

Responsible Tourism: A way for the sustainable development of the tourist destination

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Abstract: *Tourism today is the most vivacious tertiary activity and a huge industry in India. Traditionally known largely for its historical and cultural dimensions, tourism today is highlighted for its immense business opportunities. Under tourism, India offers a different aspect of her personality- exotic, extravagant, elegant, eclectic- to each traveller to the country. It is to be noted that the quality of the environment, both natural and man-made, is essential to tourism. However, tourism's relationship with the environment is complex. It involves many activities that can have adverse environmental effects. Many of these impacts are linked with the construction of general infrastructure such as roads and airports, and of tourism facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants, shops, golf courses and marinas. Negative impacts from tourism occur when the level of visitor use is greater than the environment's ability to cope with this use within acceptable limits of change. Uncontrolled conventional tourism poses potential threats to many natural areas and it can gradually destroy the environmental resources on which it depends. Due to this, tourist sites are gradually losing their identity and attractiveness. To address the situation, there is a need to implement the concept of sustainable development in tourism sector. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. It is evident that in order for sustainable tourism planning, development and operations to be successful, the notion of the responsibility towards the tourist destination must be created among the people. The concept of responsible tourism emphasizes the ethical and social responsibility of both tourists and the local community. Responsible tourism is about creating better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit. This paper raises the key issues and challenges faced in developing a sustainable tourism destination. This paper also highlights the importance and vital role of the responsible tourism in achieving sustainable development of the tourist destinations. The present study is based on the secondary data published by various agencies and organizations, Newspapers, Magazines, Books, Economic journals and Internet etc.*

Index terms: *Sustainable tourism development; responsible tourism; environment; tourism destination.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a worldwide phenomenon that has the highest and deepest aspirations of all people and is sensitive to its natural, cultural and environmental factors. It is a complex social system that operates within a micro and macro environment that is considering competitive and sustainability. Predominantly, tourism is regarded as a positive contribution to urban development.

Definition of Tourism

Mathieson and wall (1982) created a good working definition of tourism as “the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities to cater to their needs”

According to Macintosh and Geoldner (1986) “Tourism is the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors”.

Tourism is an important element of socioeconomic and political development in many countries, and it is ambivalent whether tourism contributes positively to socio-economic and cultural achievement and also to the degradation of the environment and the loss of local identity. Sustainability is becoming a significant concept of tourism destination and has increasingly added to destination competitiveness. Arguably, the development of tourism destination must be guided by effective and efficient management with a focus on sustainability on both the destination and the consumer base. It is critical that future tourism destination development plans be compatible with not only market needs, but also with human and environment integrity to maintain its economic viability. Over the years, sustainable tourism development has become a prominent key area of research and as an agenda of concern for different stakeholders within developed and developing countries. Similarly, increasing evidence shows that a need for an integrated approach to tourism planning and management is required to achieve sustainable tourism; to develop a type of tourism that meets economic expectations and environmental requirements, and respects not only the social and physical structure of destinations, but also the local population. Likewise, the sense of priority to protect and reinforce the human dignity of both local communities and tourists is widely documented in most tourism development literature. In order to achieve sustainable tourism development, there is a need to implement the concept of Responsible tourism at a massive level in the tourism industry. It is necessary to establish effective alliances among the principal actors in the field of tourism so as to fulfil the hope of a tourism that is more responsible towards our common heritage.

II. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

1. To raises the key issues and challenges faced in developing a sustainable tourism destination.
2. To highlights the importance and vital role of the responsible tourism in achieving sustainable development of the tourist destinations.
3. To put forth such meaningful suggestions as may be appropriated.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Furqan (2010) studied on the topic 'promoting green tourism for future sustainability'. According to him the development of green tourism in requires a caution approach. A right balance between the promotion of tourism and preservation of environment is a must. Less polluting greener vehicles are to be encouraged in and around tourist destinations for carrying people. Tourists also have to ensure that the rubbish and debris are not left behind. The use of plastic or tin container is to be avoided in the places they visit. The agencies involved in tourism must ensure that their conduct as well as the behaviour of the tourist is not detrimental to the ecology and socio cultural environment.

