

TOURISM AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the largest businesses in the world. It is widely perceived to be an effective vehicle for development. The objectives of tourism related development should be commensurate with the sustainable development. The attainment of long term integration of social, environmental and economic goals will pave the way for sustainable tourism development

Keywords

Tourism, Sustainable development, Sustainable Tourism Development

Introduction

Tourism is a large complex phenomenon with economic, environmental and socio-cultural implication for places and population which became involved with it. Tourism is one of the most striking phenomena of the present times and it offers man an opportunity to learn, to enrich humanity and to identify what may be termed as goals for a better life and society. Throughout the world tourism has emerged as a major sociological and economical factor. It compasses travel for pleasure during holiday, wanderlust, health, business and trade, pilgrimage and social purpose, historical and geographical research, educational purpose, foreign offices and other official functions. It has a capacity to transform certain apparently economically useless goods/services into marketable attractions such goods and services may include cultural, natural and social assets of the society.

Tourism is largely responsible for the transfer of wealth from one nation to another and redistribution of income, leading to a gross increase in wealth -income to the lower community of the tourism region. The degree of benefit from tourism largely depends upon the level of self sufficiency of the economy of the hosting region. The infusion of new wealth through overseas visitors is equivalent to the export earnings from any other international trade. Tourism can earn not only foreign exchange but also a lot of government revenue by way of taxes. It generates mostly indirect taxes for the government.

Tourism brings about an intermingling of the people from various sections of social and cultural backgrounds and this helps in national integration. It can help the regional development of areas which otherwise have little economic potential. It can also contribute

significantly to the generation of employment opportunities of a low or semi skilled nature of backward regions. Besides tourism has often a seasonal character. Therefore it is eminently suitable to supplement the income of the chronically under employed labour population. Though the third world share a small slice of this growth, in a large number of developing countries tourism is an important economic force and its study is increasing academic and practical interest.

Objective of the Study

This paper evaluates the importance of tourism as an instrument for sustainable development.

Review of Literature

Mohanlal K G in his article 'Planning and Development of Sustainable Eco - Tourism Destinations' stated that a sustainable tourism requires a commitment by all parties involved in the planning process to sustainable development principles. Only through such wide spread commitment can be long term integration of social, environmental and economic goals be attained, which will ultimately pave the way for sustainable tourism development.

In the article 'Eco - Tourism: A Boon for Sustainable Socio - Economic Development', Anbalagan M, Maugham R and Selvam V opined that maintenance of eco system by nurturing the nature for prosperity will boost the tourism industry in a long way to correct the socio-economic imbalances in under reached parts of India. Contribution towards sustainable tourism for the development of environmental and human balance ', is imperative in India, where there is greater scope.

The article 'The Kulu Valley: Impacts of Tourism Development in the Mountain areas' by Singh T V focuses on the impact of tourism in mountain areas, based on the experience of the Kulu Valley, Himachal Pradesh, India. It examines the Kulu Valley itself in terms of its climatic, ecological, religious and cultural background. Recommendations for the future safeguarding of the environment discussing the roll of the farm tourism and the limit to growth concepts

Community Networks and Sustainable Livelihoods in Tourism: The Role of Entrepreneurial Innovation' by Jithendran Kokkranikal and Alison Morrison is a case study of an eco-heritage tourism resort of coconut palms, in Indian state of Kerala provides an illustration of how entrepreneurial innovation helped to form a community network and offer sustainable livelihood diversification opportunities to stakeholders in the periphery of tourism.

Role of Tourism in India and Kerala

Tourism in India developed properly only after the setting up of Central Tourist Organization as a result of the recommendation of the Sargent Committee. In India tourism industry contributes significantly to the national GDP and provides employment to number of people. It accounts for about 8.23% to the national GDP and 8.78% of the total employment .It is the second largest foreign exchange earner of the country.

The outstanding world heritage sites, monuments, forts, scenic beauty beaches , hill stations, evergreen forests, mountain ranges, rivers, wild life, diverse and rich culture have placed India in, an advantageous position. She attracts many foreign tourists especially from the countries like UK, USA, Sri Lanka, France, Germany, Canada, Japan, Australia and Singapore.

