

Green Tourism: Need for sustainable Development in the Tourism Industry

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has a dominant role to play in strengthening the economy of the nation. It has great significance with regard to foreign relations. There are strong cultural roots in tourism. The three important sectors contributing to the growth of Indian economy are agriculture, industry, and tourism, out of which tourism can be regarded as the largest and fastest contributor. It has very high significance in the development of the economy, exchange of knowledge, technology, marketing, commerce, and industrial exhibitions and these are the major factors generating the demand for tourism. There is a dire need to control the tourism industry, and more important, to protect and conserve the biodiversity of tourist places. Dealing predominantly with such serious issues, sustainable tourism is very important, as it is all about conserving the resources, valuing the local culture and tradition and, contributing largely to economy. Think of environmentally friendly businesses, and we probably think of things like solar power, green building and recycling, but according to a report by the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP), one of the most promising things, when it comes to creating economic growth, reducing poverty, fueling job creation and addressing major environmental challenges -- turns out to be sustainable tourism. India, though it provides a multi-dimensional ground to attract the tourist has not yet succeeded in this aspect. This paper attempts to highlight the importance of Green Tourism which is the need for sustainable development in the tourism industry.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Green Tourism, Eco-Friendly Business, Green Industry

Tourism is the largest as well as the fastest industry of the world. Culturally India is a country of very rich interest. India is a unique country having cultural roots as old as rarely seen elsewhere in this world and considered to be the best place of tourism. India's glorious traditions and rich cultural heritage are closely related with the development of tourism. Its magnificent monuments attract a large number of tourists from all over the world. In Sanskrit literature the three famous words "Aththi Devo Bhava" means "the guest is truly God" "are a dictum of hospitality in India. The main elements of tourism which attract tourist to a particular destination fall under following categories: 1) Pleasant climate 2) Scenic attraction 3) Historical & cultural attraction 4) Accessibility 5) Shopping 6) Adventure 7) Variety of cuisines 8) Accommodation 9) Relaxation & recreation 10) Health care projects.

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Therefore, it has been rightly said that the core concept of tourism revolves around for 4 A's
(a) Attraction (b) Accessibility (c) Amenities (d) Ancillary services.

In general, it is said that of every ten person one is a tourist. This in turn led to the investment of \$350 billion dollar in world tourism. Spain attracts not less than 5 crore tourists a year and China has also accelerated its progress in tourism. It is quite possible and feasible for India to divert the attention of global tourists to India subject to sustainable development in tourism industry.

RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of tourism development is widely recognized as a tool for faster economic development particularly in the developing nations like India. While the general pattern is that of a fast-growing tourism initiative the world over, the adverse impacts of tourism are dangerously on the rise in many parts of the world, particularly the degradation of the environment, fast depletion of natural resources, adverse effect on bio-diversity and ecological balance, and the like. Accordingly, there is an enhanced significance for development of 'nature friendly' tourism, ecotourism, or Green Tourism. India with its geographical diversity has been endowed with a wealth of eco- systems comprising biosphere reserves, mangroves, coral and coral reefs, deserts, mountains and forests, flora and fauna, sea, lake, river and other water bodies.

These eco-systems form the major resources for ecotourism. Unfortunately, during the last decade or so there has been a mushrooming of concrete buildings in the form of hotels, industries, and lodging houses in eco-fragile areas, poaching of rare marine and wild life with little concern for the environment or aesthetics. This unplanned development activity has had an adverse effect on both environment and tourism, for example, Manali in Himachal Pradesh, an important tourist resort, and a longtime favorite with domestic and international tourists. For the past six years, the hill resort has been subjected to unregulated urban expansion which has resulted in the mushrooming of numerous multi-storied buildings around the town. The hotels have been discharging sewage into the Beas River causing water pollution. The green area of this township has diminished rapidly, thereby, destroying the natural landscape, and the pedestrian path has become a regular vehicular road causing air and noise pollution. An estimated 1.3 billion liters of sewage goes directly into the river, along with thousands of animal carcasses. Another 260 million liters of industrial waste is added to this by hundreds of factories on the banks each day. 'ECO Friends', a Kanpur based NGO is communicating its slogan 'Think Green, Talk Green & Act Green' to sensitize and mobilize the support of local citizens, students and children. Sustainable tourism can provide solutions to the issues of inclusive growth. Besides, the 'return to roots' focus, in tourism, is interlinked with increased access to information, enlarged interest in heritage and culture, improved accessibility and climate change concerns.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study about Sustainable Tourism
2. To know about the Characteristics and Principles of Sustainable tourism
3. To understand the relationship between Eco Tourism and Sustainable Tourism
4. To understand the Possibilities of Implementing Sustainable tourism nationwide and Globally
5. To study the Challenges while Implementing sustainable Green Tourism

