



Focus on the Strategies and Opportunities for Green Ecotourism

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *Tourism is an activity either for pleasure or leisure. There are many types of tourism. Among the various types, ecotourism has been given more importance in India due to its vast landscapes and natural resources. The Government of India and other state governments realizing the potentials of "Incredible India" have been very clear to protect the gifts of nature and its manifestation to promote ecotourism, which brings greater revenue both in terms of Indian currency and foreign exchange to the exchequer. Ecotourism has not only exerts pressure to protect nature but also paves way for cultural exchange, as India is known for its diversities. The contribution of private and government agencies of tourism in our country have contributed to the growth and evolution of ecotourism. In a developing country like India, since there is a potential threat due to huge population growth, indiscriminate disturbance to nature and industrialization, the importance of ecotourism has been felt and protective measures have been taken to promote ecotourism. The promotion of tourism has been based upon certain principles like minimizing industrial impact, spreading cultural awareness and protecting the gifts of nature. There has been a steady growth of ecotourism in our country due to the enchanting gifts of nature that has been reflected in the steady growth of tourists every year. The role of conservation to green ecotourism is more important and strategies have to be developed to promote and protect ecotourism in order to live a harmonious life with nature.*

INTRODUCTION

The tourism has witnessed a dramatic transformation into an economic and social activity. Previously travel and tourism was confined to a privileged group namely the rich, at the time of independence of India. But tourism is an industry with varied activities. The unique feature of tourism industry is that, it affords an opportunity to project flora and fauna and cultural heritage to attract the flow of tourists in totality based on natural resources. Tourism industry has a unique advantage of generating employment for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled persons. It ensures inclusive development for the locals. India has got enormous potential to be tapped.

Tourism denotes the temporary, short-term movement of people to destinations outside the place where they normally live and work and their activities during their stay at these destinations. It is an activity either for pleasure or leisure.

TYPES OF TOURISM :

There are various types of tourists products in India namely i) Eco Tourism ii) Rural tourism iii) Adventure Tourism iv) Spiritual tourism v) Ethnic Tourism vi) Medical Tourism vii) Dark Tourism and viii) Educational Tourism of late eco tourism has emerged as a natural tourism because it creates economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources which is more advantageous for human life. In India eco tourism saves natural resources that without it, might be exploited for economic gain in a more destructive fashion.

DEFINITION OF ECOTOURISM :

According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), Ecotourism is defined as "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well beings of local people". It contributes to the gift of the nature manifested on the earth. Ecological balance is the underlying current of Ecotourism.

ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF ECOTOURISM IN INDIA :

The concept of ecotourism has been evolved from creative strategic view for conservation, promotion and protection into an economic enterprise. Although its popularity is

gradually gaining the tourism industry more than any other type of travel, eco tourism has encountered many questions during the first few decades of its evolution. It is also greatly influenced by the goals of investors, developers, tour operators, economists and socio cultural agencies. There are many reasons for naturalistic and greening or ecotourism in India.

The responsible tourism is the ecofriendly tourism movement evolved during 1970s as a reaction to many negative consequences of tourism like prostitution, crime, drugs trafficking, cultural devastation, destruction of natural landscape and natural resources and economic discrepancies. The movement grew to include cultural organizations, educational groups, ethnic institutions and friendship tours. Active participation and grass root involvement of local communities at different is felt. Benefit of community stands at the core of debate. Conservationists and planners realized the role of community in controlling the wilderness of tourist destinations and a widespread awareness has been created among tourists not to disturb the wilderness of nature and its beauty in recent years. Travel agencies are very careful to see that the environment and atmosphere of destinations are not spoiled.

IMPORTANCE OF ECOTOURISM IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES :

Eco tourism is a fast emerging concept in tourism industry. It has gained momentum in all developing countries. The developing countries like India and South Africa though rich in flora and fauna face challenges due to manmade disturbances to their ecological balance. If ecological balance is disturbed, ecotourism is also disturbed. In order to preserve the eco tourism, It becomes imperative on the part of developing countries to preserve the rich ecological heritage. It must also encourage preserving the flora and fauna as well as cleanliness of environment by making as little impact as possible when visiting an ecological habitat. The growth of population and industrialization in developing countries pose a big problem to developing countries to promote eco tourism. They are great challenges. These challenges should be encountered with seriousness without any hindrance to

geographical varieties and innumerable species of plants and wildlife. The preservation of natural wealth and resources besides ecological balance become more important for developing countries to encourage eco tourism. Manmade disasters and devastations are less only in developing and underdeveloped countries as they have not seen over industrialization in comparison to developed countries. But the steady growth and increase of population may pose potential for the growth of eco tourism.

PRINCIPLES OF ECOTOURISM :

Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities and sustainable travel. It means that those who implement and participate in eco tourism activities should follow the below stated eco tourism principles.

