

Impact of Ecotourism in Ensuring the Sustainable Development of Tourism Industry in India

Bushra Hameed¹, Anila Khalid²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Allenhurst Business School, Kanpur

²Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, PSIT, Kanpur

Abstract-Ecotourism is consecrated for preserving and sustaining the diversity of the world's natural and cultural environments. It accommodates and entertains visitors in a way that is minimally intrusive or destructive to the environment and sustains & supports the native cultures in the locations it is operating in. The term has received much attention in recent years especially within the developing world. As in simple terms it means management of tourism and conservation of nature in a way so as to maintain a fine balance between the requirements of tourism and ecology on the one hand and needs of the local communities for jobs, new skills, income generating employment and a better status for women on the other. As a matter of fact India has been experiencing various forms of ecotourism all through the ages and boasts of thousands of years of cultural and natural heritage with 86 national parks, 448 wildlife reserves, more than 2.4 million temples, mosques and churches, magnificent forts and palaces, the towering Himalayas, a large coastline and infinite other attractions. India is among the top five destinations for individual travelers among 134 countries. Moreover, the geographical diversity of India is its wealth of ecosystems, which are well protected and preserved. These ecosystems have become the major resource for ecotourism in India. They are popularly known as Biosphere Reserves, Mangroves, Coral Reefs, Deserts, Mountains and Forests, Flora and Fauna, Seas, Lakes, Rivers and Caves. An attempt has been made by the following research paper to present a synoptic view of these ecotourism resources of India.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Preserving, Conservation, Sustaining, Geographical Diversity, Ecology

I. INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is a sub-component of the field of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism's perceived potential as an effective tool for sustainable development is the main reason why developing countries are now embracing it and including it in their economic development and conservation strategies. Ecotourism, as an alternative tourism, involves visiting natural areas in order to learn, to study, or to carry out activities environmentally friendly, that is, a tourism based on the nature experience, which enables the economic and social development of local communities. It focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, its landscape, flora, fauna and their habitats, as well as cultural artifacts from the locality. A symbiotic and complex relationship between the environment and tourist activities is possible when this philosophy can be translated into appropriate policy, careful planning and tactful practicum. Carefully planned and operated ecotourism sites, especially if it is village-based and includes local participation, is able to provide direct benefits that might offset pressure from other less sustainable activities that make use of natural and cultural resources. Eco tourism, natural resources, cultural heritage, rural lifestyle and an integrated tourism is a type of local economic activities. Therefore, ecotourism in natural and cultural areas was carried out with a number of elements in their natural

landscape and cultural landscape (water, vista, topography, vegetation, clean air), as well as in the variety of recreational activities suitable for all kinds of environments. Therefore, ecotourism and its natural assets and raw materials to create, as well as directing people to travel is an attractive force. Ecotourism helps in community development by providing the alternate source of livelihood to local community which is more sustainable. Its aim is to conserve resources, especially biological diversity, and maintain sustainable use of resources, which can bring ecological experience to travelers, conserve the ecological environment and gain economic benefit. However, achieving the aims in ecotourism depends on whether they are environmentally and ecologically sustainable and economically applicable. Ecotourism helps in involving local community for the conservation of the ecology and biodiversity of the area that biodiversity in return provides the economic incentives to the local community. Eco-tourism contributes to conservation of biodiversity; sustains the well-being of local people; involves responsible action on the part of tourist and the tourism industry; promotes small and medium tourism enterprises; requires lowest possible consumption of natural resources; stresses local participation, ownership, and business opportunities, particularly for rural people; and above all includes the learning experiences.

II. THE CONCERN FOR ECOTOURISM

Since ages, nature worship and the conservation ethics have been an inseparable part of Indian thought and traditions. Traces go back to ancient civilisations of India, when people used to nurture the philosophy of the oneness of life. The Indian tradition has always taught that, humankind is a part of nature and one should look upon all creation with the eyes of love and respect.

It is tragic that since last few decades, the mad quest for the material end and economical progress in India and abroad has become identical with the exploitation of nature in all its appearances. Today, the entire world is facing a deep crisis and is in the danger of being doomed. The rich forest areas and biological diversities have been relentlessly divested to erect concrete walls. The continuous denuding of forest reserves has led to Global Warming and Greenhouse Effects. Fortunately, this has led to some realisation, and now the world has awoken for new beginnings about human responsibility towards nature.

<http://www.ecoindia.com/eco-tourism-in-india.html>

What is Sustainable Development?

