



Sustainable tourism development in India: Role of stakeholders

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world, but the impact of tourism is extremely varied, with both positive and negative fallouts. This has led to a greater focus on sustainable development of tourism for the economy, environment, and society at large. While tourism is the second largest industry in India, there does not seem to be any concerted efforts. The main challenge of this essay is evaluating the role of Tour Operators of India. Thus, if they do not perform their tasks with a harmony and proper planning, not only they will cause tourists not to trust in Tourism of India, but also they will cause decrease in economic benefits and other profits. Therefore, tour operators can act like dealers and offer numerous services to tourists. What is especially important is that for Tour Operators, to be able to create suitable conditions to encourage tourists visit this country, they need to have high knowledge and proficiency, so that these factors can affect the results of their function evaluation and development of tourism industry in India. In this essay we try to indicate Sustainable Tourism Development, Statuses of India in Sustainable Tourism, of Sustainable Tourism and Structural modeling of Sustainable Tourism Development in India and review and analyze functions of the managing Tour Operators in Sustainable tourism Development in India. In this respect, we define Tour Operators and deal with the pathology or evaluating functions of Sustainable Tourism Development.

Keywords: economy, education, process, progress, stakeholder, sustainable tourism technology

Introduction

Tourism can be considered as one of the most profitable sectors of the Indian economy, and it is often the only successful economic activity. However, besides its economic benefits, the negative environmental and social impacts of tourism must be managed, as well. The principles of sustainable development must be taken into account in order to ensure the long term profitability of the sector. „Sustainable tourism” is a frequently quoted concept. It is usually present in strategies and plans prepared at different levels, but it is also used in everyday life besides professional and academic circles. As the fundamental document of Indian’s tourism planning, the National Tourism Development Strategy claims: „The sustainable utilization of the natural and cultural attractions is highly important for tourism; in the utilization of resources the irreversible negative processes must be prevented.

After the concept of sustainable tourism was defined, it is revised from time to time. In addition, the demand for measuring the impacts and changes of tourism received more emphasis in the last decade. The above mentioned strategy also states that „Presently, sustainable tourism is only a theoretical concept in India. In spite of different initiatives the indicator system suitable for the verification of the sustainable operation of the developments and the comprehensive regulation are missing.” (National Tourism Development Strategy, 2005, p.20) Several researchers deal with creating models or systems to be used for assessing sustainability in tourism.

However, there is a missing link between defining the concept of sustainable tourism and implementing it in practice. If sustainability is a major objective to be achieved, the stakeholders of tourism must know the concept and principles of sustainable tourism, moreover they should have positive attitudes towards its practical aspects. It is especially important that the representatives of the local governments, the so-called local decision-makers, who are responsible for planning, developing and managing tourism, should know the principles of sustainable tourism and be aware of their duties in the field of sustainability.

There is no widely accepted definition of sustainable tourism, but all the many definitions share some commonalities. The definitions of sustainable tourism emphasize the following important features: Quality – sustainable tourism provides a quality experience for visitors while improving the quality of life of the host community and protecting the quality of the environment. Continuity sustainable tourism ensures the continuity of the natural resources upon which it is based and the continuity of the culture of the host community with satisfying experiences for visitors. Balance- sustainable tourism balances the needs of the tourism industry, supporters of the environment, and the local community. Sustainable tourism also emphasizes mutual goals and cooperation among visitors, the host community, and the destinations.

Tourism planning, development and operation should be part of conservation or sustainable development strategies for a region, a province (state) or the nation. Tourism planning development and operation should incorporate several different sectors, involving different government agencies, private corporations, citizen groups and individuals thus providing the widest possible benefits. Agencies, corporations, groups and

individuals should follow ethical and other principles that respect the culture and environment of the host area, the economy and traditional way of life, the community and traditional behavior, leadership and political patterns. Tourism should be planned and managed in a sustainable manner, with due regard for the protection and appropriate economic uses of the natural and human environment in host areas. Tourism should be undertaken with equity in mind to distribute fairly benefits and costs among tourism promoters and host peoples and areas. Good information, research and communication on the nature of tourism and its effects on the human and cultural environment should be available prior to and during development, especially for the local people, so that they can participate in and influence the direction of development and its effects for the individual and the collective interest.