- Minimize industrial impact on the environment
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental and social climate.

GROWTH OF ECOTOURISM IN INDIA:

India, the land of geographical diversities and wonders, offers excellent options for eco tourism. No country in this world offers as much geographical varieties as India. Be it the highest mountain ranges of the world in the majestic Himalayas, enchanting beautiful hill stations, beaches, lush green national parks and sanctuaries with innumerable species of plants and wildlife. India is one of the most favourite eco tourism destinations in the world. It encourages preserving the flora and fauna and as well as cleanliness of environment. The country has immense potential for its growth, as it offers numerous eco tourism destinations for their natural beauty and exquisite landscape.

The India topography boasts an abundant source of flora and fauna. India has numerous rare and endangered species in its surroundings. The declaration of several wildlife areas and natural parks has encouraged the growth of wildlife resource. Currently, there are about 80 natural parks and 441 sanctuaries in India, which works for the protection and conservation of wildlife resources in India. There are numerous botanical and zoological gardens in India, which are working towards the enhancement of ecosystem. All these enchanting gifts of the nature reflect in the growth of the number of tourists every year. The private travel agencies, Tourism Development Corporation of India and the State Tourism Development Corporations contribute heavily to the growth of Ecotourism in our country. This shows "Incredible India" paves way for the steady growth of Ecotourism.

ROLE OF CONSERVATION TO GREEN ECOTOURISM :

Indian sub continent have coexisted with plants and animals for atleast 50,000 years. The modern culture and nature conservation movement had its origins in the conservation interests of aristocrats, sports persons and naturalists. The eco tourism seems to be at crossroads in its development and confronted with serious and difficult choices about its future in terms of sustainability and compatibility with environment protection and community development. Since the environment is the travel industry base product, keeping in view the present situation in India and future demands of the industry. It has recently been decided to promote eco tourism in India. Ecotourism allows visitors to enjoy an attraction with a volume of tourists with natural green sceneries and excellent wildlife sanctuaries.

There is a need to develop an eco tourism policy that is holistic, practicable and provides sensible linkages of social and natural environments by encompassing all relevant parameters. An eco tourism policy should have following compo-

nents in its framework.

- Recognition of the interface between tourism and environment.
- Avoidance of excessively reductionistic and limited perspective provided by a carrying capacity based approach.
- Provision of a better understanding of tourists value and natural environments.
- Enhancements of the communities dependent on Eco tourism as an industry.
- Identification of social and environmental impact of natural tourism.
- Implementation of systems to manage these impacts.

STRATEGIES AND FOCUS TO GREEN ECOTOURISM IN INDIA :

With growing urbanization and industrialization coupled with increased pressure on natural resources due to population explosion, the country has the responsibility to make certain essential natural resource management to flourish green ecotourism. The Government of India has decided to involve citizens in environmental management, as a part of strategic measure to improve ecotourism in India. On the other hand, wildlife sanctuaries and national parks are being established in all parts of India to develop green ecotourism. Certain kind of informal education is used as a strategic tool in promoting ecotourism in developing countries like India, where financial resources are very limited. Major sections of the society are encouraged to undertake tours in different parts of India. The Government, academic institutions and private sector provide concessions to the people for the growth of ecotourism for the nation.

NATIONAL INCOME THROUGH GREEN ECOTOURISM IN INDIA :

In 2001 India had more than 2.5 million inbound visitors and 234 million domestic tourists every year. The travel and tourism industry accounts for nearly 6% of India's jobs and 4.8% of GDP, taking into account direct and indirect employment. But this is set to grow further.

The World Travel and Tourism Council predicted that in 2003 alone, tourism demand in India would increase by more than 7% to US \$30. 1 billion. Over the next decade the Council predicts :

- 8.8% annual growth in tourism demand
- 7.9% growth per annum in tourism-related GDP
- 10.5% annual growth in overseas visitors
- 7.5% increase per annum in capital investment in tourism
- 5.1% annual growth in government expenditure on tourism

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) predicts that India will be hosting 5.08 million tourists by the end of 2010 and 8.09 million by 2020 if the ecotourism is implemented properly by integrating the conservation and rural development of natural resources. Further it will help to generate national income, stimulate economic development and provide jobs and market for local goods. The effect the local level can be anywhere from minimal to substantial, depending on the scale of ecotourism relative to the size of local economy.

CONCLUSION :

There are plenty of ecotourism success stories in India. Still there are some existing projects of green ecotourism in the country, it becomes obvious more importance has been thrown to green ecotourism. There is ample room to change or expand the concept of green ecotourism due to the driven force of modern tourists in one hand and planners, policy makers and local partners on the other hand. The increasing number of tourists towards the green ecotourism stands ahead and it brings glory to Indian economy. In future ecotourism will project to the greatest extent in terms of both

tourists and revenues. Let us join together to protect environment for ecotourism and protect environment from tourism.

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