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Sustainable tourism is a kind of approach to tourism meant to make the development of tourism ecologically supportable in the long term. The very importance of sustainable tourism lies in its motives to conserve the resources and increase the value of local culture and tradition. Sustainable tourism is a responsible tourism intending to generate employment and income along with alleviating any deeper impact on environment and local culture.

Characteristics of Sustainable Tourism:

- Sustainable Tourism tries its utmost to maintain the importance of local culture and tradition.
- Sustainable Tourism is informative, as it doesn't only let tourist know about the destinations but also it helps locals knowing about the culture and civilization of tourists.
- This kind of tourism is aimed to conserve the resources of destinations where one is visiting.
- Sustainable Tourism seeks deeper involvement of locals, which provide local people an opportunity and make their living. Above all, Sustainable Tourism stresses pointedly upon integrity of the tourist places.

Principles of Sustainable Tourism:

With the increased footfalls of tourists, the deep need today is that tourism like other sectors be planned and managed suitably. Sustainable development of tourism is possible only if it follows some of its guidelines and principles.

- Tourism ought to be initiated at any location with the help of local community. The involvement of local community helps maintaining the appropriate tourism development.
- The local community has to meet the direct benefit of flourishing tourism in their area. Link between local business and tourism enable local people gain economically as well.
- To cause large growth in sustainable development, there is need that codes, ethics and some fair guidelines be appointed.

In order to heighten the importance of heritage and natural resources, and manage them better, training and education programme should be instituted.

Relationship between Ecotourism and Sustainable tourism: Ecotourism basically deals with nature based tourism, and is aimed “to conserve the environment and improves the well-being of local people”. On the other hand, sustainable tourism includes all segments of tourism, and has same function to perform as of ecotourism – to conserve the resources and increase the local cultural and traditional value. Though the goals of ecotourism and sustainable tourism is much similar, but the latter is broader and conceals within itself very many aspects and categories of tourism. Implementation of Sustainable tourism Sustainable tourism implies minimizing the negative and maximizing the positive effects of all forms and activities of tourism on:

- a. Environment
- b. Local Communities
- c. Heritage (cultural, natural, built, oral, intangible)
- d. Inclusive economic growth

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The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNWTO brought out a publication entitled “Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers”. This lists the following aims of an agenda for sustainable tourism:

- a. Economic Viability
- b. Local Prosperity
- c. Employment Quality
- d. Social Equity
- e. Visitor Fulfillment
- f. Local Control
- g. Community Wellbeing
- h. Cultural Richness
- i. Physical Integrity
- j. Biological Diversity
- k. Resource Efficiency
- l. Environmental Purity

The implementation of Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI) will progress on the basis of:

1. Workshops to advocate sustainability by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, for all stakeholders across the regions of the country.
2. Extensive range of incentives for establishments, specially focusing on international market access, through the Ministry’s Market Development Assistance scheme, and also, operational advantage concerning energy, water and other input requirements, as feasible.
3. Ministry of Tourism, Government of India support to proposals from all tourism sector associations for skill development, as in ‘Hunar Se Rozgar’ for unskilled, low-skilled and, semi-skilled and craftsperson categories.
4. MSME tourism service providers to be specially supported after meeting eligibility compliance conditions.
5. Certification through innovative use of existing mechanisms, there is a need for appointing consultants or a project monitoring unit.
6. Training of Trainers for Sustainable Tourism through institutional arrangements.
7. School and college curricula to incorporate sustainable tourism.
8. Advance calendar of participatory activities, displayed on the Ministry’s website.
9. Capacity building in industry and Government by identifying institutions for developing a pool of trainers, training of trainers, etc.
10. Evolving governance coefficients, using contemporary technology, for incorporation in the rating / approval mechanism, to enable realistic monitoring and evaluation of sustainable tourism implementation by all tourism industry constituents.