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts (IISD, 2012):

- The concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."

According to Hall (2008) sustainable development and tourism present change which refers to the movement from one state or condition to another. Whether such a transition is positive or negative depends on the original criteria by which change is measured. Sustainable tourism requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving it requires monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them (World Tourism Organisation, 2001). Sustainable development through ecotourism is a concerning issue in the world today. Many countries have ensured their regional development by this concept. In this concept, sustainable development may be occurred by the ecotourism and regional development (Figure 3) simultaneously in an area. Dimensions of ecotourism development refer to the environmental, economic, and social aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance

between these dimensions must be established to maintain its long-term sustainability (Bhuiyan et al, 2012).

<http://www.intechopen.com/books/advances-in-landscape-architecture/role-of-ecotourism-in-sustainable-development>

III. ECOTOURISM IN INDIA

India has a large treasure of natural beauty, archaeological and architectural monuments. In addition, there are many hill resorts, beach resorts, mountains and rivers etc. The northern part of India is famous for its hills, plains, rivers, and monuments etc- the Himalayas, Kashmir Valley, the Ganges. The Taj Mahal, the Kutub Minar, religious centers like Varanasi, Badrinath attracts large number of tourists. The western region has tourist centers like Ajantha-Ellora and industrial centre like Mumbai. Goa beach attracts foreign and Indian tourists. The southern region has many temples, beaches, hill resorts, cultural heritage etc. Places like Chennai, Madurai, Bangalore and Thiruvananthapuram are important centres of tourism in South India. The eastern region has tourist attraction like the Gir Forest, pilgrim centers like Konarak and industrial centres like Kolkata.

There are colourful tribal life-styles of the North Eastern States of Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura and Manipur with their folk culture is also worth mention. In the central Indian states of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, tribal village life has resulted in a variety of artistically executed handicrafts. India's mountains provide opportunities for mountaineering and trekking. Beaches provide lazy sun bathing as well as wind surfing and snorkeling and its jungles provide shooting wildlife. India's natural beauty and its geographic location can be compared with that of any other country in the world and its rich heritage makes it unique in the world. India is one of those rare countries, which has a wonderful blend of all the resources essential to make it as a golden star on the Tourism map of the world. India's glorious tradition and rich cultural heritage are linked with the development of tourism. Its magnificent monuments attract large numbers of visitors from all over the world. India has an exceptionally varied climate ranging from the extreme cold in high altitude and hot summer in the plains. Considering the significance of tourism, 27th September is being observed as the World Tourism Day every year. Tourism in developing countries mainly depends upon its biodiversity. The quality of their natural environment gives many developing countries a comparative advantage in tourism.

Tourism, as it is known today; began in India only after 1946, following the recommendations of the Sargent Committee. It was only after the 1980's tourism activity gained momentum in India. In India tourism and its development in an organised manner has received attention over 45 years only. The significant development that took place was setting up of the Indian Tourism Development Corporation in 1966 to promote India as a tourist destination and the Tourism Finance Corporation in 1989 to finance tourism projects. Altogether,

21 Government-run hotel management and catering technology institutes and 14 food craft institutes were also established for imparting specialised training in hoteliering. The Ministry of Tourism is the nodal agency for the development and promotion of tourism in India and catering. In the year 1986, Tourism has been declared as 'Tourism Industry' by the government of India. On March 4, 1993, the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted WTO's (World Tourism Organisation's) recommendations on tourism. Ecotourism developed in India in 1970s and 1980s. Ecotourism was globally identified as a means of achieving twin goals of bio diversity conservation and sustainable development. Both short-term goals and long term goals can be achieved without sacrificing one's own interests. Sustainable tourism and nature tourism are umbrella concepts that include ecotourism. India, the land of varied geography offers several tourist destinations that not just de-stress but also rejuvenate people. There are several ways to enjoy Mother Nature in the most pristine way. The few places like the Himalayan region, Kerala, the North-East India, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Lakshadweep Islands are some of the places where you can enjoy the treasured wealth of the Mother Nature.

