

CHANGING PARADIGMS ECOTOURISM : INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT--- Ecotourism is one of the popular forms of alternative tourism. It is often defined as sustainable nature- based tourism however, ecotourism also incorporates social and cultural dimensions where visitors interact with local residents . Ecotourism is usually used to describe tourism activities which are conducted in harmony with natur . This form of tourism fosters environmental principles with an emphasis on visiting and observing natural areas. It ensures that the impacts from the tourism activity are controlled. Thus ecotourism can be defined as purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the environment taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources financially beneficial to the local citizens.

Due to the large movement of people and unplanned tourism development the environment ecology and the people at a destination are greatly affected. The environment is the most fundamental ingredient of the tourism product and need to be preserved. It is generally agreed create pollution and over crowding and threaten the floral and faunal diversity. It also produces garbage trails, overburdens environment with tourist structures and roads and at times causes hazards. There is massive reduction in forest cover in the hills and mountains. The rich forested slopes have been converted into barren rocks due to the development activities such as roads hostels and trekking trails . Several part of country the soils , biomass, flora and fauna and water bodies have suffered a lot due to unplanned encroachment. Waste generation , especially solid waste by the hotels such as food waste, vegetable scraps , paper, rags, plastic, bottles, etc. is causing damage to the local ecosystems.

Key words – Ecotourism ,Trekking trails, Biomass , Mountains, Forest, Pollution, Flora and Fauna .

INTRODUCTION

India, the land of varied geography offers several tourist destinations that not just de-stress but also rejuvenate you. There are several ways to enjoy Mother Nature in most pristine way. The few places like the Himalayan Region, Kerala, the northeast India, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and the Lakshadweep islands are some of the places where you can enjoy the treasured wealth of the Mother Nature. Thenmala in Kerala is the first planned ecotourism destination in India created to cater to the Eco-tourists and nature lovers

The India topography boasts an abundant source of flora & 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 resource, which reduced due to the wildlife hunt by several kings in the past. Today, India has many wildlife sanctuaries and protection laws. Currently, there are about 80 national parks and 441 sanctuaries in India, which works for the protection and conservation of wildlife resource in India.

There are numerous Botanical and Zoological Gardens in India, which are working towards the enhancement of the Ecosystem. Poaching has stopped to large extent. There are severe punishments for poachers, hunters and illegal traders of animals and trees. Tree plantation are taking place in several places. There are several animal & plant rights organization, who fight for the rights of the animals and plants. Numerous organizations and NGOs are coming forward to provide environmental education to the common people at the grass root level.

It is relatively new segment in India. It involves visiting natural areas without disturbing the fragile ecosystem .Eco tourism generates wealth for the local people, who in turn take measures to conserve and protect the environment and natural resources . India with its natural diversity is one of the pristine places in the world for eco tourism. The Himalayan region, Kerala, Northeast, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep islands the Western and Eastern Ghats are some of the hot spots for eco tourism in India. India has some of the best wildlife reserves in the world, rich in flora and fauna. Ecotourism is more than a catch phrase for nature loving travel and recreation. Eco-tourism 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 . Responsibility of both travelers and service providers is the genuine meaning for eco-tourism . Eco-tourism also endeavors to encourage and

support the diversity of local economies for which the tourism related income is important .With support from tourists, local services and producers can compete with larger, foreign companies and local families can support themselves. Besides all these, the revenue produced from tourism helps and encourages governments to fund conservation projects and training programs

Ecotourism- Sustainable development and Biodiversity Conservation

Saving the environment around you and preserving the natural luxuries and forest life, that's what ecotourism is all about. Whether it's about a nature camp or organizing trekking trips towards the unspool and inaccessible regions, one should always keep in mind not to create any mishap or disturbance in the life cycle of nature .Eco-tourism focuses on local cultures, wilderness adventures, volunteering, personal growth and learning new ways to live on our vulnerable planet. It is typically defined as travel to destinations where the flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. Responsible Eco-tourism includes programs that minimize the adverse effects of traditional tourism on the natural environment, and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Therefore, in addition to evaluating environmental and cultural factors, initiatives by hospitality providers to promote recycling, energy efficiency, water reuse, and the creation of economic opportunities for local communities are an integral part of Eco-tourism.

