



Sustainable tourism development in Sikkim

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Abstract

Sustainable tourism development has become a critical concept in the tourism industry. It aims to balance the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism to ensure that tourism can continue to generate economic benefits while minimizing negative impacts on the environment, society, and culture. This paper provides an overview of the key concepts, theories, and empirical studies related to sustainable tourism development. It discusses the importance of sustainable tourism development, the theoretical frameworks that guide it, the empirical studies that investigate its impacts and effectiveness, and the challenges and opportunities it presents. The paper highlights the need for a holistic approach to tourism development and the importance of involving local communities and respecting cultural heritage. Finally, the paper concludes that sustainable tourism development is a critical concept that requires a balanced approach to ensure that tourism can continue to provide economic benefits while minimizing negative impacts on the environment, society, and culture.

Keywords: sustainable tourism development, environmental, culture

Introduction

The Tourism Industry being one of the fastest expanding in the world in generation of employment and GDP. Tourist-dependent nations and areas are becoming more and more concerned with the issue related to environment and social and issues of culture that come with an unsustainable tourism. As a result, there is a growing interest where a sustainable tourism development must be uplifted in order to minimize its adverse effect on environmental and enhance its overall socioeconomic advantages at tourist locations. This paved the way for the emergence of different forms of tourism like Sustainable Tourism, Eco Tourism and Responsible Tourism, among others. Although, all of these concepts had their roots in the idea of sustainable development and were meant to enhance local communities' cultural, economic, and environmental well-being (Diamantis, 1999). Tourism activities are referred to as part of the sustainable development process, which entails managing resources in a way which conciliate economic, social, and elegance requirements while conservation cultural uprightness, ecology, biological variability, and life shielding systems. Sustainable tourism, as defined by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), is defined as having guiding principles that "lead to management of all resources in a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be satisfied while preserving cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems." in 1988. Sikkim, a state in North-eastern India, is exclusively a hill destination. It feature a few bizarre valleys. adorned by the imposing Himalayan Mountain ranges rivers, glittering lakes, jaw-dropping waterfalls, and idyllic forests and meadows. The hilly places in Sikkim call visitors to savour the profusion of nature's beauty, the unmatched scenery, and the warmth of humble culture. These hilly destinations stretch from the state's capital city, Gangtok, to the farthest corners of the north, east, west, and south. Pelling, Ravangla, Lachen, Yuksom,

Namchi, and Singhik are Sikkim's major hill regions. Sikkim is a place where spirituality and progress coexist harmoniously. The population has a diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural categories, each with its own culture, customs, and traditions that have deep ties to nature.

Sikkim is the first region in the world to have hundred percent sustainable agriculture, and has been awarded the Future Policy Award Gold Prize by United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2018.

The purpose of this research paper is to provide an overview of the key concepts, theories, and empirical studies related to sustainable tourism development. The paper will explore the importance of sustainable tourism development, the theoretical frameworks that guide it, the empirical studies that investigate its impacts and effectiveness, and the challenges and opportunities it presents.

The paper will also examine the case studies of sustainable tourism development in various destinations around the world and identify the best practices that have been implemented to promote sustainable tourism development. Finally, the paper will conclude with a discussion of the future prospects of sustainable tourism development and the need for continued research in this area to promote sustainable tourism development worldwide.

India is a country that has a rich cultural heritage, diverse natural resources, and a thriving tourism industry. However, the boom of tourism in the recent years has also led to the ecological deterioration, exploitation of local communities, and cultural corrosion. Sustainable tourism development in India aims to address these issues by promoting tourism that is environmentally friendly, socially responsible, and economically viable.

