
Sustainable Tourism Development: A study on Indian Tourist Destinations

Kalyanrao S Patil, Asst. Professor and Research Scholar, Department of Tourism and Travel,

Faculty of Business Studies, SharnbasavaUniversity, Kalaburagi-585103,

kalyanspatil.mbatt@gmail.com

Srinath H Shahapure, Chairperson, Department of MBA-Hospital Management, Faculty of Business Studies,

SharnbasavaUniversity, Kalaburagi-585103

shshahapure@rediffmail.com

Abstract

Tourism is one of the most perspective and dynamic businesses in the world. It is of great significance to plan and develop tourism purposefully and sustainability through the search for compromise between environmental, economic and social aims of society. The paper explores the benefits and costs associated with the tourism development, and also focus on the need for policy for tourism stakeholders to better understand the potential implications for destinations striving to achieve more sustainable tourism growth. The study highlights that for tourist destinations, tourism growth remains economically, socially and environmentally unbalanced, often as a result of rapid and unplanned growth visitor numbers such as sensitive natural and heritage sites, degradation of community-specific infrastructure and facilities, economic stress in off-peak periods, while unexpected events or shocks affecting destinations highly dependent on tourism. However, as the opportunities and challenges for tourism development will vary depending on the unique characteristics of individual destinations. A selection of key criteria and indicators are highlighted to help established and emerging destinations to strike a balance between the benefits and costs associated with tourism development and implement a sustainable tourism development vision for the future.

Keywords: *Sustainable tourism, benefits, costs, tourist destinations.*

Sustainable Tourism: An Introduction

The World Tourism Organization declared in 1988 that sustainable tourism is:

“Envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.”

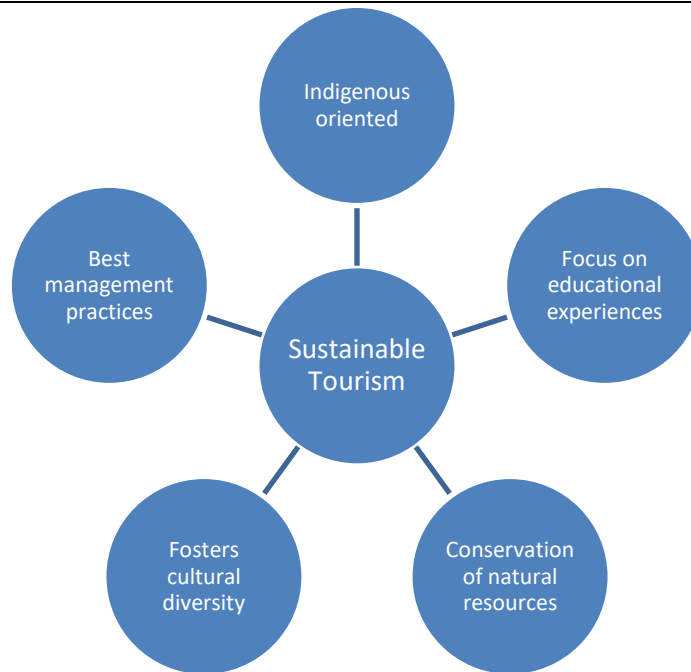
Tourism has become an important economic activity in India and other areas around the world. Well planned sustainable tourism development provides opportunities for the visitor to experience aesthetic natural areas and host communities, and learn about the importance of conservation of natural and cultural resources. Additionally, sustainable tourism practices can generate income for both host communities and Government. The International Ecotourism Society (2004) has described sustainability in regards to tourism as meaning:

Environmentally	Minimizes any damage to the flora, fauna, water, soils, energy use, contamination, etc. and ideally tries to benefit the environment in a positive way
Socially and Culturally	Does not harm the social structure or culture of the destination and the host communities
Economically	Continues to contribute to the economic well-being of the host community. A sustainable business should benefits its owners, its employees, and its neighbors

Source: International Ecotourism Society (2004)

The “triple bottom line” approach in these three aspects referred to as “doing well by doing good”. It means tourism service providers run their businesses in such a way that it doesn’t destroy the natural, socio-cultural, and economic resources.

