

## **Sustainability and Tourism- Contradiction or Symbiosis?**

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### **Introduction**

Tourism is a shape of pastime performed over a period for enjoyment, and it can be defined when people move from place to another place (Holloway, J, C. Humphreys, C and Davidson, R. 2009). The World Tourism Organization (1999) defined that tourism is also collection of activities, services in terms of leisure, including transportation, accommodation, and others up to a year. But tourism can improve livelihoods, unite communities, safeguard and celebrate heritage, and build bridges throughout the world between people of different cultures and backgrounds. However recent the definitions may be, the essence of tourism is an age-old concept. The classical antiquities of Geography can relate it to encyclopaedism. The concept of tourism has evolved in a variety of modes throughout history. From the Enlightenment through the nineteenth century, the fashionable Grand Tour of continental Europe for wealthy young men popularized the idea of leisure travel. The development of faster methods of transportation during the nineteenth century allowed tourists to travel greater distances in smaller periods of time. Within the last century, tourism industry has undergone consistent changes which have influenced not only destinations and the impact of tourism on economy of countries, but also on the tourism industry proper and the way people get used to travel in the modern world. Tourism has become a force for economic growth in the Twenty-First Century. The tourism sector is sweeping the global economy. 2016 saw the seventh consecutive above-average increase in international tourist arrivals: 1.2 billion. Tourism now accounts for 10% of the world GDP and one in every 10 jobs.

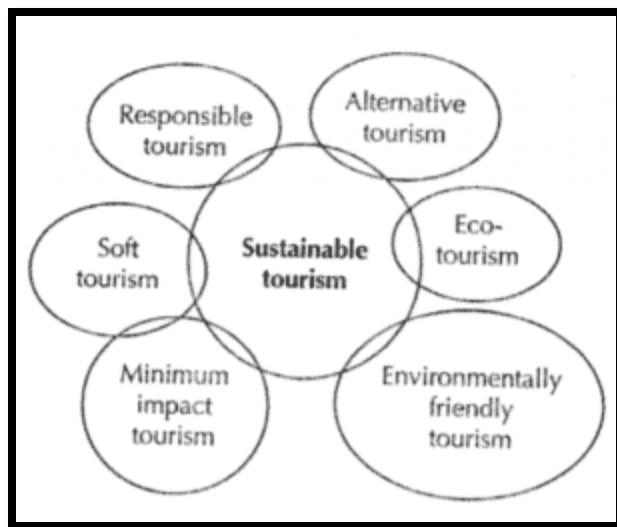
### **Tourism as an Extractive Industry**

As the world's fastest growing industry, the continuous growth of tourism poses great threat on remaining biologically diverse habitats and indigenous cultures, which are often used to support mass tourism. Sustainability and Tourism is definitely a contradiction. Flying into holiday destinations, living in an (over)built environment, (over)using resources, destroying nature – is this sustainable? On the other hand: why should we care for the environment and for

our hosts when we are on holidays, we want to break and enjoy. Most destinations want a bigger piece of the pie and attract more and more tourists. Therefore, negative effects are inherent to the economy, such as emission of greenhouse gases and waste generation that are difficult to avoid. Tourism can also contribute to water and energy shortages, degradation of water supplies and ecosystem degradation, owing to ad hoc development and weak or poorly enforced environmental regulations. From clear cutting and destruction of mangroves to excavations and construction, land use changes associated with tourism result in the creation of artificial landscapes and infrastructure. This visually degrades the scenic value of natural landscapes and results in a change in the environment, because of factors like erosion, pollution and artificial boundaries. This, in turn, can result in more erosion and increased flooding and storm damage, as well as a negative impact on wildlife migration and breeding patterns. Historically, local and indigenous people are forced to relocate when new parks are established. Though jobs are created for local people, they are generally very low-paid jobs.

### **Sustainable Tourism**

The World Tourism Organization defines Sustainable Tourism as: "Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It 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." Increasingly, destinations and tourism operations are endorsing and following "responsible tourism" as a pathway towards sustainable tourism. Sustainable Tourism is the concept of visiting somewhere as a tourist and trying to make a positive impact on the environment, society, and economy. It is an industry committed to making a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate future employment for local people. There are many forms of sustainable tourism: the ecological tourism (ecotourism), the green tourism, the soft tourism, the rural tourism and agro tourism, community tourism, equitable tourism, solidarity and responsible tourism etc. The positive of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development is a positive experience for local people, tourism companies, and tourists themselves. When it comes to sustainability, tourism depends on the three strong pillars: environmental, economic and socio cultural. Tourism must include these three pillars to become sustainable in the true sense.



