

## Need and Importance of Sustainable Tourism in India: An Overview

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**Abstract:** It is a well known fact that India is a country which is emerging as a hub of tourism sector in the recent years. It is evident that there are the natural, cultural as well as human resources in the country through the ages and more than 70 percent of the population resides in remote and rural areas. Therefore, the core beauty and essence of India is hence lies in the rural places only. Moreover, rural areas are based on agricultural activities. Still a large number of people use traditional practices in agriculture sector which are sustainable to human development. Consequently, rural tourism has become a key sector of tourism industry in the recent years. Now, the necessity of sustainability and development of the society by the tourism is felt by the environmentalists and intellectuals. Today, government of India has been taking some effective steps to make the tourism business eco friendly and sustainable. That is why; sustainable tourism has become a major focus in the debate on environmentally integrated tourism development, but existing research shows that sustainability is a complex concept, and one that requires more critical and comprehensive analysis.

**Keywords:** Tourism Sector, Eco-friendly, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Tourism.

**Introduction:** Today, tourism is recognized as a resource-intensive industry, therefore, here it is urgent need to make it accountable in terms of sustainability at both local and global scales. The fact is that as the economy grows the demand for services increases. Recently, the service sector accounts for 54 percent of GDP in India and is currently the fastest growing sector of the economy. In this perspective, the hospitality and tourism sector is an important contributor for the growth of Indian economy. Therefore, the tourism industry in India is expected to achieve the fastest rate of growth of any economic sector. In the wake of liberalization, privatization and globalization, tourism sector in India is rapidly changing and highly competitive with full

potential in the changing global scenario. Moreover, this sector is strategically working to develop sustainable competitive advantage across the world. Now, it is playing a vital role to boost the economic growth and GDP of the country by generating new job opportunities for the unemployed youth. In the global scenario employing 260 million people and generating 10.7 percent of world's GDP, Tourism is the largest as well as the fastest industry of the world. Therefore, we need to control the tourism industry, and more important, to protect and conserve the biodiversity of tourist places. In this way we can make tourism business activities more sustainable and eco friendly for the future generations.

**Research objectives:** The present research paper has the following research objectives:

- To know the concept of sustainable tourism.
- To point out the basic principles of sustainable tourism.
- To highlight the need and importance of sustainable tourism in India.
- To trace out the recent trends of sustainable tourism in India.

**Research Methodology:** The present research work is exploratory and analytical in nature and based on the secondary source of data collection. The researcher has collected the secondary data from the reputed books, journals and official websites of the tourism departments of Indian states and tourism ministry of India. To pace the study, the researcher has also used some observational facts.

**A Review of Literature:** It is a well known fact that the growing need and importance of including an environmental dimension in strategic management processes has grown during the last decade, leaving no industry unaffected. That is why; sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism development and sustainable principles have been discussed, and a review of the existing tourism literature clearly indicates two separate discussion paths. On the one hand, we have researchers who have focused on defining and comparing different concepts related to sustainability and who have developed guidelines for a sustainable tourism. Therefore, Sustainable tourism planning in tourism companies must be based on a positive attitude towards sustainable development. The competitiveness of industry has been one of the most important themes of research in the fields of economics and business studies.

Erick T. Byrd (2007) in his study entitled “Stakeholders in sustainable tourism development and their roles: applying stakeholder theory to sustainable tourism development” has pointed out that today sustainability has become an important topic and concept in relation to tourism planning and development. For sustainable tourism development to be successful stakeholders must be involved in the process. The study has investigated that sustainable tourism development and how stakeholder inclusion and involvement are incorporated in the basic concept of sustainable tourism development. This investigation was accomplished by reviewing and drawing conclusions from the literature. The discussion includes thoughts from both management and public participation perspectives. So who should be involved in the sustainable tourism development process?

Kamal Manaktola et.al. (2007) in their study entitled “Exploring consumer attitude and behaviour towards green practices in the lodging industry in India” has traced out that the consumers using hotel services are conscious about environmentally friendly practices in India and they patronize the hotels that have adapted green practices though not compromising on service quality. The consumers would prefer to use lodging that follows these practices but are not willing to pay extra for these services. Indian hotels have the competitive advantage over similar products if they follow green practices in the present environmental scenario at the global level.

