Research Paper History

Tourism and Environmental Audit

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is travel for recreational, leisure, or business purposes, usually of a limited duration. Tourism is commonly associated with trans-national travel, but may also refer to travel to another location within the same country. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes". Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. Tourism can be domestic or international, and international tourism has both incoming and outgoing implications on a country's balance of payments. Today, tourism is major source of income for many countries, and affects the economy of both the source and host countries, in some cases it is of vital importance. In 1936, the League of Nations defined a foreign tourist as "someone traveling abroad for at least twenty-four hours". Its successor, the United Nations, amended this definition in 1945, by including a maximum stay of six months. Environmental audit is a general term that can reflect various types or evaluations intended to identify environmental compliance and management system implementation gaps, along with related corrective actions. In this way they perform an analogous (similar) function to financial audits. There are generally two different types of environmental audits: compliance audits and management systems audits. Compliance audits tend to be the primary type in the US or within US-based multinationals

KEYWORDS

Despite the international meet at Stockholm in 1972 and at Rio in 1992 environment of our mother earth further deteriorated and the ecological imbalance intensified. To achieve all round success in this field, it is necessary that environmental commitments must acquire cultural and spiritual base. Religious spiritual and cultural tradition can contribute to a great extent for the protection of environmental improvement. The present environmental problem lies in our prevalent model of development, which has established consumerism as an index of development.

We have inherited a beautiful a vast, green and full of fascinating human beings, animals, birds, oceans, grass lands, forests and deserts. In recorded history there have been instances whereby one is able to know that man has been travelling throughout the ages to understand the surroundings and environment. Travel for religious purposes was a significant development in the history of mankind. It became a great unifying force and the travels strengthened cultural and social bonds. It also served as a powerful means of understand environment and its importance for sustaining a harmonious life.

The concept of modern tourism, as we understand it today is relatively new, not more than sixty years old. It is a new economic phenomenon, a new business, a new industry of vast dimensions and magnitude. The tourism activities will, if properly organized, will promote ecological consciousness among the people so that the eco-friendly behavior can be promoted.

Environmental audit is defined that "an assessment of the extent to which an organization is observing practices which minimize harm to the environment."[1]

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Today, the problem of global ecological crisis is due to the ecological balance that has been wildly disturbed by our present day lifestyle, particularly by the wanton destruction of the animal and plant life in the civilized societies. The western economists theory says that we have unlimited wants and limited resources, and the capitalists says that we can use as much resources as possible to become rich. This has caused what economists call scarcity. Whereas the Eastern thought doesn't believe in exploiting the resources till they become scarce. They try to reach certain equilibrium where the usage becomes sustainable. Societies who over exploited the resources died out.

Today, the global ecological crisis that is threatening the entire human race is becoming a matter of grave concern for all of us and especially for those who are conscientiously aware. For those who are not aware they forget one thing and that is when one life is threatened, all life is at risk. It is important to know that each of us is a vital thread in another's life tapestry and our lives are woven together for a reason survival and to be happy.

Have we ever wondered how so many invisible lives have made our single day livable and comfortable? How the microcosm is connected to the macrocosm and the macrocosm to the microcosm? How we are indebted to everything that assists us?

In the words of Nathaniel Altman, who depicts a better pic-

ture of interdependence, "Grass, for example, provides nourishment for millions of tiny invertebrates, which in turn are food for insects. The insects are eaten by frogs and small snakes, which provide nourishment for birds. When the larger animals die, they provide food for other living things, and as they decompose, they fertilize the soil on which grass is grown. When this "food chain" is disrupted, the very fiber of life on this planet is affected. As with a house of cards, the removal of one card can bring about the collapse of the entire structure." [4]

We do not realize that we are interrelated and bound together by mutual support and interdependence with all life force. Each living thing depends on another for insuring its survival. We cannot live a single day without the help of others. Therefore, it is important to know that all life is a gift of togetherness, accommodation and assistance which lead to mutual peace and harmony. This fundamental natural phenomenon of symbiosis or mutual dependence forms the basis of modern day science of ecology. Eco-friendly tourism if promoted, it will help to understand the real value of this concept. Eco-friendly tourism is responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people. It is rightly observed that Eco-tourism is nature based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable.[5] This observation recognizes that natural environment includes cultural components and that ecologically sustainable involves an appropriate return to the local community and long term conservation of the resources.

By promoting the concept of Eco-friendly tourism we can create awareness among the people the importance of environmental protection. Hence it can be said that the educative characteristic of eco friendly tourism is a key element which distinguishes it from other forms of tourism. Environmental education and interpretation are important tools in creating an enjoyable and meaningful eco-tourism experience. It attracts people who wish to interact with the environment in order to develop their knowledge, awareness and appreciation of it. By extension, eco-friendly tourism should ideally lead to positive action for the environment by fostering enhanced conservation awareness. Eco-tourism education can influence tourist community and industry behavior and assist in the longer term sustainability of tourist activity in natural areas. Eco-tourism is useful as a management tool of natural areas. Interpretation helps tourists see the big picture regarding the environment.

Tourist management and promotion in natural areas serves two main objectives-the reduction of adverse environmental impacts and the enhancement of tourist experiences towards environmental audit. The development of eco-friendly tourism in a given region shall comprise the identification of development of existing and potential touring routes which link gateway areas with destinations zones. Hence the touring system shall include the attractions, transport, services and information functions for creating eco awareness. It paves the way for environmental audit which in turn prevent the damage to it.

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