IV. IMPORTANCE OF ECO-TOURISM IN INDIA

India is one of the 12-mega bio-diverse countries of the world and has a rich cultural heritage too. It has a vast potential for ecotourism that needs to be tapped for healthy conservation and preservation of nature and bringing about economic benefits to the local communities. Ecotourism in India has developed recently, for the concept itself is a relatively new one. India has spectacularly attractive natural and cultural tourist attractions. India offers enormous diversity in topography, natural resources and climate. There are land-locked mountainous regions, lush valleys and plains, white sandy beaches and islands. Central India has numerous wildlife sanctuaries with countless varieties of flora and fauna. The most significant feature of the ecotourism industry in India is its capacity to generate large-scale employment opportunities, particularly in remote and underdeveloped area. It offers enormous potential for utilising natural resources like landscapes, mountains, bio-diversity areas, rivers etc for the benefit of people. Ecotourism is not only a travel statement; it gives the message of our relationship with nature and its own inhabitants. India became a very common name for ecotourism, because of its natural resources and beauty. Ecotourism focuses on Indian local cultures, wilderness, adventures, and environmental protection. In India the movement is gathering momentum with more travel and travel related organisations for addressing the needs of the eco tourists and promoting ecotourism in the country. As a concept ecotourism has gained momentum recently in India, but as a way of life Indians has practiced ecotourism since times immemorial by their traditional approach to nature and rich cultural heritage. The immense popularity of ecotourism in India stems from the fact that people are becoming

increasingly conscious of the environmental hazards and the importance of the existence of diverse flora and fauna. The ecological diversity of India is arguably the most varied in the world. Ecotourism does not disturb or modify the actual biodiversity of India; it only popularises the secluded parts of India. Ecotourism in India is a niche industry that has mainly developed in the past few years. Ecotourism is largely based on the concept of sustainable tourism or eco-friendly tourism. It has often been the case with the tourist destinations in India where the ecological balance of a fragile area has degraded drastically due to the pressure of tourism. Hence, the country is trying to promote tourism in a manner in which it generates considerable revenue without disturbing the delicate ecosystem in the region. This type of tourism is extremely essential for India considering that it has one of the richest biodiversities in the world. The Indian topography boasts of an abundant source of flora and fauna. India has numerous rare and endangered species in its surroundings. The declaration of several wildlife areas and national parks has encouraged the growth of the wildlife resources. Today, India has many wildlife sanctuaries and protection laws. There are numerous botanical and zoological gardens in India, which are working towards the enhancement of the ecosystem. There are severe punishments for poachers, hunters and illegal traders of animals and trees. There are several animal and plant rights organisation, which fight for the rights of the animals and plants. Numerous organisations and NGOs are coming forward to provide environmental education to common people at the grass root level. Ecotourism is an attempt for sustainable ecological development. India, the land of geographical diversities and wonders offers excellent options for ecotourism. No country in this world offers as much geographical varieties as India. India provides an unmatched range and diversity, justifying several ecotourism travel trips. Ecotourism in India is gradually qualifying for attention of the tourists, the government and entrepreneurs for obvious reasons. India has enough potential in ecotourism to cater to the interests of the tourists. Ecotourism industry is one of the leading employment generating sectors of India and it generates directly or indirectly approximately 3.8% employment out of the total employment generation every year in India. India is full of topographical variations with amazing scenic beauty. Mountainous ranges of Himalayas, golden beaches, impenetrable forests and plenty of water bodies along with rich blend of culture provokes people across the world to tour India. Ecotourism is the best way to enjoy the nature's charisma without harming it and for the admiration of nature's marvels.

V. PROMOTING ECO-TOURISM IN INDIA

The key players in the ecotourism business are Government, local authorities, developers and operators, visitors and local community. Each one of them has to be sensitive to the environment and local traditions and follow a set of guidelines for the successful development of ecotourism. In addition, governmental organisations and scientific and research

institutions also have to play key role in development of ecotourism. Special officers have been designated to coordinate activities regarding ecotourism. The Forest and Tourism Departments of the states like Karnataka, Kerala, Sikkim, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh have specifically announced a policy for the development of ecotourism laying special emphasis to the involvement of the local communities. A management plan for each ecotourism area should be prepared by professional landscape architects and urban planners in consultation with the local community as well as others directly concerned. Integrated planning should be adopted to avoid inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral conflict. The first step should be to prepare 20-year master plans for each state. The architectural programme for ecotourism centres should include controlled access points, roads, self-guided nature trails, transportation options, interpretation centers, signs and adequate but unpretentious lodging and dining facilities, docks, garbage disposal facilities and other utilities as needed. If required, suitable living quarters and facilities for project personnel should be provided.