## **Objectives**

Sustainable tourism must consider:

- Conserve natural heritage and biodiversity by optimal use of environmental resources which forms the key factor behind tourism
- Respect the socio-cultural heritage of the host communities, understand their traditional values and contribute to intercultural tolerance.
- Ensure viable, long term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

While tourism is welcomed almost universally for the benefits and opportunities it creates, there is a growing recognition of the need to see tourism in its environmental context, to acknowledge that tourism and the environment are interdependent, and to work to reinforce the positive relationship between tourism, the environment and poverty reduction. It integrates tourism development into national development policy.

## **Principles of Sustainable Tourism**

Tourism Concern (1991) has developed ten sustainable principles for sustainable ecotourism in association with the World Wildlife Fund for Nature:

- Reducing over exploitation and waste
- Integrating tourism into planning
- Supporting and involving local communities
- To train the staff properly
- Marketing tourism responsibly
- Undertaking research

Tourism is seen as an agent for rural economic regeneration and as a way of valorizing conservation, in many parts of the world. But rural environment is a very fragile one because it changes or experiences damages easily due to rapid changes of any sort; and tourism is a powerful agent for change. This is an important issue because of the role rural areas play in many countries as repositories of both natural and historical heritage and important commercially. Therefore, 'rurality' is a unique selling point for holidays in the countryside. Tourists look for high quality and unspoiled scenery, for peace, quiet and solitude. Tourism growth in course of time would destroy rurality and induce the onset of negative impacts on the environment, cultures and economies.

### **The Global Need for Sustainable Tourism**

Sustainable Tourism is an inclusive term for any type of tourism that advocates to preserve the biodiversity and resources of an area. Sustainable tourism and ecotourism have much in common-both advocate a holistic approach to environmental management in order to avoid tyranny of increment. We live in a world where over tourism has become a real problem. Animals are made captive for the amusement of the tourists, nature is deliberately destroyed in most of the places. Large areas are cleared to make room for tourists and the investors in most cases are foreigners. Animals lose their habitat, deforestation takes place, and hill slopes become over crowded with hotels. There is an enormous pressure put over the local nonrenewable resources. The local communities are deprived of their requirements.

There comes the idea of sustainable tourism with the three outlying objectives of human welfare, animal welfare and nature preservation. Economic sustainability means building linkages and reducing leakages. In simpler terms, this essentially means keeping the money local. A hotel or company owned and operated by a foreigner or huge international brand is not likely to

contribute much to the local economy – the money will likely “leak” overseas instead. This is not sustainable in the long run because it means the destination will not see any of those tourism dollars, and may begin to question the tourism industry altogether. To most people, sustainable is synonymous with eco-friendly. To some extent, it is. Both the natural environment (such as beaches, forests, and waterways) and the built environment (such as historic buildings and ruins) must be preserved for an area to be environmentally sustainable. To become a traveler in the modern sense of the term is to be more responsible. Little by little, we learn new things that affect the way we travel and the choices that we make. That’s how we make a difference.

In August 2014, the Comprehensive Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI) was launched. Leading the way are Kerala Tourism, Himachal Tourism and many others.

### **Discussion**

Despite numerous international conferences and discussion of panels, there is a weak understanding of the objectives and principles of sustainable tourism. This is often associated with misinterpreting sustainability. Often the term is abused for individual benefit and profit. Despite of this critique, already the public debate about sustainability issues and some initiatives in mass tourism destinations can be seen as progress. Additionally, the pressure of the local population is resulting in more participation and new governance processes. This is the case especially in regions where the effects of mass tourism are interfering with the subjective well-being and the recreational visions of the guests. Holistic approach towards ‘sustainable’ change and ‘sustainable’ transition is grounded on the identity, the value systems and the capabilities as well as the needs of the local population.

### **Conclusion**

Although tourism can be a great form of wealth distribution, often as little as 5-10% of the money tourists spend remains in the destinations they visit. These issues must be addressed to fully realize the benefits of tourism through an inclusive approach and collaboration between the public and private sectors and host communities. The full involvement of local communities in the tourism sector not only benefits them and the environment in general but also improves the quality of the tourism experience. Consulting between the tourism industry and local communities, organizations and institutions are essential if they are to work alongside each other

and resolve potential conflicts of interest. When the social impact of sustainable tourism has been considered, the focus is always on the host communities. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has declared the year 2017 as the International Year for Sustainable tourism for Development. The world today is leaning more towards the term quality rather than quantity. So, the increasing number of people is not the key word in tourism, it is the quality to be preserved that catches the attention. Thus, a traveler who prefers sustainable tourism is a conscious traveler who respects and is in solidarity with the environment, with the heritage of heterogeneous communities and believes in social equality. So, it is obvious that a change of our values and value systems can guarantee a sustainable future for our planet and especially, tourism geography can contribute a lot.

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