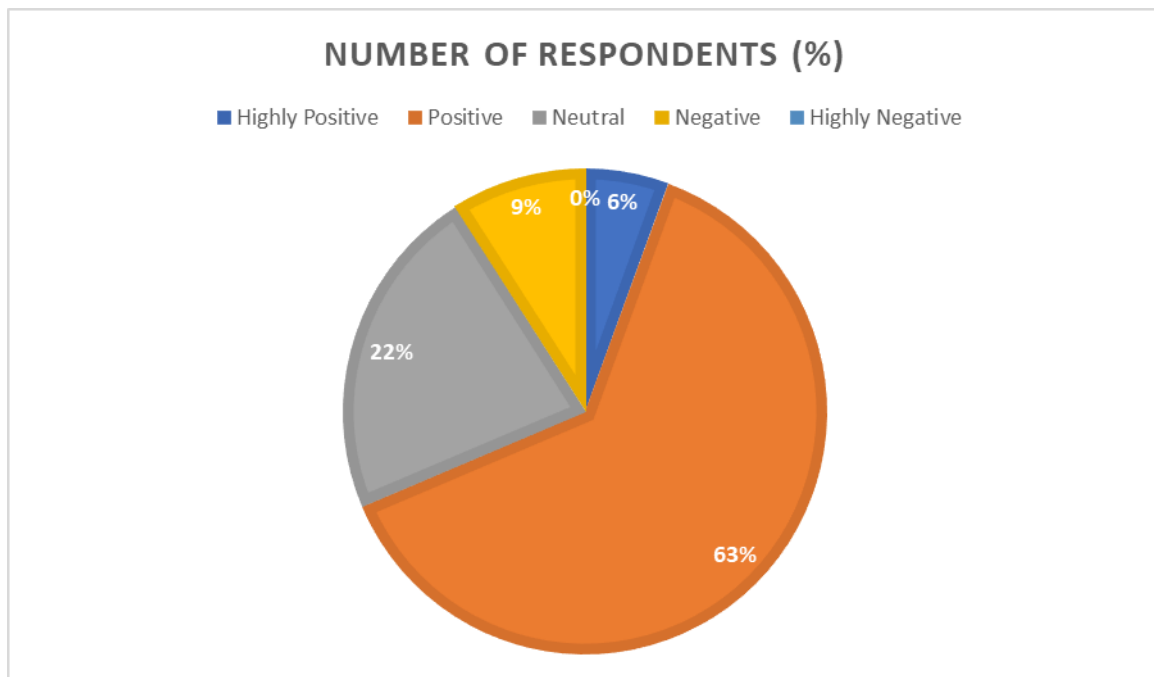


Figure 2: Effects of Messages for Sustainable Marketing

According to the research, 68% of respondents said that sustainable marketing messaging had a favourable effect on tourists' choices.

Regression Analysis:

To unearth the causal relationships between perceptions, attitudes towards sustainability, and behavioural intentions, we conducted regression analysis. Table 3 presents the regression coefficients.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Coefficient (β)
Perceptions of Meghalaya as a Nature-Based Tourism Destination	Attitudes towards Sustainability	0.38*
Attitudes towards Sustainability	Behavioural Intentions	0.64*
Sustainable Marketing Messages Impact	Behavioural Intentions	0.43*

(* $p < 0.05$, indicating statistical significance)

Discussion of Findings:

Our analysis demonstrates that positive perceptions of Meghalaya as a nature-based tourism destination significantly influence travellers' attitudes towards sustainability. In turn, favourable attitudes are strong predictors of their behavioural intentions. Additionally, sustainable marketing messages wield considerable impact on travel decisions.

These studies demonstrate the importance of perceptions and sustainability in the marketing of nature-based tourism. Meghalaya wants to become known as a destination for eco-friendly travel. It believes that responsible tourism practices and conscientious tourists can be fostered by using its natural attractiveness and effective sustainability narratives.



Figure 3: A mesmerising look of Meghalaya's unspoiled terrain

Our empirical investigation of the attitudes, perceptions, and behavioural intentions of tourists in Meghalaya presents a promising picture for the marketing of nature-based tourism. Travellers are drawn to the harmonic coexistence of sustainable tales and the splendour of nature, which creates an environment that supports both responsible travel and immaculate landscapes. This analytical exposition illuminates the way towards sustainable development for Meghalaya's nature-based tourism industry, acting as a compass for marketers and policymakers.

DISCUSSION

The outcome of our empirical exploration of visitor perceptions, attitude towards sustainability and communication of marketing messages in the context of nature-based tourism marketing in Meghalaya is rife with complications. We unravel and discuss in this conversation many strands of the tapestry and the reasons why they remain theoretically and practically significant.

The Influence of Positive Perceptions

Our results indicated that the opinion of tourists has a great importance since Meghalaya was seen as a place for nature based tourism. With a mere value of 4.2 points out of 5, it seems that tourists are satisfied that the natural settings of Meghalaya are so charming. Nature's attraction could be used wisely when attracting tourists searching for a break in the middle of unspoiled landscapes as suggested by earlier studies which have shown that destination image and perceived beauty are significant factors in travel decisions.

