



Improving Sustainable Development of Ecotourism in India – a View

DR. (Mrs). A. Bhavani Asst. Prof. in History Department, E.M.G. Yadava women’s college

ABSTRACT

In this paper I have discussed with the development of ecotourism in India, The tourism industry is global. It is big business and will continue to grow. Meeting this growth with well-planning all over the world. When we think of tourism, we think primarily of people who are visiting a particular place for sightseeing, visiting friends and relatives, taking a vacation, and having a good time. They may spend their leisure time engaging in various sports, sunbathing, talking, and singing, taking rides, touring, reading, or simply enjoying the environment. In the global scenario, tourism is the world’s largest industry. Ecotourism has received much attention in recent years, especially within the developing world. It has been linked to sustainable development initiatives, protected area, conservation efforts and regional and community development strategies in many places. In today’s world eco-tourism is the only tool for sustainable development. Ecotourism has lot of scope and at the same time there are problems too.

KEYWORDS

sustainable development, economic development, opportunities, pollution.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism as we understand the term today is of relatively modern, origin. It is distinguishable by its mass character from the travel undertaken in the past. The mass movement of people annually from their home location to another country for temporary stay for a few days or weeks is a growth very largely of recent origin. Although the annual migration of people began rather more than a century ago.

There are a myriad of definitions for Sustainable Tourism, including eco tourism, green travel, environmentally and culturally responsible tourism, fair trade and ethical travel. The most widely accepted definition is that of the World Tourism Organization. They define sustainable tourism as:

“Tourism which leads 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”

The word „ecotourism means tourism directed towards unspoilt natural environments and for to support conservation efforts. Ceballos-Lascurain (1990) provided one of most comprehensive consumer –centered definitions. He argued,

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DEFINITION OF ECOTOURISM

The term “ecotourism” can be used to refer to any form of tourism development, which is regarded as environment friendly.”The International Ecotourism Society (2001) uses the following definition to define the ecotourism.

Ecotourism covers the ecological, economic and community issues. The ecological aspect means that ecotourism contributes positively to the conservation of nature. The economic aspect means it is a tool for a sustainable economy. Community opinion requires ecotourism to empower the community in an economic sense by giving roles in ecotourism to local people and by improving their participation in conservation

ECO TOURISM IN INDIA:

In last twenty years India has opened its doors to international visitors and is now fostering tourism largely to gain an increase in foreign earning to help its economy in 1996, 2.2m international tourists visited the country an increase in foreign earnings to help its economy In 1996, 2.2m international tourists visited the country, an increase of 12.6% on the previous year. However, India’s tourism infrastructure is barely keeping pace with the industry increase and problems are evident in the accommodation, transport and personnel sectors. In addition India has real problems with environmental pollution and tourist pressures causing substantial damages to its natural treasures, wildlife, historic sites and cultural relics.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ECOTOURISM

Some of the general characteristics of eco-tourism are: It should be nature-based and ecologically sustainable involving appropriate returns to the local community and long-term conservation of resources. It should involve education and interpretation of natural environment to manage it in an ecologically sustainable way. It should also support the protection of natural areas by creating economic opportunities and providing alternative employment for local communities. Local community involvement is very much crucial for the sustainable ecotourism practices. More broad based democratic participation of the local communities in planning and implementation of ecotourism programmers would ensure long term sustainability.

ECOTOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

The concept of sustainable Development first originated in the World Conservation strategy published by the World Conservation unit in 1980 .India is one of those rarest countries, which is a wonderful blend of all the resources essential to make it a golden star on the tourism map of the world. To maintain ecological balance and preservation of indigenous culture of the local people, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India has advocated super segmentations of the tourism market in the tourism policy of 2002.

The special segments are eco-tourism, cultural tourism and heritage tourism. With a view to create employment opportunities and bring about socio-economic benefits to the local communities in the interior and remote areas and preserve, enrich and promote Indian cultural heritage, special provisions are made in the new tourism policy. India is a country where unity in diversity is prevailing. India has a wide range of geo-climatic conditions and varieties of flora and fauna

and also diverse human culture. Thenmala in Kerala is the first planned eco-tourism destination in India created to cater to the eco-tourists. There are six types of areas that are being promoted as eco-tourism sectors in India. These are

- (1) biosphere reserves of the Nilgiris, Great Nicobars etc.,
- (2) mangroves of northern Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Sunder bans and Goa, etc.,
- (3) coral reefs of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep Islands and Gulf of Kutch etc.,
- (4) the Great Thar Desert,
- (5) mountains and forests, and
- (6) flora and fauna.