The country has witnessed 2.73 million annual foreign tourists and 1036.35million domestic tourists in the year 2012.As per the Travel and Tourism competitiveness Report 2009 by the World Economic Forum, India is ranked 11th in the Asia pacific Region and 62nd overall ,moving up three places on the list of the world's attractive destinations . It is ranked the 14th best tourist destinations for the natural resources and 24th for its cultural resources with many world heritage sites, both natural and cultural rich fauna and strong creative industries in the country. India also bagged 37th rank for its air transport network. The India travel and tourism industry is ranked 5th in the long term (10 years) growth and is expected to be the 2nd largest employer in the world by 2019.

Since independence, the country is stepping slowly and attracting more foreign and domestic tourists from 15,000 in 1950 to 2.37 million foreign tourists and 1036.35 million domestic tourists in 2012.In 2012 Foreign Exchange Earnings stood at US\$17737million (Global rank 16).India's foreign exchange earnings grew by an astonishing 14.1%during 2001-2010 outpacing global average 7.7%. India's share in World Foreign Exchange Earnings has gone up from 0.64% 2002 to about 1.65% in 2012.

The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2007 ranked tourism in India 6th in terms of price competitiveness and 39th in terms of safety and security. India's rich history and its cultural and geographical diversity make its international tourism appeal large and diverse. It presents heritage and cultural tourism along with medical, business and sports tourism. India has one of the largest and fastest growing medical tourism sectors. The majority of the foreign tourists came from USA and UK. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Utter Pradesh and Rajasthan are the top five states to receive inbound tourists. Domestic tourists in India too grew phenomenally over this period. The number of Domestic tourists in India rose from 159.88million in 1997 to 1036.35 million (provisional) in 2012.

Table 1 India tourism at a glance 2012

Number of foreign tourist arrivals in India	6.58 million
Annual growth rate	4.3%
Number of domestic tourist visits to all states/UTs	1036 million
Annual growth rate	19.9%
Foreign Exchange Earnings from Tourism	
1)in INR terms	Rs.94487crore(#)
Annual Growth rate	7.1%
2)in US\$ terms	US\$17.74billion(#)
Annual Growth Rate	7.1%
India's position in the world	
1)Share of India in International Tourist Arrivals	0.64%
2)India's rank in World Tourist Arrivals	41
3)Share of India in Tourism Receipts	1.65%
4)India's rank in World Tourism Receipts	16

#- advance statistics

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

Kerala is nicknamed as one of the "10 paradises of the world by National Geographic .Kerala is famous especially for its ecotourism initiatives. Its unique culture and traditions coupled with its varied demography, has made it one of the most popular tourist destinations in India. Growing at a rate of 13.31% the tourism industry significantly contributes to the state's economy. Kerala is known for its tropical backwaters and pristine beaches such as Kovalam.

Popular attractions in the state include beaches at Kovalam, Kappad, Muzhippilangad, Cherai and Varkala; the hill stations of Munnar, Thekkady, Nelliampathy, Ponmudi and Wayanad;Forts like the Bekel Fort in Kananghad and St. Angelo's fort in Kannur and the national Parks/ wild life sanctuaries at Periyar and Eravikulam.The backwaters' region -an extensive network of interlinking rivers , lakes and canals that centre on Alleppey, Kumarakom and Punnamada also see heavy tourist traffic. Heritage sites, such as the Hill Palace, Mattanchery Palace are also famous, cities such as Kollam, Kochi, Thrissur, Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram are popular centers for shopping and traditional theatrical performances.