Stakeholders and local decision-making

Citizens and workers in the host communities have the biggest stake in a form of tourism that protects their cultural and natural environment. Many of today's problems can be corrected if working relationships are built with communities and local tourist operators. This is especially true of aboriginal communities, where a respect for traditional values, knowledge and ways is a prerequisite to such a relationship. However, participation does not take place in a political vacuum. It occurs where minimum democratic conditions exist; e.g., local elections, free press, free speech and due process. Wherever these are lacking in tourist destinations, political preconditions for meaningful stakeholder involvement must be attended to as a priority. Unionized workers in the Tourism Web can play an especially key role in advancing such a political agenda in their communities. Democratic growth goes hand-in-hand with a process of building a new workplace and a new society based on a concept of "environmental citizens" able to make sound decisions and act instinctively to protect their Earth. Tourism is unique in this respect, and trade unions would welcome the opportunity to work with employers and governments to secure local community control.

Government and stakeholder involvement

In addition to its important regulatory responsibilities in such areas as air and water quality, soil and resource conservation, and public health, government must play an integrative role involving communities in social and economic management. This is to ensure that it is carried out in accordance with their priorities in such areas as land use, resource development and public services. Local governments are in the best position to encourage public participation in decision-making. Coordinating and providing training and other capacity building activities: Much can be gained by government sponsorship of training for tourist workers, as productive employment contributes to both profitability and community vitality. However, local authorities require assistance in this respect, as many do not have the resources or the political latitude to implement broad-based capacity building, among their stakeholders. They must appreciate and deal with this problem.

Beginning the process of stakeholder engagement

Employers, Governments, and NGOs

Much can be done to utilize the strengths and advantages in trade unions to initiate change. But a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development can only result if there is close co-operation between industry, trade unions, NGOs and governments. We propose "Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism" at all levels, but particularly at the workplaces and in the affected communities. Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism, Local planners, trade unions, tourist operators, travel agents, and other players must be equipped with guidelines that draw attention to desirable features of tourism, even where they are not reflected in law. Again, these must be generated through a network of "Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism", and should include specific bans on projects or proposals that exacerbate unsustainable features in the industry and give preference to activities that promote positive change.

Indian Tourism

India is of the most popular travel destinations in south Asia. Tourism is emerging as the second largest foreign exchange earner for the country even though the mainstay of the tourism industry in India continues to be domestic travelers. The barriers to improved performance of the tourism industry in India include its distance from affluent tourist markets lack of facilities, relatively limited professional in the industry and the image of the country (e.g. it is not a holiday location, it poses safety concerns and it has inadequate services).

Conclusion

There is a need for more clearly defined role of Stake holder rather than the traditional mass and specialist in order to reflect the growing diversity of Tourism. This would help markets to position their product more accurately and also provide a more concise picture of how the Sustainable Tourism is comprised. Secondly, many of the steps necessary to introduce Sustainable Tourism are also desired by Stakeholders to increase margins and stability. The price – cutting competition of undifferentiated mass market operators continues to be a threat to Sustainable destination development and environmental planning. For the industry it to be Sustainable, there needs to be an increase in the quality of holidays for customers and an increase in margins for Stakeholders. Thirdly, this suggests that mass operators are unable to regulate themselves. Conversely, small operators are often glad of regulations or guidelines to limit growth and thus preserve the quality of their

product. The fourth conclusion is that awareness of environmental problems varies between types of Stakeholders and is related directly to perceived responsibility. Some Stakeholders often believe that host governments have the major responsibility to ensure appropriate destination development. Third World governments find themselves in a weak, dependent situation and therefore, feel themselves powerless to enforce restrictions on large operators once the infrastructure for tourism in place.

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