PRINCIPLES OF ECOTOURISM

Fundamentally, eco-tourism means making as little environmental impact as possible and helping to sustain the indigenous populace, thereby encouraging the preservation of wild-life and habitats when visiting a place. This is responsible form of tourism and tourism development, which encourages going back to natural products in every aspect of life. It is also the key to sustainable ecological development.

The International Eco-tourism Society defines eco-tourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." This means that those who implement and participate in Eco-tourism activities should follow the following principles:

- Minimize impact
- 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
- Support international human rights and labor agreements

CHALLENGES TO ECOTOURISM:

Eco-tourism in India is facing various challenges mainly due to lack of infrastructural facilities such as roads and accommodation, strategic business plans, well-trained nature guides, methods of gaining community consensus and awareness programmes etc. . To attract eco-tourists, many terms such as nature tourism, green tourism and bio-tourism etc., are used in the name of eco-tourism although they are not synonymous with eco-tourism.

Some of the different kinds of impacts that ecotourism development and operational activities can have include;

- **Threats to ecosystems and biodiversity** :e.g loss of wildlife and rare species ,habitat loss and degradation,
- **Disruption of coasts**:e.g shoreline erosion and pollution, impact to coral reefs and fish spawning grounds,
- **Deforestation**: loss of forests for fuel wood and timber by the tourist industry also impact on soil and water quality, biodiversity integrity, reducing the collection of forest products by local communities,
- **Water overuse**: as a result of tourist recreational activities e.g golf courses, swimming pools , and tourist consumption in hotels,
- **Urban problems**: Congestion and overcrowding, increased vehicle traffic and resultant environmental impacts, including air and noise pollution, and health impacts,
- **Exacerbate climate change**: from fossil fuel energy consumption for travel , hotel and recreational requirements,

- **Unsustainable and inequitable resource use**: Energy and water over consumption, excessive production of wastes, are all common impacts.

IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT

Ecotourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the tourism industry, growing annually by 10–15% in India. One definition of ecotourism is "**the practice of low-impact, educational, ecologically and culturally sensitive travel that benefits local communities and host countries**". The sustainable development of tourism has the following responsible factors.

Regulation and Accreditation

This suggests a management plan, benefit for the local community, small group interaction, education value and staff training. The ecotourists who consider their choices would be confident of a genuine ecotourism experience when they see the higher star rating. In addition, **environmental impact assessments** could be used as a form of accreditation. Feasibility is evaluated from a scientific basis, and recommendations could be made to optimally plan infrastructure, set tourist capacity, and manage the ecology. This form of accreditation is more sensitive to site specific conditions.

Guidelines and Education

The ecotourism experience is marketed to a different lifestyle from large scale ecotourism, the development of facilities and infrastructure does not need to conform to corporate Western tourism standards, and can be much simpler and less expensive. There is a greater **multiplier form of effect** on the economy, because local products, materials, and labor are used. Profits accrue locally and **import** leakages are reduced. The basic assumption of the multiplier effect is that the economy starts off with unused resources, for example, that many workers are cyclically unemployed and much of industrial capacity is sitting idle or incompletely utilized.

The **multiplier form of effect** arises because of the induced increases in consumer spending which occur due to the increased incomes and because of the feedback into increasing business revenues, jobs, and income again. This process does not lead to an economic explosion not only because of the supply-side barriers at potential output but because at each "round", the increase in consumer spending is less than the increase in consumer incomes. Each increase in spending is thus smaller than that of the previous round, preventing an explosion.

CONCLUSION

Ecotourism is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people". A several strategy for conservation and development studies are being done on ways to improve the ecotourism structure. As stated, the ecotourism structure must be improved to direct more money into host communities by reducing leakages for the industry to be successful in alleviating poverty in developing regions, but it provides a promising opportunity. Any form of tourism that does not reduce the availability of resources and does not inhibit future travelers from enjoying the same experience. Some Indian school on a free flowing river is an example of sustainable tourism. Although ecotourists claim to be educationally sophisticated and environmentally concerned, they rarely understand the ecological consequences of their visits and how their day-to-day activities append physical impacts on the environment. Eco-tourism is considered the fastest growing market in the tourism industry of various states in India.

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