

Tribal Engagement for Sustainable Tourism and Environmental Protection in South India

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Abstract

Sustainable tourism is a form of tourism that seeks to mitigate the environmental and social impacts of travel. Green tourists select destinations and activities that prioritize sustainability to enjoy and focus on responsible travel. This includes principles like reducing energy consumption, minimizing waste, and making an eco-friendly environment. World Tourism Organization describes sustainable tourism as tourism in which social and economic aspect comes together. The appealing needs of sustainable tourism are maintained by cultural credibility, ecology, variation, and biological processes. Today sustainability in tourism is the need of the environment and people. Sustainable tourism is defined as achieving a particular combination of numbers and types of visitors, the cumulative effect of whose activities at a given destination together with the actions of the servicing businesses can continue into the foreseeable future, without damaging the quality of the environment on which the activities are based. Sustainable Tribal Tourism is the application of sustainable tourism with the tribal community. Under Sustainable Tribal Tourism, the tourists are exposed to the tribe's culture and customs for dual benefits, tourists can also learn about them. On the other hand, the tribal community get income. It can be possible when the tourism activity cannot affect their original position regarding their culture and customs. In the Indian economy, travel and tourism play an essential portion. In this paper an attempt is made to reveal the Tribal Engagement for Sustainable Tourism and Environmental Protection in South India.

Keywords: Sustainable, Tribal Engagement, Tourism, Environment, Protection, South India.

Introduction

India is home to many tribes and several indigenous groups who retain their original traditions until today and have a direct link with their natural world. Tribes in India are environmentally friendly communities that struggle to protect the rivers, land, and forests that enable them to live. The equivalence between local tribes and nature makes tribal areas full of exotic biodiversity. Tourism, a strong force for boosting the economy and promoting cultural exchange, as it adapts to the urgent demand for sustainable practices. South India is well-known for its rich history, varied geography, and vibrant traditions. The states venture into eco-friendly tourism provides an interesting at the intersection of environmental awareness and the travel industry. As the world continues to focus on sustainable

living, the tourism industry is under growing pressure to minimize its impact on the environment. Rajasthan and Gujarat in the west observe a colourful way of life, and the craftsmanship of the Nilgiri Hills is fascinating in Southern India. This pastoral lifestyle emphasises attractiveness with simplicity. Tribal traditional songs and dances, colourful hand-worked clothes and finely crafted bamboo designs highlight the South and North Eastern India. The critical factor contributing to the growth of sustainable tourism might lead to a different quest for tourism.

Contribution of Eco Tourism for Sustainable Benefits

Builds Community Strength and Unity

The local community is involved in carrying out the day-to-day operations for delivering the services to the guests. Working towards the common goal enhances the community strength and unity.

Community-Based Tourism Products

In order to provide a village experience to tourists by guiding them through real life situations in hinterlands and thereby distributing economic benefits of tourism directly to the community, tour packages are developed. These packages are popular among tourists and the state tourism websites are promoting these. The members of the community participating in the package by showing demonstrating their activities receive fixed amounts from the package – price realized. These packages create close interaction between the community and the visitors. The Empowerment of Women Community based tourism plays an important role in empowering local women. It calls for community participation with women's active role in decision-making, benefits sharing, pride in traditional skills such as environment care, systemic ownership and sustainable management of the process are among the principal intended outcomes. The Government of India - United Nations Development Program's Rural Tourism Project aims to empower women in tourism.

Strengthening Community Pride

Community based tourism encourages the locals to share the culture of village life that has existed for centuries with tourists from urban areas. From local arts and crafts to recipes, songs and dance, guests experience the vibrancy and joy of rural life. This in turn strengthens the pride among local population for their culture.

Passing on Traditional Skills and Knowledge to Generations

While visiting rural areas, tourists experience local traditions and consume local products respectively. As these destinations become popular, the demand for such traditional products increases. In many cases this has helped in reviving arts and crafts as people pass on their skills and knowledge to their future generations to fulfil the increasing demands for such products. People also start taking pride in their heritage-clothing, food, customs and beliefs, lifestyle, building technologies.