VI. RECENT INITIATIVES IN ECO-TOURISM IN INDIA

- A project of ecotourism for development of Horsely Hill in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh has been sanctioned.
- The project of development of Satkosí in Orissa (Rs.4.25 crore) has been sanctioned in which interpretation centre; landscaping, elephant camps, trekking park, watch towers and parking facilities etc. are proposed to be developed.
- Ministry of Tourism (MOT) has sanctioned a project for development of ecotourism in Morni-Pinjore Hills and Sultanpur National Park in Haryana for which Rs 2.63 crore have been sanctioned.
- The project of integrated development of tribal circuit with special focus on ecotourism in Himachal Pradesh has been approved for Rs.6.98 crore.
- Development of Wayanad in Kerala for an amount of Rs.2.01 crore.
- Development of Tourist Circuit (Western Assam Circuit) DhubariMahamaya-Barpetta-Hajo has been sanctioned for an amount of Rs.4.97 crore.
- Development of Mechuka destination (Rs.4.41 crore in Arunachal Pradesh).
- Development of tourist destination of Khensa at a cost of Rs 4.58 crore in Nagaland Circuit-Udhyamandalam-Madumalai-Anaimalai, Tamil Nadu.
- Jungle Lodges and Resorts, Karnataka (provides experiences of living in the wilderness).
- Private Initiative in Kerala-Casino Group of Hotels, Tours India Ltd (adopted 2 tribal villages in Periyar Tiger Reserve for growing indigenous pepper-used as USP and financial gains to communities).
- GEF Project-Gulf of Mannar, Tamilnadu (ecotourism as an alternative method of livelihoods and preservation of the biodiversity of the region).

- Sikkim Biodiversity and Ecotourism Project (developing collaboration between TAAS, local orgs, and communities for biodiversity, conservation and income generation). 112
- Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala-India Ecotourism Project (promoting participation of local communities in biodiversity conservation through incentive based mechanisms).
- Corbett-Binsar-Nainital Ecotourism Initiative, Uttarakhand (promoting participation of local communities in biodiversity conservation through incentive based mechanisms).
- Great Himalayan National Park, HP-Eco Development Project (promoting participation of local communities in biodiversity conservation through incentive based mechanisms).

VII. ECO-TOURISM IN INDIA: SOME MAJOR ISSUES

“Tourism has a tendency to become something like a steamroller wherever it goes. It can completely destroy natural places. Ecotourism is about trying to stop that”. The quotation tries to define loudly the scope of ecotourism in comparison to mass tourism. Making a concept is much easier than its implementation and it is quite practical if we say that achieving hundred percent successes in any implementation program is inevitable. It is true with the concept of ecotourism all over the world. Indian ecotourism industry is successful but facing with number of problems, which are adversely affecting. There are number of issues relating to ecotourism in India, which contradict the very principle of the concept.

Environmental Issues: - One of the most disturbing facts about ecotourism is that it is mainly promoting the expropriation of wilderness area, national parks, isolated tribal areas and even the areas having no trace of any permanent settlement. Tourists opting for such tourism often belong to the prosperous strata of society and are capable and ready to pay for everything they wish, so consumerism becomes focal theme here. Tour operators succumb to ever increasing demands made by visitors and to facilitate and entertain them, they build completely artificial landscape in the area, which have mega-resorts, luxury hotels, and shopping centers. Such changes cost almost the entire eco system dearly, many of flora and fauna species lose their natural habitat and in the long run this may even lead to species extinction. Tourism competes with other forms of development and human activity for natural resources, especially land and water. The use of natural resources subsequently leads to the transformation of ecological habitats and loss of flora and fauna. Land transformation for tourism development can directly destroy ecological habitats. The use of resources for tourism involves an ‘opportunity cost’ as they are denied to other sectors of economic development.

Socio-Economic Issues: - Just because something is marketed as ecotourism, it does not necessarily mean that the long-term motto of providing socio-economic benefit with protection of environment to the host areas will be achieved.

The fact that ecotourism business are often owned and controlled by outside interests in just the same way as mass tourism means the economic benefits often are not used for the protection of the areas or to support the local community. Besides, the carrying capacity of host areas is not calculated. As a result, there is a breakdown of civil amenities during peak season when the influx of tourists is tremendous.

