ECOTOURISM ETHICS: ANTHROPOCENTRISM OR ECOCENTRISM

จริยธรรมการท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศ: โลกทรรศน์ที่มุ่งเน้นความอยู่รอดของมนุษย์ หรือ โลกทรรศน์ที่มุ่งเน้นการปกป้องธรรมชาติ

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Abstract

The responsibility of humanity towards humanity and humanity towards ecology expresses the ethical domain of ecotourism. The encounter of nature and humans in ecotourism involves a two-fold relationship between humans and humans and between humans and nature. Natural environment contributes to the profits of ecotourism stakeholders. It is a matter of fairness to return this contribution in the form of moral considerations.

When it comes to ecotourism, a dilemma arises between deep ecology, eco-centered or ecocentric values and anthropocentric or human-centered values. Therefore, the ecotourism policy should likewise focus on ethical dimension for the better ecotourism opea-ration because good ecotourism operation creates sustainability.

KEYWORDS: Ecotourism, Ethics, Anthropocentrism, Ecocentrism, Pole-balancing technique, Sustainability

บทคัดย่อ

ความรับผิดชอบทางศีลธรรมหรือจรรยาบรรณในการท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศสามารถแบ่งออกเป็นสองส่วนคือ จรรยาบรรณระหว่าง 'มนุษย์กับมนุษย์' และจรรยาบรรณระหว่าง 'มนุษย์กับธรรมชาติ' ด้วยเหตุผลที่การท่อง เที่ยวเชิงนิเวศนั้นมุ่งแสวงหาผลประโยชน์จากธรรมชาติ หรือการมีธรรมชาติเป็นต้นทุนในการหาผลประโยชน์ให้ กับ 'มนุษย์' ดังนั้นศีลธรรมที่มนุษย์ควรมีต่อธรรมชาติ จึงเป็นเรื่องจำเป็นที่ไม่ควรถูกมองข้าม

การท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศไม่ว่าจะเป็นการสร้างนโยบายหรือการปฏิบัติจริงในพื้นที่ ภาวะความจำยอมมัก เกี่ยวข้องด้วยกันเสมอ เปรียบเสมือนทางสองแพร่งที่ผู้สร้างนโยบายและผู้ปฏิบัติต้องพิจารณาเลือกระหว่าง มนุษย์หรือธรรมชาติ ทางออกสำหรับภาวะความจำยอมนั้น จำเป็นต้องพิจารณาตั้งแต่ระดับนโยบายในการนำ เสนอจริยธรรมการท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศให้มากขึ้น เพื่อเป็นแนวทางในการปฏิบัติจริงในแต่ละพื้นที่และนำไปสู่การ ท่องเที่ยวอย่างยั่งยืนได้อย่างแท้จริง

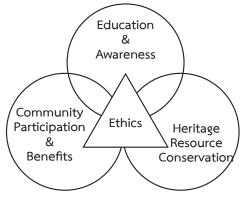**คำสำคัญ:** การท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศ จริยธรรม มนุษย์-ธรรมชาติ สร้างสมดุล ความยั่งยืน

Tourism ethics preceded the attention of scholars in the mid 1990s (Dawson et al., 2011; Fennell, 2006; Holden, 2003). Its emergence in the industry originates from the global crisis in its holistic nature (Hall & Brown, 2006) and began in the concept of 'leisure ethics' in the 1980s (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). Its formal introduction was based on conferences to establish a commission to deal with ethics and tourism, held by The Association Internationale d'Experts Scientifiques du Tourisme in 1992. These proposed the creation of a World Committee on Tourism Ethics. Following the first conference, The Cairo meeting of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism commenced in 1995. The meeting proposed a Declaration of Ethics in Tourism. Consequently, at the thirteenth session of World Tourism Organisation Network General Assembly at Santiago, Chile on 1 October 1999, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism was adopted and distributed to stakeholders worldwide.

In relation to ethics, ecotourism is positioned in the tourism industry as one of the most ethical forms of tourism (Fennell, 2006). In 1990 a well known ecotourism organisation, the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) provided a definition of ecotourism to be:

Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people (TIES 1990).

TIES's ecotourism definition is the first definition that makes explicit the ethical dimension as part of the 'responsible' tourism concept. Moreover, environmental and human ethics are part of early definitions of what constitute 'ecotourism destinations' whether protected or not.

Ethics has been stressed by Holladay and Ormsby (2011), Donohoe and Needham (2006) and Fennell (2001, 2006) as a core concern to drive auspicious ecotourism. An ethics-oriented perspective in ecotourism increases the sustainability of both the resource and the industry, integrating economic, social, and conservation objectives (Wight, 1993). The figure below demonstrates the relationship of ecotourism and ethics for reaching sustainable ecotourism in both policy and practice.

Source: Synthesied from Holladay and Ormsby (2011), Donohoe and Needham (2006) and Fennell (2006, 2001)

Figure 1.1: Ecotourism and ethics

The responsibility of humanity towards humanity and humanity towards ecology expresses the ethical domain of ecotourism. Correspondingly both policy and practice seek to sustain the anthropocentric and ecocentric components of ecotourism. Anthropocentrism is a philosophy that argues that human beings are the central or most significant entities in the world (Newman & Robbins 2011, p.15). In contrast, Ecocentrism is a philosophy that values nature for its own sake (Thopmson & Barton, 1994, p.149).