To achieve sustainable tourism development in India, numerous government initiatives have been undertaken also by the private sector, and civil society. These initiatives include:

1. **Preservation of cultural and natural resources:** The government has taken many steps to protect and conserve the country's cultural and natural resources, such as wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, and heritage sites.
2. **Community involvement:** Sustainable tourism development in India emphasises the involvement of community members in tourism planning, development, and management. This approach ensures that there is a direct benefits of tourism which is shared with the host people, and their cultures and traditions are respected.
3. **Economic sustainability:** Sustainable tourism development in India promotes tourism that generates economic benefits for local communities and contributes to the country's overall economic growth. This approach ensures that tourism is not only a source of income for a few, but also benefits the wider community.
4. **Responsible tourism practices:** To minimize tourism's detrimental effects on the environment, responsible tourism practises are encouraged, such as trash minimization, energy saving, and water management.
5. **Awareness and education:** Awareness and education programs are conducted to sensitize tourists, local communities, and stakeholders about the basic elements of India's sustainable tourism development.

Tourism is a main source of resources in Sikkim, and the resources must be used efficiently which is important for both the host community's well-being and the environment, as well as the conservation of global resources. Efficient usage of the resources, mainly energy that are driven from fossil fuels, which is vital in reducing toxic gases. These techniques reduce the cost of managing the tourism industry, making it practicable even in remote and rural mountain setting. Additionally this increases the quantity and calibre of jobs in the area, which are supported by tourism, including skill and entrepreneurial development which will overall develop the region. As sustainability was a realization that the earth's limited resources could not enough for the world's fast population and industrial growth eternally. The majority of tourists choose to visit regions that are appealing, functional and less polluted where nature smiles. A good environmental quality is critical for the enjoyment of local residents. Tourism can influence inhabitants to become more conscious of the quality of their surroundings. When tourism continues to expand there must be many ways discovered to improve the two's relationship and make it more sustainable. The 'Nathula' Pass is one of the highest motorable highways in the world, with a diverse range of alpine flora and fauna. Tsomgo Lake is located at an elevation of 12,210 feet which is home to Brahmini ducks as well as a stopover for numerous migratory ducks. Yumthang, located at an elevation of 11,800 feet and 140 kilometers from Gangtok, is a nature lover's delight.

Sustainable tourism must be prioritized in tourism development in any areas. Achieving such a goal is a bit difficult undertaking; nonetheless, promoting tourism in a sustainable manner must be a key goal in development process.

Conclusion

The Human Development Report (HDR) 2014 listed several prospective industries for growth and job generation, with tourism ranking first. With its stunning terrain, diverse ecosystem, culture and customs, and welcoming people, Sikkim enjoys a comparative edge in tourism, according to the HDR. Other considerations include its stunning landscape, serenity climate, stable politics, high literacy rate, environmentally friendly initiatives like as organic farming, band of plastic, mineral water bottles and ease of access like 'Kailsh Mansarovar pilgrimage' across nathula pass. Declaration of 'Kanchendonga National Park as UNESCO World heritage site' bringing opportunities to establish local business and making easier permission process for Green Lake trek. 'Sikkim Tourism Mission-2015' was established in 2010. Which was announced by the state administration, which underlined the importance of sustainability Tourism which is achieved by the development of quality tourism and increased participation of tourists, and the equal involvement of stakeholders. Amidst the COVID 19 "Visit Sikkim 2022" was declared by the Chief Minister which focus on having tourists in Sikkim as many stakeholder and Tour operators faced challenges during the lockdowns, so to revive the tourism industry these steps were taken.

In conclusion, the study highlights the challenges and opportunities for STD in Sikkim, India. The key challenges include the need to balance tourism growth with environmental conservation, to ensure equitable distribution of benefits among stakeholders, and to address social and economic inequalities. The opportunities include promoting cultural preservation, enhancing the quality of life for local communities, and creating employment opportunities. Additionally, it is important to promote community involvement in tourism planning and decision-making, to ensure that local communities are empowered to participate and benefit from tourism development. Furthermore, capacity building and skill development programs can create employment opportunities and the improvement of local communities' quality of life.

This study suggests that the 'United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals' can provide a strategy for Sikkim's sustainable tourist development. By calibration tourism development with the SDGs, policymakers can ensure that tourism development benefits the environment, society, and the economy. Furthermore, promoting sustainable tourism can contribute to achieving several SDGs, such as poverty reduction, gender equality, and environmental conservation.

By

addressing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities for sustainable tourism development, Sikkim can create a more sustainable and prosperous future for its people while preserving its unique culture and environment for generations to come.

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