Bearing in mind the impacts of ecotourism and the objectives of sustainable development we can gauge that these objectives can be of immense help in projecting furze prospects of eco-tourism . If these objectives are applied in a practical sense in a potential area they can promote healthy eco-tourism activities with minimum acceptable levels of negative impacts because there is no zero- impact of tourism as development and exploitation go hand in hand .

In order to achieve a sustainable kind development for eco-tourism two most important elements should be taken into- account .

Carrying- capacity

Infrastructure

Carrying capacity :- Carrying-capacity with respect to tourism refers to the level of visitor use an area can accommodate with levels of visitor use an area can accommodate with levels of satisfaction for visitors pertaining to few impacts on resources literally it implies that there is a limits to visitors use .Bolton in 1985 offered a formula to estimate tourists carrying capacity of given area. It is an area used by tourists divided by average to his is $M^2/person$

Carrying capacity = Area used by tourists / Average individual standard

The total number of daily visits is obtained by the following formula –

Carrying- capacity X Rotation co- efficient of daily visits

**Here Rotation Coefficient can be calculated as – : Number of daily hours areas in open for tourists
/ Average time of visit**

The greatest bearing and the relevance for the assessment of tourism carrying capacity should be expanded through means of conservation strategies recycling of resources and maintenance ecology.

Infrastructure

Ecotourism has a wide range for activities and to attract tourists supportive infrastructure is needed as it plays an important role in tourism industry . Infrastructure development is a primary component for the beginning of tourism in any region. The construction and provision of road railways, airports electricity gas supplies sanitation and water supplies and many other things are undertaken to attract and facilitate tourist. These changes also benefit the residents of the region itself by providing them amenities but the wanton encroachment by man has adversely affected the environment. FoR example : Road and buildings in the hilly terrain necessitates removal of the forest cover which is vital to maintain the ecological balance. It has been seen that tourism brings urbanization and unless there is simultaneous development in other infrastructural facilities, severe and serious problems of pollution may occur.

Eco- Tourism Society , suggested that eco-tourism is a viable tool for conservation and sustainable development for the protection of environment and economic development . It should be taken as a common goal not a conflict between the two for the present and for the future generations. Eco-Tourism society has published some eco-tourism guidelines for nature tour operators. They suggested that before the departure, to visit any area the travelers should be informed of dos and don't by offering literature briefin explaining them with the help of examples and taking corrective measures. So that the negative impacts on sensitive environment and culture should be minimized. Visitors should be prepared for encounter with local cultures and with native animals and plants.

Contribution of Different Economic Sectors to the Employment

SECTOR	JOBS
Agriculture	44.7
Manufacturing	12.6
Mining and quarrying	2.6
Railways	0.9
Other transport	13.8
Tourism	47.5

Table shows the contribution of different sectors to employment in 2010. Comparing to other sectors the tourism sector contributes 47.5% to employment. Agriculture is the second one. It contributes 44.7%. Other major sectors are manufacturing, mining and quarrying, railways and other transports. Railways contribute only 0.9% to jobs.

Conclusion

The great wealth of Indian wildlife can be imagined with the sight of the majestic elephants, the dance of the peacock, the camel's stride, the roar of the lion are unparalleled acts of beauty. The vastness of the wildlife and wilderness in India is unparalleled in the world. This accounts for the immense opportunities for wildlife tourism in India. Ecotourism development has entered an exciting phase in North India. The Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal offer a very large coastline. 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 offer 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 utilizing natural resources like landscapes, mountains, bio-diversity areas, rivers etc for the benefit of people. Ecotourism is not only a travel statement; it give 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 organizations for addressing the needs of the eco tourists and promoting ecotourism in the country.

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