The state's tourism agenda promotes ecologically sustained tourism, which focuses on the local culture, wilderness adventures, volunteering and personnel growth of the local population. Efforts are taken to minimise the adverse effects of traditional tourism on the natural environment and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Tourism in Kerala has recorded remarkable growth in the last few years. The number of foreign tourists and domestic tourists visiting the state has crossed two lakhs and 50 lakhs respectively. The percentage share of Kerala in foreign tourist's arrival is more than 8% in the country. Domestic tourist arrivals have grown at an average of 8.2% per year. In 2012 the total domestic tourist arrived in Kerala was 10076854.On the other hand the International Tourist

Arrivals have grown at an average rate of 13% per year and the number was 793696. Total employment generated in this sector both direct and indirect is about 11 lakhs. The total revenue generated in the economy due to tourism was rupees 17348 crore (both direct and indirect) in 2010. The total investment in tourism in the state for the last five years is estimated in the order of Rs.1000 crores.

In Kerala tourism has emerged as one of the few economic alternatives to develop the state economy. It has been recognized as an important sector for the development on account of its potential for generating income and employment. A physical quality of life comparable to developed nations and almost fully literate population in this beautiful land are important factors that help transform Kerala into an important tourist destination. Moderate climate and the rich art and culture are positive factors to foster tourism development.

Tourism and sustainable development

Tourism is widely perceived to be an effective vehicle for development. The objectives of tourism related development should be commensurate with the sustainable development. The term sustainable tourism usually denotes the application of the more general concept of sustainable development to tourism as a specific economic sector. The satisfaction of basic needs and self-reliance, fundamental objectives of sustainable development are also implicit objectives of sustainable tourism development.

The emphasis on community involvement in the planning, development and control of tourism is a linchpin of sustainable tourism development strategies. That is, it is only when priority is given to the developmental needs and interests of local communities over the goals of the tourism industry itself that broader social development will be achieved. There is widespread support for community based tourism planning a variety of economic, political and social factors can adversely impact up on the demand for tourism, there by not only weakening the ability of destinations or countries to maintain control over tourism related development but also highlighting the non-sustainability of all tourism development.

A fundamental principle of all sustainable tourism development policies is that the natural, social and cultural resources up on which tourism depends should be protected and enhanced. Most sectors of the tourism industry have a vested interest in following such a policy. This may result from either a genuine commitment to sound environmental practice from the adoption of ethical business principles which embrace sustainability issues or for more pragmatic business reasons.

Resource sustainability is dependent on all sectors involved directly and indirectly in the tourism industry working towards common goals. When the entire tourism industry accepts the need to introduce policies for sustainable resource utilization that sustainability within the context of tourism will be achievable. Achievement of sustainable

development is dependent upon the fulfillment of a number of basic requirements. In relation to tourism, a number of points deserve emphasis:

1. Firstly, it is recognized that national and international cooperation should exist to facilitate the adoption of sustainable tourism development
2. Secondly, from a techno centric perspective on development, many of the principles of sustainable development have been criticized for ignoring the contribution of technological advance to solving environmental problems. There is a little doubt that technology has much to contribute to sustainable resource use, although within the context of tourism its role is less clear. On the one hand, technology has provided the means for reducing certain environmental impacts, such as noise reduction or fuel efficiency in jet engines. On the other hand technological advance has paradoxically contributed to the continuing growth in tourism, not only increasing tourist numbers but also access to more distant and fragile environments.
3. Thirdly, sustainable tourism development requires the adoption of a social paradigm relevant to sustainable living.

Thus sustainable development in relation to tourism means “developing the tourism product in such a way that it contributes to the economic, social and environmental growth of region or local community rather than destroying or degrading the resource on which it is based”. The benefits of tourism industry, which is designed and managed to growth in a sustainable manner, is that it can contribute to national and regional prosperity in ways that are felt by everyone.

The tourism vision slogan is to conserve ‘nature and culture’, preserving the ‘heritage and environment ’to promote tourism. Our mission is to preserve the natural beauty, beaches, water, hill stations etc to accelerate the process of sustainable development of tourism. The tourist will destroy what they had come to see. That is poorly managed tourism may lead to deforestation and erosion, degradation and depletion of biological diversity, disruption of natural habitats and over consumption of resources like fresh water and energy. These are caused by increased demand for building, increased production of waste, problems of household waste, more use of environmentally dangerous products, high tourist densities, local communities are often exploited, destruction of natural environment and disrupts the structure of host countries.

