

GREEN TOURISM IN INDIA: WITH SPECIAL CONTEXT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

Dr. Abdul Wahid Farooqui*

ABSTRACT

Green tourism now a day's is an emerging topic for tourism industry in India in general and Himachal Pradesh in particular, which is one of the favorite tourist destinations among other Asian Countries. Green tourism generally refers to environment friendly facilities, amenities and other facilities provided to tourist. The main aim of this paper is to highlight the significance of green tourism and the extents of green practices adopted by tourism industry. In this paper an attempt is made to analyse relevance of green tourism and its relationship with sustainable development. In this paper 'Eco Tourism' principles are analysed in context of Himachal Pradesh. The Challenges of sustainable tourism is also discussed in the present paper.

KEYWORDS: *Green Tourism, Sustainable Development Responsible Tourism, Eco-Tourism.*

Introduction

Green tourism is a new concept which aims at providing environmental friendly tourist's facilities and services. Every traveler or tourists wants to have safe, secure from urban noises and pollutions and wants to have environment. It is the need of the hour that tourism must provide healthy environment to the tourist as well as tourism industry or service provider. Green tourism is very much depending upon the initiative taken by local community so, local community plays on important role in ensuring green tourism in India.

Objectives of Study

- There are three objectives of the present study
- To examine the relevance of relevance of green tourism in Himachal Pradesh.
 - To understand the relationship between green tourism with sustainable development.
 - To study the challenges of sustainable tourism.

Rationale of Study

It has been observed that various studies have been conducted by researcher and scholars of different regions on green tourism. Some studies revealed those environmentally friendly attributes that customers would like to have in their hotel room, while some other analysed guests attitude towards the environment and green tourism practices. However, these studies have several limitations which provide directions for further research. Most of the studies were conducted in the tourist places and resorts located on various areas. Very few studies were based on Indian demography and state. This aspect raiser the issue of applicability of the findings in India and other Asian Countries. Research in other counties can contribute to the feasibility of this study.

* Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Zakir Husain Delhi College, University of Delhi, Delhi, India.

Major Ways by Which a Good Tourism Practice Prevent the Environment

- Optimum utilisation of natural resources and raw material such as water, power, flora, fauna, road transport etc.
- The prevention of air, land water, noise pollution.
- The protection and development of historical places and enhancement of biodiversity.

Principles of Sustainable Tourism

- Tourism can be developed with the closer and direct cooperation with the local community. In other world, local community has greater role in developing sustainable tourism.
- Direct relationship between local business and tourism enable local people gain economically as well.'
- Sustainable tourism is interrelated with the development of local businesses and trade.
- Sustainable tourism focuses particularly upon integrity of the tourist places.
- Sustainable tourism seeks greater association with local people, places, policies, parties, product and peripherals.

Ministry of tourism has formulated various set of policies and guidelines for the development of eco-tourism/ Green tourism in pursuance of the government policy. A unique approach, scientific planning, effective control and periodic evaluation has to be adopted in order to protect, conserve, maintain, secure and enrich environment with healthy lifestyle and cultural heritage.

Global Inventiveness and Action

The concept of environmental oriented tourism initiated by Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) based on the basic fact that systematic tourism can play a vital role in the development of tourist places worthy of conservation as well as ensure the level of development. Thus, environmental impact assessment becomes part and parcel step in consideration of any particular site for a tourism project. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) in its guidelines for systematic and comprehensive environmental programs give prime relevance to environmental concerns in design planning, construction and implementation.

Preamble

Himachal Pradesh, known for its natural heritage, is amongst the top tourist destinations in the country, both for national as well as international visitors. Recent estimates, place the number at about 160 lakh visitors – more than twice the state's population. However, much of the tourism related activity is concentrated in four major locations, Shimla, Manali, Dharamshala and Dalhousie. A majority of the visitors do not get an opportunity to experience the rich bio-cultural diversity contain in the many forest areas, sanctuaries and national parks that comprise such a large part of Himachal Pradesh. The Forest Department of Himachal Pradesh framed an eco tourism policy during 2005 to enable tourist to experience this national heritage. Eco- tourism, in a very broad sense, means venturing into and enjoying nature in such a way as to assure that negative impacts on the cultural and natural environment are minimized and mitigated. It is, therefore, responsible tourism which, besides being ecologically and naturally sensitive helps the local communities in realizing social and economic benefits.

Vision and Objectives

The objectives is to preserve and protect the natural (both flora and fauna) and cultural heritage of Himachal Pradesh, provide opportunities to enhance livelihood of local people, generate resources for sustainable development and promote greater understanding and appreciation for this heritage through authentic eco-tourism initiatives. Eco-Tourism can be one of the most viable options for conservation of natural resources and sustainable development in a mountain state like Himachal Pradesh. The following Eco-Tourism principles will form the basis of this policy.

Design, Construction and Low-Impact Facilities

- Provide a positive experience for both visitors and hosts,
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect,
- Minimize physical, social and behavioral impacts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation and livelihood opportunities to local communities.

Forest department has created a special purpose vehicle in the form of 'Himachal Pradesh Ecotourism Society. HP (ECOSOC) registered vide No. 422 and dated 30-june-2006 under the Registration rules of societies Act 1860 to assist in delivering the mission and objectives of the policy.

Challenges of Sustainable Tourism

- Protecting natural and cultural resources
- Limiting negative impacts at tourist destination, including use of various resources and waste production developing the betterment of the local community
- Minimizing the seasonality of demand
- Limiting the environmental impact of tourism related transport
- Making tourism accessible to all tourist
- Improving the quality of tourism jobs

Main Findings

- Findings reveal that the hotels in Himachal Pradesh follow the Green approach in their hotel.
- There is a strong cooperation of local community in maintaining and ensuring green tourism in Himachal Pradesh.
- By conducting interviews, it is found that 67% of the tourist are satisfied with the services provided by the hotel employees regarding tourism practices
- It is found through survey that 88% of the hotels in Himachal Pradesh have proper system of disposal of solid waste management, air purifier system, bio degradable and non degradable waste.
- Government of Himachal Pradesh are very keen in promoting green tourism in its state, many tourist places are located in.
- Study also reveals that tourists are becoming more aware about environmental issues, the hotel industry should communicate them, create awareness, educate tourist on conservation of resources and work on improving the traveler preparation
- The study highlighted the significance of resort environmental practices on guest's loyalty in addition to resort service and location quality.
- The resort managers should be genuinely involved in environmentally friendly programs because their practices could potentially enhance the public reputation of the resort.

Conclusion

There can be no economic growth in tourism without sustainability, without conservation of natural resources and without incentives to local community. Long-term sustainability requires a close balance between sustainability in economic, socio-cultural and environmental terms. The need to match economic growth and sustainable development also brings in an ethical dimension. Tourism will thus emerge as a prime factor in eco-development in the future years and can only develop with tourism cooperation. It is more important than ever that we support green innovation as agent of tourism's sustainable growth. Hence, it can be said that green management of tourism in Himachal Pradesh is the way to harness the nature's true value and not to cancel with the rhythm of north India's paradise still to be explored'. In the end, all tourism-related activities should be well designed, executed and managed in an environment friendly manner so that environment is not degraded.

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