National Policy on Green tourism. The Department of Tourism has come up with a set of policies and guidelines for the development of ecotourism/Green Tourism in pursuance of the Government policy. These have been formulated after analyzing the documents of various national and international organizations working in this field. According to the guidelines, a selective approach, scientific planning, effective control and continuous monitoring has to be adopted, to help preserve, retain and enrich our world-view and life-style, our cultural expressions and heritage in all its manifestations.

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Global Initiatives:

The concept of environmentally responsible tourism floated by Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) rests on the basic premise that organized tourism can contribute to the development of areas worthy of conservation as well as determine the level of development. Thus, environmental Impact assessment becomes an integral step in the consideration of any site for a tourism project.

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) in its guidelines for systematic and comprehensive environmental programmes give utmost importance to environmental concerns in design planning, construction and implementation. It also advocates being sensitive to conservation of environmentally protected or threatened areas, species and scenic aesthetics, achieving landscape enhancement where possible, practicing energy conservation and reducing and recycling wastes.

Challenges of Sustainable Tourism:

- Preserving natural and cultural resources
- Limiting negative impacts at tourist destinations, including use of natural resources and waste production
- Promoting the wellbeing of the local community
- Reducing the seasonality of demand
- Limiting the environmental impact of tourism related transport
- Making tourism accessible to all
- Improving the quality of tourism jobs

The Solution: Although not everything depends on tourism, tourism depends on almost everything.

A balance must be found between limits and usage so that continuous changing, monitoring and planning ensure that tourism can be managed. This requires thinking long-term (10, 20+ years) and realizing that change is often cumulative, gradual and irreversible. Economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development must include the interests of all stakeholders including indigenous people, local communities, visitors, industry and government.

What can we do?

Address environmental and social concerns through policies, practices and initiatives with others.

Travel Tips – Responsible Travel Tips

- Be considerate – of the communities and environment you visit.
- Do not litter.
- Carry your own shopping bag to avoid contributing to the plastic problem in many countries of the world.
- Remove all packaging before leaving home...avoid excessive waste and the use of plastic bottles (in many countries there is no way of disposing of these, therefore creating plastic mountains due to tourism)
- Bring your own mug and consider purifying your own water (life straws are great)
- Reduce energy consumption. Unplug your mobile phone charger, turn off the lights...

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- Conserve water. Take shorter showers... the average hotel guest uses over 300 liters of water per night! In a luxury hotel it is approximately 1800 liters!
- Always ask before taking photographs. If someone says no, respect their wishes.
- Educate yourself about the place you are visiting and the people – you are their guest.
- Respect cultural differences – and learn from it! People in different places do things differently – do not try to change them – enjoy it.
- Dress respectfully. Cover up away from the beach. Cover your head in religious places. Notice local dress codes and adhere to them.
- Do not purchase or eat endangered species (e.g. turtle egg soup, crocodile handbags).
- Choose sustainable seafood
- Support the local economy. Buy locally made souvenirs, eat at local restaurants – enjoy the local culture!
- Do not give pens, candy or other gifts to local children – it fosters a begging economy. If you wish to donate, contact a local school or tour operator who can ensure the gifts are distributed fairly and properly.
- Do not support the illegal drug trade or the sex trade. Recognize the signs of human trafficking
- Take public transit. Use a bicycle. Or if you must rent a car – why not a hybrid or electric one if available?
- Support a local charity or organizations that works towards responsible tourism – if you aren't sure – ask around, it's a great way to start a conversation
- Before you go, ask your travel provider (tour operator, travel agent) about the company's environmental and responsible tourism policies – support those who support responsible tourism.
- Ask your accommodation provider (hotel, guest house, lodge) about their sustainability practices – do they compost? Recycle? Have fair labor laws? Have an environmental policy?
- Support responsible tourism organizations – those operators who publicly are aiming to make tourism more responsible.
- Support local organizations – either in the place you visit or where you live.