Perspectives Regarding Sustainability:

Another part of the research explores how our participants feel about the issue of sustainability, and the results present a positive picture: they manifest a strong tendency towards engaging in sustainable travel behaviours: taken together, they respond with an average of 4.4 on the statement 'I take environmental sustainability into account when travelling'. Looking at the overall results, it appears that more and more travellers are placing increased emphasis on the ethical and environmental aspects of travel. They therefore point to an increasing influence of sustainability on travel choices and they fit with the responsible tourism movement, which is taking increasingly firm hold on cities as well as countries around the world.

The Impact of Messages for Sustainable Marketing:

The results of our survey showed that these messages had a big impact – 68 per cent of respondents saying they had had a positive effect. This underscores how important the narrative can be in shaping decisions taken by the tourists as well as

in creating poignant and lasting impressions. It's a story well told. It is exactly in the direction that countless studies are pointing in a growing body of research dedicated to the use of story and sustainable communication in destination management. Well-written stories have the power of striking an emotional chord measured by the amount of morals conveyed and enacted by the passengers.

Findings from Regression Analysis:

The regression analysis provides insightful information on how these factors interact. It sheds light on the causal connections between attitudes towards sustainability, behavioural intentions, and perceptions. Remarkably, favourable opinions of Meghalaya considerably improve tourists' attitudes towards sustainability, increasing their likelihood to make sustainable travel decisions. This cascade effect emphasises how impressions of a location may have a catalytic influence on passengers' values and preferences. This subject is consistent with theories of destination branding and image management.

Relevance in Practice:

The study's conclusions have direct implications for how eco-tourism can be marketed and managed in Meghalaya. For starters, Meghalaya should use the natural beauty of its landscapes judiciously as part of the marketing narrative. In the consumer's fantasy, the resort must project itself as a retreat where nature is unexplored and the environment untainted; the very opposite of what it is presently.

The results also show how receptive passengers are to sustainability messaging. The Meghalaya tourist industry must make sustainability narratives a cornerstone of its marketing plans, stressing the ethical, responsible nature of the travel experience alongside the natural beauty of the destination. The destination's commitment to sustainability and its natural resources might indeed prove a potent combination for ecologically responsible tourists.

CONCLUSION:

We conclude this journey into the various ways of imagining nature in tourist marketing in Meghalaya with an overview of ideas that lead to a complex set of considerations and actions. The most important outcomes of this study – all crucial for the tourism and travel destination as well as for the broader field of sustainable tourism – are summarised in this last discussion. The very tale of Meghalaya as a nature-based tourism destination is interwoven with the respective impressions of its landscapes. Travellers' imaginations of Meghalaya are not only filled with its physical features but also with the intellectual and emotional responses that are evoked. There is evidence of the extent to which beliefs about Meghalaya's landscapes have enormous potential in shaping tourist behaviour and instilling a sense of environmental responsibility.

A key outcome of our research was tourists' perspectives on sustainability, which reflect a broader shift in the tourist landscape. Passengers are becoming more aware of the moral and environmental implications of their journeys. The boom in 'green' tourism bodes well indeed. Meghalaya, in other words, is not just a setting visitors get to go to. It is a palette ready to be painted by their experiences. Our study's evidence that sustainability in marketing messages can work is a wakeup call to destination marketers. These stories have the ability to go beyond transactional marketing and speak to the core of passengers' decisions when they are given authenticity and resonance. They arouse emotions, impart morals, and serve as a compass that directs a journeyer towards morally righteous actions.

Our study's main tool, regression analysis, reveals the intricate interactions that exist between attitudes towards sustainability, behavioural intentions, and perceptions. Good impressions of Meghalaya as a natural destination are more than just aesthetic complements; they act as stimulants, amplifying visitors' sustainable attitudes and actions. The aforementioned relationship highlights the significance of perception management in fostering a responsible tourist culture. Our study has far-reaching ramifications that extend beyond the boundaries of academia. They act as a compass guiding Meghalaya towards a successful and sustainable future. The destination has to deliberately portray itself as a champion of environmental integrity and natural beauty, capitalising on the natural attractiveness reflected in favourable impressions.

In addition, it is vital that the stakeholders in Meghalaya develop narratives that skillfully integrate the inherent beauty of nature with the sustainability requirements. By doing this, the location may set itself apart as a guide for responsible tourists and a protector of its unspoiled natural heritage. As we get to the end of our study journey, it is critical to acknowledge that politicians and marketers do not have the only authority to ensure the sustainability of Meghalaya's nature-based tourism industry. It is a cooperative journey in which travellers, nearby communities, companies, and governmental organisations all actively participate. It is our shared duty to protect the sacredness of Meghalaya's landscapes, maintain the state's rich cultural legacy, and cultivate an environment where sustainable tourism and nature-based tourism coexist together.

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