Forsyth (1997) analysed the environmental responsibility and business regulation for the sustainable development of tourism. Under this study author adopted the voluntary practices of environmental is discussed as a form of environmental regulation, and then applied to using a survey of 69 companies and institutions in the UK outgoing tourism. Results indicate that business has adopted a wide range of practices, but considers to be weak regulatory instruments because ultimate responsibility for change host governments via legislation. However, environmental protection may cause business performance if voluntary practices could differentiate mass-market packages and allow companies to compete on more than price alone. According to author the achievement of sustainable tourism may therefore depend on a change in discourse of both campaigners and industry in order to identify common ground more easily, and to communicate this more effectively to the marketplace. However, to wait for he also points out that market demand for 'sustainable tourism' may result in losing opportunities to implement commercially attractive practices in the short term, and also risk reflecting populist demands for 'environment' which may not achieve sustainable development or allow business to deal proactively with competition and environmental damage in the mass market.

Russell and Wallace (2004) in their study about the 'Irresponsible tourism' found that Ecotourism may be in vogue as a marketing tool, but they recommend the term 'eco-cultural tourism' instead. This permits focus on more than the environment (i.e. the 'eco' alone) to the exclusion of local people, and incorporation of the richness and diversity of local lives into the equation. Author found in many wetland communities, like the environments in which they are situated, lack the 'pulling power' of destinations more attractive to tourists. They observed in the study that Eco-cultural tourism, with its dual focus on environment and culture, provides local people and policy makers with a conceptual framework for developing marginal areas. It incorporates the concepts behind responsible tourism and, since the popular 'eco' is part of its name, eco-cultural tourism could be easily marketed. According to them, marketing would not be limited just too vulnerable communities whose cultural and natural resources are not enough individually to attract sufficient visitors for economic viability: any communities with outstanding natural and cultural resources could benefit from marketing and implementing this brand of responsible tourism.

Lansing (2007) found in his study that while tourism is often seen as a welcome source of economic development, conventional mass tourism is associated with numerous negative effects, such as the destruction of ecological systems and loss of cultural heritage. In response to these concerns, a term that has surfaced recently is sustainable tourism. He suggested that sustainable tourism should make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity. He also suggested that sustainable tourism should

Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Sustainable tourism is not a discrete or special form of tourism. Rather, all forms of tourism should strive to be more sustainable. Making tourism more sustainable is not just about controlling and managing the negative impacts of the industry. Tourism is in a very special position to benefit local communities, economically and socially, and to raise awareness and support for conservation of the environment. Within the tourism sector, economic development and environmental protection should not be seen as opposing forces—they should be pursued hand in hand as aspirations that can and should be mutually reinforcing. Policies and actions must aim to strengthen the benefits and reduce the costs of tourism. Big issues are at stake here. Further massive growth is predicted for tourism between now and 2020, providing excellent opportunities for spreading prosperity but presenting considerable challenges and potential threats to the environment and local communities if not well managed. Climate change is recognized as a major global issue, with significant implications for tourism. There is also an increasing appreciation of the potential role of tourism in addressing world poverty, by bringing sources of income to the heart of some of the poorest communities.

V. TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Tourism is in a special position in the contribution it can make to sustainable development and the challenges it presents. Firstly, this is because of the dynamism and growth of the sector, and the major contribution that it makes to the economies of many countries and local destinations. Secondly, it is because tourism is an activity which involves a special relationship between consumers (visitors), the industry, the environment and local communities.