Ecocentrism inherently embeds the philosophy that each nonhuman species occupies its own intrinsic values rather than having an instrumental value, in particular no species is superi-or than any others (Sylvan, 1998; Zsolnai, 1993). Intrinsic values were introduced by Arne Naess (1973) as deep ecology, ecocentric, earth-centred or deeper ecology; ecofeminism. The Gaia theory of James Lovelock demonstrated that earth itself plays an active role in sustaining life. The earth is seen as an holistic and giant network of ecosystem. Untouched nature is more valuable than altered nature that is affected by humans. Deep ecology sees human-centred activations as out of step with nature (Mellor, 2000). Referring to deep ecology, it can be assumed that ecotourism should not violate the systemic patterns and global mechanisms of the Earth.

Despite the fact that ecotourism is opposed by deep ecology, ecotourism can be justified as a means to promote local populations to place new value on the preservation of their environmental resources with adequate control to demonstrate that people can balance economics and environmental aspects (Honey, 1999). Therefore, adequate control for sustainable ecotourism can be achieved by policy. It is stressed by Duenkel and Scott (1994) that significant change towards deep ecology/earth wisdom needs changes in policies. Indicating that humanity has the power to generate the policies towards ecocentric or anthropocentric in ecotourism, humanity and human interaction is therefore involved.

In opposition to ecocentricm is the anthropocentric viewpoint. Despite the fact that ecotourism aims to nurture ecological tourism destinations, it correspondingly results in consideration of community-based and socio-cultural costs of ecotourism development. The global environmental movement is likewise the continuation of an anthropocentric perspective (Duenkel & Scott, 1994) e.g. Brundtland report 1987 or 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development. The mentioned movements focus on humans and their future and under which other species and ecosystem are resources for development.

Ecotourism has its own anthropology of symbols and signifiers (Ryan, 2002 and Stronza, 2001). In relation to the relationship between anthropocentricm and ecotourism policy, most ecotourism policy is underpinned by the anthropocentric perspective. Similarly, local ecotourism operation requires the management from human which is also embedded with anthropocentric perspective. Chatavanich (2012: p.25) pointed out that to operate good ecotourism for nurture both human and surrounding nature government and local people need to

participate in all tourism related activities. Therefore, anthropocentric value lay heavily embedded in the practice of ecotourism.

The underlying purpose of anthropology is to understand human nature in its psychic unity as well as in its particular manifestations of group and individual behaviours as they are shaped through participation in a specific society. The study of tourism needs to gain more insight into the details of human lives, values the motivations for travel, the interpersonal conflicts that impact social interaction, the local traditions that will direct tourism to specific markets, and host reactions to outsiders (Smith, 1980). It is significant to stress that understanding human nature delivers the greater enlightenment of the relationship between human-nature.

The promotion of anthropology of ecotourism engages study of the proximity in the community's relationships between tourist-host, tourist-tourist and host-host. Local people involve and interface with social classes, the rights of local people (Mclaren, 2003), authenticity, and with others/insiders/outsiders (MacCannell, 2011, 1999; Urry, 2002, 1990) and deal with unequal distribution of benefits (Mclaren, 2003) whereas the anthropology of ecotourism overlooks the fact that the environment contributes to the profits of ecotourism stakeholders. Hence, it is a matter of fairness to return this contribution in the form of moral considerations to the natural surrounding for the greater sustainability. Yet, in case of ecotourism policy and local community value profit over sustainability, then presumably the behaviour manifested by local people will be ecologically unsound. Therefore, the environment is viewed for its instrumental values not its intrinsic values. Given this range of problems of ecotourism operation, ethics in ecotourism may alleviate these problems.

In relation to the academics, Fennell (2006) and Holden (2003) stressed the deficiency of ethical research foundations in the industry as well as the insufficiency of morals and their application to tourism. Most tourism scholars employed non-empirical research on ethics in ecotourism (e.g. Stark, 2002; Amaro, 1999; Malloy & Fennell, 1998; Karwacki & Boyd, 1995; Wight, 1993; Duenkel & Scott, 1990). Recently, Nowaczek (2009) conducted ecotourism ethics research but emphasised solely the demand side of ecotourism by employing ecotourist ethics scales based on the classical, theoretical and ethical framework of Deontology, Teleology, and Existentialism. Accordingly, the ethical dimension of ecotourism still needs more injection of empirical research to make a contribution into the field.

The encounter of nature and humans in ecotourism involves a two-fold relationship between humans and humans and between humans and nature. Either our species is seen as superior, or alternatively other species. Neither view seems satisfactory. When it comes to ecotourism, a dilemma arises between deep ecology, eco-centered or ecocentric values and anthropocentric or human-centered values. However, the relationship between humanity and nature is heavily circumscribed by relations between humans (Mellor, 2000). Zsolnai (1993) and Duenkel and Scott (1994) indicated that the higher the welfare of people, the higher the

environmental awareness that can be expected from people. This can be interpreted to mean that people living in the ecotourism community have to firstly satisfy with the equality in benefit distribution before they cooperate to nurture the surrounding environment. Yet, it is to emphasis that to focus on the ethics of both people and nature is equally significant. Since human is a social animal, we do know how to be ethical in order to live peacefully in the community and society. This is based on the fact that nature has no morality whereas humans have their own morality to preserve or conserve the natural world.

Holism ethical perspective should be adopted for pole-balancing between the two edges; anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. This can be done by promoting the interests of both grounds that are anthropocentric and ecocentric in relation to the ethical context of sustainable ecotourism in both policy; top-down approach and practice; bottom-up approach. Additionally, the policy is required to inject intensive ethical dimension for the better practice of ecotourism stakeholders. So that the ecotourism stakeholders could acknowledge how and to what extent they should manage, utilise, preserve, conserve or respect their surrounding natural resources to reach the sustainability by employing the guided ethical realm from the existing policy.

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