Sustainable Tourism Features

**Source: Own Findings**

Nowadays, sustainable tourism is attaining much attention in the national and international scientific and government discourse (Aall, 2014). The involvement in sustainable tourism requires participation by all the stakeholders in tourism industry (Hamid & Isa, 2020). Sustainable tourism has emerged as an important consideration in Indian tourism industry. The involvement by government on implementing sustainable tourism practices mainly focuses on preservation and conservation of the natural and cultural resources of the destination, and augmenting the participation of the host communities for social transformation. The importance of sustainable tourism in India has increased significantly due to the impact of increased human activity on climate and other social aspects of the destination. The same can be easily understand with an example of Sundarbans Islands in West Bengal where 7,000 people have already been displaced and by 2030, it is anticipated that over 70,000 people from this area will be exposed to the risk of losing their homes and livelihoods due to sea level rise, increased cyclone intensity and flooding. In addition to the widespread community displacement, the mangrove forests which are the largest of such forests in the world and are well known for their biodiversity and habitat for threatened species (including the Royal Bengal Tiger), will have diminished by over 75% in the next 20 years due to the climate change triggered by human activities.

Goals of Sustainable Tourism

The historic agreement among world leaders at the United Nations in 2015 on a universal 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development committed all countries to pursue a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would lead to a better future for all. The bold agenda sets out a global framework to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and fix climate change until 2030.

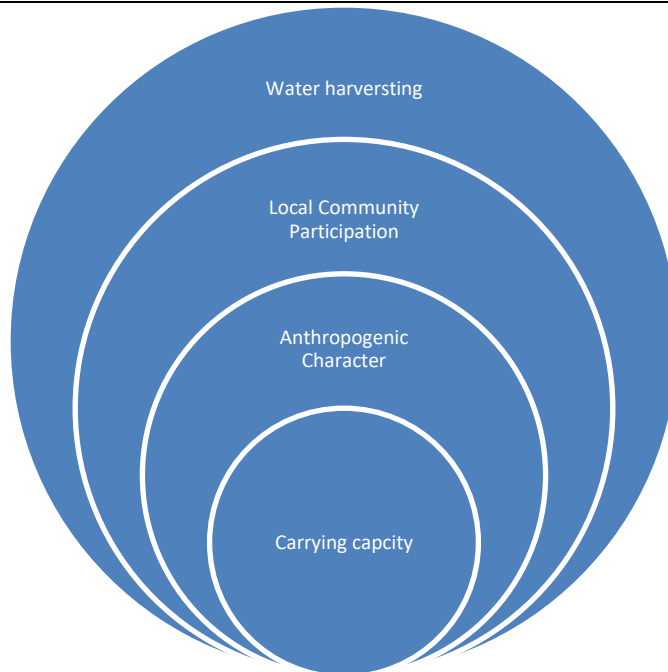




Source: UNEP & UNWTO, 2015

Sustainable tourism is in a very special position to benefit local communities, economically and socially, and to raise awareness and support for conservation of the environment. As the 17 SDGs and the corresponding 169 SDG targets offer the world a new direction, tourism can and must play a significant role in delivering sustainable solutions for people, the planet, prosperity and peace. Within the sector, economic development and environmental protection should not be seen as opposing forces – they should be pursued hand in hand as aspiration that can and should be mutually reinforcing (UNEP, 2015).

Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India



Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2020-21

The sustainable tourism criteria and indicators by the Indian Tourism Ministry have progressed well, and they are now accordingly planned for implementation. Among the ensuring task, the foremost is implementation of the criteria and indicators for tour operators and the accommodation sector; and the development of criteria and indicators for tourism in rural areas and homestays.

Objectives of the study

1. To understand the benefits and threats of tourism to the tourist destination
2. To understand the role of sustainable tourism to maintain the balance between benefits and threats of tourism.

Literature Review

Florek (2012) highlighted that sustainability principles is the best way to preserve tourism destinations from degradation in social, cultural and environmental way. Author also noted that properly planned tourism can also increase income and be source of wealth of host community. She strongly believed that reputation for being sustainable adds value to touristic enterprises' brands and strengthens their market position, making them less vulnerable to short-term market