HwanSuk Chris Choi & Ercan Sirakaya Turk (2010) in their study entitled “Sustainability Indicators for Managing Community Tourism” have pointed out that there is an urgent need to work on a well planning strategy for the effectiveness of sustainable tourism. Tourism as one of major components in a community planning process, we need some continuous monitoring programs, delivery of performance-based incentive programs and training based programs for local stakeholder groups are urgently needed in tourism sector.

Fujun Shen et.al. (2012) in their study entitled, “Connecting the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and Tourism: A Review of the Literature” have revealed the fact that tourism has

been increasingly used for, and directly linked with, rural poverty reduction in developing countries. However, the application, and to an extent the principles, of the widely used organizing framework for considering poverty reduction, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, may not fit fully the tourism situation, and vice versa. Therefore, sustainable livelihoods for tourism should be viewed in a broader tourism context, rather than merely taking tourism as a development tool. Moreover, sustainability at the individual or household level, while tourism sustainability is often applied to the industry and destinations at wider, more macro level scales in the present scenario.

**What is Sustainable Tourism?** There are so many definitions about the term sustainable and sustainable tourism in the present scenario. Some of them have been cited here to define the term 'sustainable tourism'. According to the World Tourism Organization (2004), sustainable tourism refers to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. Moreover, sustainable tourism is a kind of approach to tourism meant to make the development of tourism ecologically supportable in the long term and its importance lies in its motives to conserve the resources and increase the value of local culture and tradition. Thus, sustainable tourism is a responsible tourism intending to generate employment and income along with alleviating any deeper impact on environment and local culture.

According to The United Nations World Tourism Organization- "Sustainable Tourism as tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. The German Forum on Environment and Development (GFED) defines that sustainable tourism has to meet social, cultural, ecological and economic requirements and it holds a long-term view, for present and future generations, ethically and socially just and culturally adapted, ecologically viable and economically sensible and productive in the present global scenario of tourism sector.

The major importance of sustainable development lies in its objective which is to conserve resources and increase and preserve local cultures and traditions. To conclude, sustainable tourism is responsible tourism intended to generate employment and income, thereby reducing

any deeper impact on the environment and local culture. Therefore, the basic principles of sustainable tourism highlight the participation of local communities at tourism destinations and the active involvement of local community is the essential factor in sustaining momentum. Moreover, a well planning, training and education programmes play a crucial role here as they help to improve cultural heritage and the management of natural resources. However, Sustainable tourism can also be a source of environmental damage and pollution, a heavy user of scarce resources and a cause of negative change in society. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore its important role in the present tourism scenario. Some of the basic features of sustainable tourism are:

- It is an important and valuable as an agent for development of a country.
- It tries its utmost to maintain the importance of local culture and tradition.
- It is informatory and it helps tourists to know about the destinations.
- It also helps local people knowing about the culture and civilization of tourists.
- It is aimed to conserve the resources of destinations where one is visiting to.
- It seeks deeper involvement of locals and it provides them an opportunity and make their living.
- It stimulates productive capacities from trade and the provision of jobs linked to the tourism value chain.
- As modern day economies it tends to leave a chasm between industrial growth and rural aspirations.
- It is one of the few sectors that can bridge the divide while venerating the socio-cultural as well as environmental ethics.
- It not only advocates prudent use of our natural capital, but also endeavors to suitably remunerate communities by helping to achieve this goal through mechanisms like payments for ecosystem services.

**Basic Principles of Sustainable Tourism:** Today, there is an urgent need for Governments to take a leading role if truly significant progress is to be achieved in making tourism more sustainable. Reason behind this is that the tourism industry is very fragmented and now it is

very difficult for the individual actions of many micro and small businesses to make a positive difference, hence coordination is urgently required in sustainability relates to areas of public concern—air, water, natural and cultural heritage and the quality of life. Governments have many of the tools that can be used to make a difference—such as the power to make regulations and offer economic incentives, and the resources and institutions to promote and disseminate good practice. Therefore, sustainable development of tourism is possible only if it follows some of its basic guidelines and principles as under:

- Sustainable tourism ought to be initiated at any location with the help of local community.
- The local community has to meet the direct benefit of flourishing tourism in their area.
- There should be a link between local business and tourism enable local people gain economically as well.
- To achieve the real goal of sustainable development, there is need that codes, ethics and some fair guidelines be appointed.
- For the better results and heighten the importance of heritage and natural resources, and manage them better, training and education programme should be instituted in time.