This special relationship arises because, unlike most other sectors, the consumer of tourism (the tourist) travels to the producer and the product. This leads to three important and unique aspects of the relationship between tourism and sustainable development:

- **Interaction:** The nature of tourism, as a service industry that is based on delivering an experience of new places, means that it involves a considerable amount of interaction, both direct and indirect, between visitors, host communities and their local environments.
- **Awareness:** Tourism makes people (visitors and hosts) become far more conscious of environmental issues and differences between nations and cultures. This can affect attitudes and concerns for sustainability issues not only while travelling but throughout people's lives.
- **Dependency:** Much of tourism is based on visitors seeking to experience intact and clean environments, attractive natural areas, authentic historic and cultural traditions, and welcoming hosts with whom they have a good relationship. The industry depends on these attributes being in place.

This close and direct relationship creates a sensitive situation, whereby tourism can be both very damaging but also very positive for sustainable development.

On the positive side, tourism can:

- Provide a growing source of opportunities for enterprise development and employment creation as well as stimulating investment and support for local services, even in quite remote communities.
- Bring tangible economic value to natural and cultural resources. This can result in direct income from visitor spending for their conservation, and an increase in support for conservation from local communities.
- Be a force for inter-cultural understanding and peace.

On the negative side, tourism can:

- Place direct pressure on fragile ecosystems causing degradation of the physical environment and disruption to wildlife.
- Exert considerable pressure on host communities and lead to dislocation of traditional societies.
- Compete for the use of scarce resources, notably land and water.
- Be a significant contributor to local and global pollution.
- Be a vulnerable and unstable source of income, as it is often very sensitive to actual or perceived changes to the environmental and social conditions of destinations.

The net result is that all those involved in tourism have a huge responsibility to recognize the importance of its sustainable development. Tourism has immense power to do well. Yet it can also be the vector for the very pressures that may destroy the assets on which it relies. Developed without concern for sustainability, tourism can not only damage societies and the environment, it could also contain the seeds of its own destruction. For governments, tourism policies that address economic, social and environmental issues, and which are developed with an awareness of the potential both for harm and for benefit, can channel the forces resulting from the sector's dynamic growth in a positive direction. For the tourism industry, accepting this responsibility is not only about good citizenship, it should also be fuelled by a strong element of self interest, since any harm that is inflicted to the natural, cultural or social environment of destinations can lead to their eventual destruction or loss of value as a tourism product. In economic terms, sustainability can guarantee that crucial factor already mentioned: 'the viability of enterprises and activities and their ability to be maintained in the long term'.

VI. STAKEHOLDER IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Many different interests can benefit from tourism being made more sustainable:

- Tourism enterprises, while seeking long term profitability, should be concerned about their corporate image, the relationship with their staff, and their impact on the global environment and that immediately around them.
- Local communities are seeking increased prosperity but without exploitation or damage to their quality of life.
- Environmentalists are concerned about the harmful impacts of tourism but also see it as a valuable source of income for conservation.
- Tourists are seeking a high quality experience in safe and attractive environments; they are more aware of the impacts of their travelling. In seeking more sustainable tourism, governments must recognize the different positions and motivations of these stakeholders and work with them to achieve common goals.

VII. WHAT IS RESPONSIBLE TOURISM?

Responsible Tourism was defined in Cape Town in 2002 alongside the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Responsible Tourism is about "making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit." Responsible Tourism requires that operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists take responsibility, take action to make tourism more sustainable.

The World Travel Market has adopted the Cape Town Declaration of Responsible Tourism Definition for its World Responsible Tourism Day which encourages the industry to take responsibility for making tourism more sustainable and demonstrate their responsibility. The Cape Town Declaration recognised that Responsible Tourism takes a variety of forms, it is characterised by travel and tourism which:

- Minimises negative economic, environmental and social impacts;
- Generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- Involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life changes;
- Makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- Provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- Provide access for people with disabilities and the disadvantaged;
- It is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence. Behaviour can be more or less responsible and what is responsible in a particular place depends upon its environment and culture.