Travel Tips – Carbon Conscious Tips:

TIPS for becoming a carbon conscious traveler

WHEN ON HOLIDAY OR A TRIP – REDUCING ENERGY WILL REDUCE CARBON

- ❖ **Turn off your lights when you leave your hotel room**
- ❖ **Put on a Sweater**
- ❖ Wear more clothes instead of turning up the thermostat.
- ❖ **Turn off Your Computer**
- ❖ Shut off your computer when not in use. Conserve energy by using your computer's "sleep mode" instead of a screensaver.
- ❖ **Unplug Unused Electronics (even your mobile phone)**
- ❖ **Take Shorter Showers**
- ❖ Take quick showers using less hot water means using less energy.
- ❖ **Air Dry Your Clothes**
- ❖ Instead of using the dryer, line-dry your clothes which will reduce energy
- ❖ **Recycle**
- ❖ Recycle paper, plastic and glass.
- ❖ **Buy Organic Food**
- ❖ There are chemicals used in modern agriculture pollute that pollute the water supply, and require energy to produce.
- ❖ **Bring Cloth Bags to the Market**
- ❖ Use cloth or reusable bags when shopping instead of plastic or paper bags.
- ❖ **Buy Products Locally**
- ❖ Reduce the amount of energy required to drive your products to your store.
- ❖ **Buy Minimally Packaged Goods**
- ❖ Buy products with less packaging or buy in bulk.
- ❖ **Buy produce that is in season**
- ❖ Less energy is wasted for the production of out of season produce

WHEN TRAVELING BY PLANE

- ❖ **Fly less**
- ❖ Reduce how much you fly by even one or two trips a year that will reduce your emissions significantly – videoconference if you can... or if you need to fly:
- ❖ Try to fly direct (this will reduce your emissions)
- ❖ **Offset your flight**
- ❖ Neutralize your carbon emissions by offsetting your flight.

WHEN TRAVELLING ANYWHERE ELSE

- ❖ **Use public transportation wherever possible, such as the train, bus, cycle, or just walk.**
- ❖ **Plan Ahead**
- ❖ Do several errands in one trip, carpool, and use uncongested routes.
- ❖ **Change Your Air Filter**
- ❖ Check your car's air filter monthly to increase your fuel economy.
- ❖ **Buy or rent a Hybrid Car**
- ❖ Hybrids save an enormous amount of CO2 and money. Plug-in hybrids can save even more.

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- ❖ Buy a Fuel Efficient Car (Fuel efficient cars use less fuel per mile or km)
- ❖ **Inflate Your Tires**
- ❖ Check them monthly and keep them at the maximum recommended pressure.
- ❖ **Don't Idle in Your Car**
- ❖ Except when in traffic, turn your engine off if you must wait for more than 30 seconds. Do not idle the car if it is cold, drive as soon as you start the car.
- ❖ **Lose weight**
- ❖ Remove car racks and other objects that add on unnecessary weight.
- ❖ **Reduce the air conditioning**
- ❖ Do not keep the windows open when the air conditioning is on. Try to reduce the usage of air conditioning because it increases fuel consumption, use the air vents instead.
- ❖ **Cruise Control**
- ❖ Use the cruise control function when possible, especially on long journeys. Sharp breaking and accelerating wastes fuel.

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CONCLUSION

There can be no economic growth in tourism without sustainability, without conservation of natural resources and without incentives to citizenship. Long term sustainability requires a balance between sustainability in economic, socio-cultural, and environmental terms. The need

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to reconcile economic growth and sustainable development also brings in an ethical dimension. Tourism will thus emerge as a key factor in eco-development in the coming years and can only develop with people's participation. It is more important than ever that we support green innovation as a catalyst of tourism's sustainable growth.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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