and economic changes. Sustainability cannot be achieved by an authoritarian regime (top-down) or an exclusively community-based approach (bottom-top). This means that the participation of stakeholders does not automatically guarantee the sustainable use of the resources or sustainable tourism (Ramet et al., 2016). Hunter (1995) suggested that the dominant paradigm of sustainable tourism development, one which appears to chart a responsible course, balancing the requirements of tourism development with the protection of the environment. However, in his study he argued that the predominant paradigm is too tourism-centric, parochial and, therefore, inherently flawed, and that it effectively condones planning, management and policy approaches which fails to operationalise sustainable tourism in a manner consistent with the general aims and requirements of sustainable development. Hardy et al. (2002) illustrated the conceptual and operational development of the term sustainable tourism. They suggested that the concept, despite being subjected to definitional and conceptual arguments, is one that has primarily given focus to environmental and economic issues, despite its development and early definitional focus on subjective well-being and intergenerational equity. Perhaps due to the difficulties inherent in studying human behavior and perceptions, issues related to local communities have historically been given less attention in debates surrounding sustainable tourism issues. Butler (1999) said that sustainable tourism is the way of the future because there is a growing interest in the concept will not ensure its adoption or success. He highlighted, there is a disturbing tendency, in the desire to promote sustainable tourism, to claim that any small-scale, particularly where it is developed by or for local residents. He also mentioned that in the absence of accurate and reliable indicators and monitoring, one cannot comment on the sustainability in the tourism industry. Liu (2003) suggested that there is an urgent need to develop policies and measures that are not only theoretically sound but also practically feasible for the development and promotion of sustainable tourism. Without effective means of translating ideals into planned action, sustainable tourism runs the risk of remaining irrelevant and inert as a feasible policy option for the real world of tourism development. Liu also mentioned to find out the ways of applying the principles of sustainable development to mainstream, conventional mass tourism rather than preoccupying ourselves with inventing or relabeling the various side-shoots of mass tourism.

Benefits to Destination from Tourism

Revenue for heritage and protected sites: Funding heritage and protected sites is a major concern for the Government and the local authorities. Government funding is often not sufficient for conservation needs, and many important sites will not survive without new and additional sources of revenue. Sustainable tourism offers opportunities to generate income in diverse ways such as developing and promoting Self-Help Groups (SHGs), promoting local art and handicrafts by providing subsidized financial assistance, etc. are allowing Government and authorities to protect sites efficiently and effectively.

Employment: Sustainable tourism can bring new job opportunities in the area, considering one of the greatest benefits to host communities. To meet the demands of tourism in and around tourist destinations, residents may find employment in transportation, accommodation, guiding and escorting, self-help groups, arts and handicrafts, etc. Local residents are in a good position for tourism and tourism related jobs because they are familiar with the resources of the destination.

Environmental and Cultural education: O'Reilly, 2006; Powell et al., 2006; Martin, 2010; Health, 2007, 2009 highlighted the importance of sustainable tourism education positively linked to greater travel experiences contribute to travelers adaptability, motivation and their contribution towards sustainability. Once visitors have seen the natural and cultural resources, they can be eager to learn more about them, as well as visitors may also want to understand the challenges of conserving these resources.

Threats to destination from tourism

Environmental threats: Improper or heavy visitors use can cause trampling on sensitive habitats, disturbance of wildlife, damage to other natural resources, and impacts to water quality from the increase in wastewater discharge. In addition to the immediate local damage, these impacts can cause long-lasting subtle changes and problems, including the alteration of animal habits, migration and reproduction. Many changes are difficult to detect, but all are important indicators of the health of natural resources.

Economic instability: Tourism revenue may not remain by the host community but instead land in the pockets of outside investors. This is called leakage of revenue, and if leakage is high, there will be little local support for the destination and the host communities. Even if some residents are able

to generate revenue from tourism, if income benefits to the community are small or not sufficiently linked to conservation efforts, residents may re-invest those funds in high-impact activities with greater economic returns. For those who do not find stable jobs in tourism, if the jobs do not provide management or ownership opportunities, local employees will not be motivated to commit tourism as a career.

Crowding: A sense of crowding can be a problem within both the communities and the destinations. Many host communities find themselves giving up traditionally used natural areas to tourism, including infrastructure development such as roads, hotels, restaurants, etc. Tourists may start to compete with residents for remaining open spaces. If access to these open spaces becomes difficult, tensions often grow and locals may start to resent tourists. Crowds can also be a nuisance for the tourists themselves, many of whom are seeking leisure and solitude trip.

Unplanned development: When location becomes a popular tourist destination, local entrepreneurs will create lodging, restaurants and other services to cater to visitor's needs. In some cases where tourism demand is strong, people from other parts of the country will move to a community to take advantage of the increased economic opportunity. With the increased need for tourism services comes on increased infrastructure demand, hotels, restaurants and homes for new employees or entrepreneurs. These demands put pressure on basic services such as water supplies, wastewater treatment, waste management, electricity, etc. In addition to the burden put on municipal services, increased development typically occurs with minimal planning and can become an aesthetic problem as well as an ecological problem for both the community and other tourist resources of the destination.