Impact over Locals: - One of the basic objectives of ecotourism is to engage local communities so that they benefit from conservation, economic development and environmental education. While nearby inhabitants are most directly affected by the establishment of parks and protected areas, they also stand to profit by their conservation. Ecotourism deceives the locals in two ways. First, their traditional economic and social structure undergoes a transformation towards tourism monoculture. Secondly, the promise made to them to provide perennial source of income and rational distribution of profit made is highly insincere. Those locals get jobs but only of low quality, low valued and seasonal in nature. They serve mostly as tourist guide, food providers, or souvenir vendors in the locality. The lion's share of revenue generated goes only in hands of organisers. So it can be said that the cost of ecotourism is borne by locals and big players like organisers make profit. Tax paid by the tourist in India is the highest in the world compared to the other Asian countries where the tax rate is between 3-6%. Indian hotels charge about 40% tax. Another important factor behind the limited exploitation of the tourism potential of the country is the deterioration of macro-economic central planning to the level of micro-planning. Other problems are poor service, poor advertisement, lack of infrastructure, lack of security arrangements, poor management, improper implementation of the government policies, lack of coordination between the centre and the state governments in the promotion of tourism, involvement of too many intermediaries, a big gap between policies and practice and so on.

VIII. REFERENCES

- [1]. Aggarwal Prateek, *International Tourism*. Reference Press, Delhi (1991) PP 60- 74.
- [2]. A.K. Bhatia, *Tourism Development - Principles and Practices*. Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., New Delhi (1995) PP 79-110.
- [3]. Aneja Puneet, "Tourism Growth in India". *Kurukshetra*, Vol.17, No.9, June 2005, PP 11-14.
- [4]. Awadh Singhal, Agarwal Meera, *Glimpses of Tourism in India*. Kanishka Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi (1985) PP 180-209.
- [5]. Butler Richard, W. & Stephen, W. Boyd, *Tourism and the National Parks, Issues and Implications*. John Wiley and Sons Ltd., Singapore (2000) PP 58-70.
- [6]. Chaturvedi Devesh, "Tourism in India: Ensuring Buoyancy and Sustainability". *Yojana*, Vol.13, No.8, May 2010, PP 16-18.
- [7]. D.S. Bharadwaj, & O.P. Kandari, *Domestic Tourism in India*, Indus Publishing Company, Delhi (1999) PP 59-66.
- [8]. Das Niranjana, H.J. Syiemlieh, "Ecotourism in Assam". *Yojana*, Vol.8, No.4, July 2004, PP 29-31.
- [9]. G. S. Rao, Shailesh Sikha, "Bollywood: A Tool for Promotion of Indian Tourism Industry".
- [10]. *South Asian Journal of Socio-Political Studies (SAJOSPS)*, Vol.37, No.1 (July-Dec 2005) PP 98-100.
- [11]. Hariharan Iyer Kailash, *Tourism Development in India*. Vista International Publishing House, New Delhi (1995) PP 90-113.
- [12]. Kohli, M.S. "Ecotourism and Himalayas". *Yojana*, Vol.24, No.15, August 2002, PP 25- 28.
- [13]. Leela Shelly, *Tourism Development in India*. Arihant Publishers, Jaipur (1995) PP 120-186.
- [14]. M. Selvam, *Tourism Industry in India*. Himalaya Publishing House, New Delhi (1998) PP 64-90. 120 Mohan Rao, V. "India - Tourists Delight". *Kurukshetra*, June 2007, Vol.22, No.14, PP 21- 22.
- [15]. Motiram, "Globalisation: Potentials and Prospects of Mass Tourism in India". *South Asian Journal of Socio-Political Studies (SAJOSPS)*, Vol.7, No.2 (July-Dec 2007) PP 104-107.
- [16]. Murugan Annmalai, "Challenges and Changes in Indian Tourism". *South Asian Journal of Socio-Political Studies (SAJOSPS)*, Vol.37, No.1 (July-Dec 2007) PP 103-106.
- [17]. Priya Vikas Rajuvedi, "Tourism in India". *Yojana*, Vol.12, No.6, December 2002, PP 48-49.
- [18]. Rabindra Seth, Gupta, O.M. *Tourism in India-An Overview*, Vol-2. Kalpaz Publications, New Delhi (1996) PP 130-167.
- [19]. Ratandeep Singh, *Handbook of Environmental Guidelines for Indian Tourism*. Kanishka Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi (2000) PP 22-79.
- [20]. Santhi, V., Shanthi, G., Benon, S., & Arunkumar, J. "Tourism in India-Emerging Trends". *South Asian Journal of Socio-Political Studies (SAJOSPS)*, Vol.11, No.2 (Jan-June 2011) PP 130-133. www.indiawildlifeportal.com
- [21]. www.indiatourismstate.com
- [22]. www.tourisminindia.com
- [23]. www.tourism.gov.in
- [24]. www.ecotourismindia.com