‘What attracted tourist most’ show that it was scenery, wild life, historic townscape and generally find rural environment. These form the core of the tourism product and if they are continued to be harmed by pollution or other environmental impacts, then the very foundations on which the industries stand will be eroded. Therefore greater appreciation of the environment is given. This is possible through following sustainable tourism because sustainable tourism plays an important role in establishing potential development of a region. The major objectives of the sustainable tourism are

improve the material and nonmaterial well being of communities, protect biological diversity and maintain ecological systems and ensure the cultural integrity and social cohesion of communities.

In 2006, the Kerala Tourism Department pro-actively decided to make Responsible Tourism (RT) the frame work for sustainable growth and development of tourism in the state. For that the first step was an extensive consultative exercise to determine the contours of the overall strategy. State level consultation on Responsibility in Tourism in association with ICRT-India and EQUATIONS (Equitable Tourism Options) in February 2007. Follow up meetings and consultations with groups representing - LSGs & Civil Society Organisations, Tourism Industry, Govt. Departments and Organisations. Kudumbashree, the State Poverty Eradication Mission was identified as the partner for local production and services .Leveraged Kudumbashree's community network of women's self-help groups to implement production cum supply plan. Its closeness with Local Governments made the community - local government - industry engagement easy to facilitate. Kerala RT Initiative was formally kicked off on 14 March 2008 at Kumarakom and functions smoothly.

Sustainable tourism is led by motives like spirit of enquiry, love of beauty, search for knowledge and respect for future. There is to be no negative impact on immediate and interrelated environment. It aims at quality tourism, which creates minimal damage to the natural, social and cultural environment. The important methods to achieve sustainable development through tourism which are applicable to Kerala are:

1. Carrying capacity studies be undertaken for popular trekking trails, national parks, rivers etc
2. 'Honey Pot Areas' need to have pressure relieved by opening closed areas and by publicizing lesser known regions so that traffic is dissipated from popular zones
3. There is requirement to have trained nature guides, naturalists, mountain trek leaders etc who have safety and environmental knowledge. Such courses could be initiated at tourism institutions, vocational study institutes as well as outdoor training institutions
4. Maintain and if possible increase the economic return from tourism
5. Improve the quality of life of the community and increase the benefits that tourism brings to the local community
6. Enhance the visitor experience and increase appreciation of the areas special character
7. Introduce measures to discourage visitors from taking cars into the heart of the area
8. Prevent any increase in visitor number on peak days and also the number of cars
9. Reduce the visitor pressure on the most sensitive locations
10. Increase the proportion of visitors using public transport
11. Improve management of visiting school groups which disturb local people
12. Upgrade certain footpaths as alternatives to more pressurized routes
13. Promote more robust recreational areas near cities to divert demand
14. Use capacity management to reduce tourism pressure on the community
15. Increase accommodation occupancy during the week and off season
16. Work with the tourism industry to promote sustainable tourism
17. Open up dialogue between local residents and the tourism sector
18. Raise community awareness of the importance of tourism

19. Create mechanism to allow visitors to make voluntary donations to support conservation work
20. Provide information for visitors to increase their appreciation of the areas' special qualities
21. Improve signing and information panels to orientate visitors and to put across key message
22. Develop a new tourist information centre
23. Effective steps at the state level be carried out for garbage disposal through Municipal bodies and use of incinerators to be re-looked at
24. Partner state governments and NGOs to keep cities and towns clean in conjunction with local authorities
25. Environment education should be included in the curriculum of schools and colleges with a special component of Eco Tourism to make a sensitive population
26. The Ministry of Tourism should sponsor a program for Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) in order that sustainable tourism businesses are clearly identified. This may also provide the incentive for non-sustainable operators to seek Certification. In addition International Endorsements can also be encouraged such as ISO-14000 series for environmental care and ISO-9002 for service quality.

Conclusion

Sustainable tourism is attempting to make as low as impact on the environment and local culture as possible, while helping to generate future employment for local people. Thus the aim of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development it brings a positive experience for local people, tourism companies and the tourist themselves.

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