Balancing the benefits and costs

Sustainable tourism has potential to reduce the threats posed by tourism to the tourist destinations and to the host communities. However, successful sustainable tourism requires rigorous planning and management to realize its potential. Balancing the costs and benefits is not easy. In some cases, minor negative impacts need to be accepted in order to gain greater benefits. Sustainable tourism guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability

principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term viability:

- Make optimal use of environmental resources that continues a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- Respect socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary (OECD, 2018b; UNEP & UNWTO, 2005 and 2012).

Conclusion

Tourism is a huge part of our global culture, allowing us to explore different parts of the world, meet people from different destinations, and experience new traditions and activities. Since it brings many benefits to both guests and hosts, it can generally be seen as a force for good. However, industry is changing and we are becoming more and more aware of the threats of natural, socio-cultural change and our role in escalating it, our global community is thinking about ways we can lessen our impacts on the destination. It is not just host communities that live in tourist destination that are feeling the negative effects of tourism. As tourists ourselves, we need to prefer to visit places that are clean, not too crowded, and safe and also need to preserve local cultures, traditions, religions, and building, rather than experience an inauthentic ploy for money. Therefore, we all have a lot to gain from alternative forms of tourism, including sustainable forms. The best places for sustainable tourism to be developed are regions with natural resources, landscapes, or cultural buildings that attract tourists who might want to explore and admire local destinations and cultures in a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way.

References

1. Aall, C. (2014). Sustainable tourism in practice: Promoting or perverting the quest for a sustainable development?. *Sustainability*, 6(5), 2562-2583.
2. Abd Hamid, M., & Mohd Isa, S. (2020). Exploring the sustainable tourism practices among tour operators in Malaysia. *J. Sustain. Sci. Manag*, 15, 68-80.
3. Alexander, S. E., & Whitehouse, J. L. (2004). Challenges for balancing conservation and development through ecotourism: insights and implications from two Belizean case studies. *WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment*, 76.
4. Butler, R. W. (1999). Sustainable tourism: A state-of-the-art review. *Tourism geographies*, 1(1), 7-25.
5. Cernat, L., & Gourdon, J. (2011). Is the concept of sustainable tourism sustainable? Developing the Sustainable Tourism Benchmarking Tool.
6. Clarke, J. (1997). A framework of approaches to sustainable tourism. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 5(3), 224-233.
7. Florek, I. (2012). Sustainable Tourism Development. Region Formation and Development Studies. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(3), 157-166.

8. Hardy, A., Beeton, R. J., & Pearson, L. (2002). Sustainable tourism: An overview of the concept and its position in relation to conceptualisations of tourism. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 10(6), 475-496.
9. Harris, R., Williams, P., & Griffin, T. (Eds.). (2012). *Sustainable tourism*. Routledge.
10. Hunter, C. J. (1995). On the need to re-conceptualise sustainable tourism development. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 3(3), 155-165.
11. Ioannides, D. (1995). A flawed implementation of sustainable tourism: the experience of Akamas, Cyprus. *Tourism management*, 16(8), 583-592.
12. Janusz, G. K., & Bajdor, P. (2013). Towards to sustainable tourism—framework, activities and dimensions. *Procedia economics and finance*, 6, 523-529.
13. Liu, Z. (2003). Sustainable tourism development: A critique. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 11(6), 459-475.
14. Lu, J., & Nepal, S. K. (2009). Sustainable tourism research: An analysis of papers published in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism. *Journal of sustainable Tourism*, 17(1), 5-16.
15. Mbaiwa, J. E., & Stronza, A. L. (2009). The challenges and prospects for sustainable tourism and ecotourism in developing countries. *The SAGE Handbook of Tourism Studies*. SAGE Publications, London, 333-351.
16. Rämetsä, J., Tolvanen, A., Kinnunen, I., Törn, A., Orell, M., & Siikamäki, P. (2016). 3.3 Sustainable Tourism. *pdf*, *Sustainable use of renewable*.
17. Saarinen, J. (2019). Communities and sustainable tourism development: Community impacts and local benefit creation in tourism. In *A research agenda for sustainable tourism*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
18. Teo, P. (2002). Striking a balance for sustainable tourism: Implications of the discourse on globalisation. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 10(6), 459-474.
19. UNEP, U. (2005). Making tourism more sustainable: a guide for policy makers. *United Nations Environment Programme, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics*. Paris. Weaver, D. (2007). *Sustainable tourism*. Routledge. <https://tourism4sdgs.org/tourism-for-sdgs/tourism-and-sdgs/>