**Need and Importance of Sustainable Tourism:** The fact is that making tourism more sustainable is not just about controlling and managing the negative impacts of the industry. Rather than tourism business is in a very special position to benefit local communities, economically and socially, and to raise awareness and support for conservation of the environment. Therefore, here it is not needless to say that within the tourism sector, economic development and environmental protection should not be seen as opposing forces. Moreover, these forces and driving factors should be pursued hand in hand as aspirations that can and should be mutually reinforcing, and practices that commensurate with these values can provide long term benefits to the industry as well as the community in the perspective of sustainability of tourism business in a particular area.

Today, in the wake of privatization and liberalization, domestic tourism in India has been growing at double the rate of international tourism, boosted by the expansion and liberalization

of aviation networks and increasingly affluent populations after a sustained period of stellar economic growth. Recently, it can be seen that for India to tap its enormous tourism potential and to compete globally and within the Asian tourism market, it must offer world-class tourism services and destinations. There needs to be sensitization so as preserve the environment, local culture and involvement of local communities. There is also an urgent need for a more robust educational system that can train the manpower needed for the industry.

### **Sustainable Development and the Home Stay Scheme in Himachal Tourism:**

Himachal Pradesh is very famous for its natural beauty and serenity. Moreover, its forests cover two-thirds of the geographic area of the state and are crucial for the economic, social and environmental well-being of the region; they are a storehouse of rich biodiversity and a primary source of livelihood for the rural communities. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that owing to the fragile Himalayan eco-system, unplanned or lack of infrastructure has always been a valid concern. As accommodation is an important tourism component, the government of Himachal Pradesh came up with a new tourism policy in 2005 ensured that host communities reap maximum benefits. Likewise, the introduction of the 'Home Stay' scheme also seeks to draw tourists away from posh and crowded urban areas to the rural hinterland replete with natural surroundings, by providing them clean, comfortable and budget-friendly accommodation and food. The scheme is very helpful to divert the tourist traffic to new untapped places while also ensuring an alternate source of income generation for rural folks. The Himachal Pradesh government provided several incentives to promote this scheme such as exempting home stay units from luxury and sales tax and charging domestic rates of electricity and water. The Department of Tourism has also listed the registered Home Stay houses on its website, free of charge which also includes them in the online Reservation system. The new scheme has a focus on rural tourism to generate income and promote alternate tourist destinations showcasing the unique heritage and culture of the hills. However, the unconventional schemes received overwhelming response from local communities and international tourists. Therefore, in the course of three years there were a total of 891 rooms

and 332 units registered under the Home Stay Scheme. It also received 25 awards including the National Level Award for Rural Tourism Promotion.

**Recent Trends:** Today, after the formation of new government led by Shri Narendra Modi, the Ministry of Tourism has given a special priority to eco- tourism, rural- tourism, health-tourism and sustainable tourism. The main focus of the tourism policy is on the importance of tourism to provide employment to the poorest of the poor. Hence, anticipated growth in this sector warrants a comprehensive sustainable tourism strategy that builds the capacity of the rural poor and enables them to act as owners and decision makers in tourism based on their natural and cultural heritage. Sustainable Tourism and UN Sustainable Development Goals in recognizing 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, UNWTO has identified following five key pillars required to ensure sustainable tourism for development as under:

- Resource efficiency, environmental protection, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Social inclusiveness, employment, and poverty reduction.
- Inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
- Respect for cultural values, diversity, and heritage.
- Mutual understanding, peace and security.

**Conclusion:** Now it can be concluded that sustainable tourism positions itself well as a panacea to curb the negative impacts of tourism activity without compromising on the economic benefits. Nevertheless, there are some challenger and issues in the way of sustainable tourism. Today, this sector requires an effective marketing strategy due to changing consumer pattern behavior. Recently, the Ministry of Tourism has prepared an extensive sustainable tourism plan to boost the tourism sector and to make it more sustainable in the changing environmental scenario. Therefore, it is suggested that Public Private Partnerships (PPP) for sustainable tourism in the modern day economic scenario maybe very helpful to

create infrastructure in tourism industry. Now, it comes as no surprise that there is an increasing emphasis on fully integrating the ethos of sustainability into all forms of tourism. Today it is said that in a burgeoning economy, Public Private Partnerships are essential tools to ensure that stakeholder engagement, especially Government and large enterprises, shift from delivering services directly, to service management and coordination, entrusting last mile implementation to the local community.

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