



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The concept of ‘sustainability’ has become one of the remedial tools to address the environmental and economic crisis in the 21st century. Sustainability is the process suggested to improve the quality of human life within the limitation of global environment. Sustainable tourism is considered as tourism development that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future, leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems. It provides a unique solution to lead quality human lives which result in degrading the environment or impinging on the well being of other people. Tourism can be seen as an economic activity that produces a range of positive and negative impacts. Sustainable tourism aims to safeguard the resources of destinations. Sustainable tourism is very much essential to achieve the greatest balance between economic benefits and social and environmental costs. The present paper is thus an attempt to give an overview of Indian tourism sector and suggest the ways and means how the sustainability can be managed so that overall sustainable development can be possible.

Key words: Tourism, environmental impacts, sustainability

INTRODUCTION



Sustainable tourism is an implementation of the concept of sustainable development, applied to tourism. The purpose of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development is a positive experience for local people, tourism companies and tourists themselves. Tourism is a rapidly growing phenomenon and has become one of the largest industries in the world. The impact of tourism is extremely varied. It plays a vital role in respect of socio-economic and political development of a country by offering huge employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled persons and also ensures intercultural exchange between the countries which can help in increasing cultural understanding and awareness among the people. Tourism in service sector plays a vital role and the biggest industry in the world, which contribute more than 12% of the world GDP. Its size threatens vulnerable destinations whose culture heritage is their main attraction, while on the other hand sustainable tourism can play a vital part in addressing such developing country problems as poverty, poor infrastructure, unemployment, and a decline in a nation's sense of cultural identity. The mutual dependence that exists between tourism and cultural heritage is becoming more evident. While culture heritage creates a foundation for tourism's growth, tourism has the power to generate funds that make conservation possible. Cultural heritage loses much of its meaning without an audience, and a society participating in and benefiting from it. Without sustainable management, tourism loses its potential for growth. Sustainable tourism is synonym of eco-tourism. In general sense, eco-tourism means management of tourism and conservation of nature in a way so as to maintain the fine balance between the requirements of tourism and ecology on one hand and the needs of the local communities for jobs, new skills, income generating employment and a better status for women on the other hand. To understand the principles behind sustainable tourism development, it is first necessary to appreciate how the idea evolved. During the 1980s, it became apparent that major global environmental changes were occurring suddenly and silently and that these changes had not been predicted by scientists. The world also became more aware that there was an element of uncertainty and risk in relation to the effect of a range of human activities on global environments. To rectify these problems, fundamental changes were required in our style of



living. The concept of sustainable development came from this realization. It was first mentioned in 1987 in a report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development. It defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Keeping this aspect in mind, an attempt has been made here to create awareness about the need for sustainable tourism development, the impact of tourism growth and the future challenges before tourism industry. Objectives of the Study:

The present study is carried out with the following objectives:

To study the negative and positive impact of tourism to the environment and society at large.

To analyze the challenges faced by tourism sector in the present changing environment.

To discuss how sustainable development and sustainability can be managed in tourism sector.

Methodology:

The present study is basically a descriptive research consisting of a fact-finding operation and survey of the opinions and characteristics of a given population. The study consists of reviewing the major concepts, principles, and researches that dealt with sustainable tourism at macro level. It is mainly give emphasis on sustainability and sustainable development in tourism sector .The study particularly indicates how sustainable development can be captured in the present changing environment.

Findings and suggestions:

In order to prepare a desirable future of tourism industry and to face the challenges before this industry, we should not only analyze the prevailing trends of tourism but also find a joint approach .Keeping this aspect in mind; the following suggestions can help tourism professionals and policy designers in making the future of tourism desirable.



1. Financial sustainability – Tourism should be financially viable not only in the current circumstances but also in future. The major obstruction to sustainable development through tourism is an excess dependence on market mechanisms to guide tourism development and consumption decisions. It needs a joint venture among the stakeholders of the local tourist destination. This venture must use both market and non-market tool to execute a shared sustainable development vision. It could be achieved through use of globally accepted and verified guidelines for future course of action and documentation. Sensitize the people about fair and environmental friendly atmosphere. Innovation of eco friendly diversified products to win the heart of the tourists. Adequate training must be imparted to promote ethics in this channel.

2. Ecological Sustainability- It is one of the important pillars of sustainable tourism. Sustainability must be ensure from the various angle of eco-system. A governance code may be established for each level of administration. There is immediate requirement of formulation of strategies at every level so that the overall objectives of sustainability can be achieved. Sustainability principles must be applied while designing, planning and developing the entire process. There should be a continuous research on tourist behavior on the concept of sustainable tourism.

3. Cultural Sustainability- It can be achieved through people's participation in various welfare activities so that they can strengthen the community identity. Education and training most imparted in order to protect traditional and natural resources. Custom and traditions of the locals should not be diluted. Strengthen, nurture and encourage the community's ability to maintain and use traditional skills. The tourists must be educated about the desirable and acceptable behavior.

4. Local Sustainability- It must be design to see the financial interest of the local communities. Financial interest of the locals is one of the barometers for ensuring sustainability. The industry should provide adequate quality employment to the host community. Ensure an equitable



distribution of financial benefits throughout the entire supply chain. Provide financial support to the local trade to be a part and parcel of tourism.

Conclusions

This paper has introduced some of the key features behind sustainable tourism. The principles of sustainable development focus on taking a longer-term and more cautious approach to development to ensure that our children can enjoy a quality life. Though the single most important input to achieving sustainable tourism is probably political will, knowledge and information is also vital. Sustainable tourism has identified how the tourism industry can contribute to overall sustainable development and continue to provide high quality, low impact experiences. Sustainable tourism is built around four pillars of tourism, economic sustainability, ecological sustainability, cultural sustainability and local sustainability. The above four elements must be tackled in order to achieve sustainable tourism.

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