VIII. KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACED IN DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DESTINATION

This paper shares several critical issues and challenges with regards to sustainability development. This includes understanding the sustainability level of a tourist destination and Identifying its key attributes, implementing destination competitiveness and sustainability and finally the marketing of responsible tourism to the relevant market segments. The key issues and challenges faced in building and developing sustainable tourism destination at both the local and/or national levels, as pointed out by Mathew (2009) are as follows:

1. The communication gaps which exist between communities and states; the lack of community participation at an early stage
2. The frequent non-involvement of communities at the planning level.
3. Lack of support and coordination amongst the various government and non-government agencies.
4. Lack of or limited entrepreneurial initiative guidance provided by the respective Government agencies involved in sustainable tourism development.
5. At the global level, there is an increasing complexity within the economy, environmental, political and social contexts.

These challenges can be categorized into three levels in the sustainable tourism destination conceptual framework, as pointed out by Ritchie and Crouch (2003):

- A. Integrated destination management and planning which deals with the destination system, value, vision, positioning, branding, development, monitoring/evaluation and audit;

- B. Supporting factors and resources, core resources and attractions (key attractions, infrastructure, accessibility, facilitating resources, hospitality, enterprise and political will);
- C. Finally amplifying determinants which include the factors of location, security/safety, cost/value, awareness/image, carrying capacity and interdependencies.

IX. HOW TO BE A RESPONSIBLE TOURIST?

Responsible Tourism harbours a belief, rather, a behaviour, that every tourist, local, business, or any other stakeholder should adapt to, each adhering to its responsibilities in whichever way possible, to go beyond mere gratification or financial rewards. As is described by Centres for Responsible Tourism around the world, it should aim to:

- Minimise negative economic, environmental, and social impacts
- Generate greater economic benefits for local people and enhance the well-being of host communities, improve working conditions and access to the industry
- Provide more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local culture, its social and environmental issues
- Provide access for people with disabilities
- Be culturally sensitive; engender respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

The Centre for Responsible Tourism, Goa, sums it up beautifully in “Tourism is fire minus the smoke.” But how do we reduce this smoke to a bare minimum?

Practical suggestions for being a Responsible Traveller:

Here are some suggestions that we can stick to and play our part in being a responsible traveller towards the larger picture. Remember, this is all about minimising the negative impact of our travel and maximising the benefits for the host country: ecologically and economically.

1. It is most advisable that we should educate our self beforehand about the culture, religion, geography, ecosystem, and customs of the destination that will plan to visit and save our self from any potential hassles as to what to wear, what to say, what to eat etc. There are many a guidebooks and online travelogues that will help you with it.
2. Try and learn a few words of the local language of the destination you are about to visit. This will not only help you travel safe locally, but also project to the locals about your willingness to take interest in their cultures and customs.
3. Before making hotel reservations in the destination you are about to visit, enquire with the owner or the manager about what measures the management and the staff is taking to promote responsible tourism from their end, or, how are they being responsible towards the environment, economy, and the culture of the place.
4. Try and keep your air travel time to bare minimum. This will reduce the carbon emissions from your end of travel. Make use of as much local transport: trains, buses.
5. Please don't litter the place. Whether it's a plastic bag or a paper one, dispose it o. Only when you see a proper dustbin. Again, please don't litter the pristine surroundings when on a high altitude or remote trek.
6. Pledge for a cleanup drive on every trip of yours. Wherever you see litter on the way, pick it up and put in your disposal bag to be disposed later. Even if it seems too much to handle single-handedly, don't give up; it all counts. Maybe, seeing you, others will join you as well.
7. There also are local N.G.O.'s and concerned people and travellers with whom you can un-litter at least a little portion of the town or village. Check with locals or your guide or tour operator for more information.
8. Water, in some countries, is worth more than precious stones. Use it wisely. If possible, take quick showers and try and go for the refill rather than purchasing a new bottle every time. This, eventually, will help bring down the number of scrapped plastic bottles up for waste or recycle.
9. When shopping for food, try and buy local produce rather than imported goods. And when shopping for souvenirs, buy them at the local markets.
10. Do not disturb the local flora and fauna of the place.

It is not an overnight transformation. It will take time, a few trips maybe, but accountability towards a healthy tourism and healthy world is ours, and it is, the way forward.

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