Increased Hygiene and Safety Awareness

The Endogenous Tourism Project is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiated in 2003 and being implemented at thirty six sites across the country. Infrastructure development in the project falls into three broad categories. First those that had direct linkage to tourism such as accommodation, restaurants, tourist information and interpretation centres, second those that are geared to overall village development and indirectly benefiting tourism such as toilets, pavements, footpaths, street lighting and third was an aspect of convergence of various schemes for the village so as to provide basic facilities and services and civic

amenities in which they lacked. The capacities of community members were built by conducting training on various issues.

Opportunities for Developing Sustainable Tourism among Tribal areas in South India

Rich Biodiversity and Natural Beauty: Tribal areas are often characterized by rich biodiversity, unique landscapes, and natural beauty, which can be attractive to eco tourists seeking authentic and sustainable travel experiences.

Unique Cultural Heritage: Tribal communities have distinct cultural practices, traditions, and lifestyles, which can provide a unique and authentic cultural experience for eco-tourists.

Community-Based Tourism: Eco-tourism can be developed as a community-based enterprise, where local communities can directly benefit from tourism revenues and participate in the decision-making process.

Job creation and Income Generation: Eco-tourism can create employment opportunities and generate income for tribal communities, thereby contributing to poverty reduction and economic development.

Conservation and Environmental Sustainability: Eco-tourism can contribute to conservation and environmental sustainability by promoting responsible tourism practices, raising awareness about environmental issues, and supporting conservation efforts.

Government Support and Policy Incentives: The government can provide support and incentives for sustainable tourism development in tribal areas, including infrastructure development, financial support, and policy incentives such as tax breaks and subsidies.

Initiatives for Responsible Tourism

Responsible tourism was initiated in four destinations in Kerala and Wayanad was one of the chosen destinations. Local items manufactured by Kudumbashree units, craftsmen, and the farmers are distributed to the hotel sector using the triple bottom line strategy to make them economically sustainable, increase community cohesiveness, and close the gap between local community and industry. Tourism activities were started using a participatory method. The local government, District Kudumbashree Mission, NGOs, social workers, the tourism industry, and other key stakeholders are all cooperating to meet the destination's economic, social, and environmental obligations. The Samrudhi group is one such company that has successfully launched its operations in the destination. Samrudhi has a strong relationship with industry partners as a consequence of on-going conversations and meetings with hoteliers. The Responsible Tourism mission's principal goals were the identification of farmer groups and production units. The promotion of organic farming in the destination was a step in the right direction. The local farmers' enthusiasm for putting this approach into practice was a good effect of this undertaking.

Social Responsibility

One of the important focus areas of the responsible tourism initiatives were the Achieving social responsibility. The various initiatives include mission's festival calendar featured numerous pilgrim centres, fairs, and festivals, among other things. The mission also conducted studies on ethnic food, safety issues, and local cuisine, as well as developing a code of conduct, assessing infrastructure gaps, creating a destination directory, identifying community-based tourism products, developing Wayanad souvenirs, and conducting social surveys, resource mapping, core destination surveys, and labor

directories. The mission also established two village life experience packages, Sugandhagiri and Pozhuthana Grama Panchayaths, which assisted tourists in learning about and purchasing traditional products made from local resources, such as bamboo, clay, and theruva grass. Some of the other initiatives include safety issues, code of conduct, brochure, and audit social issues of the local area.

Environmental Responsibility

Like other key areas, environmental responsibility was also taken up by the Responsible Tourism cell in Wayanad. This includes destination safety studies, working toward being a waste-free tourist destination, implementation of a green protocol, and aiming to be a plastic-free destination to ensure environmental protection on the RT principles. To implement the green protocol and waste-free destination aims, efforts have been made to announce at least twenty one tourism centres as waste-free tourist destinations, based on sustainable tourism criteria. Among these, Ambalavayal and Vythiri are two destinations selected from Wayanad. Additionally, the roles of stakeholders in waste management are stated.

Ensuring Local Community Participation

To ensure local community participation in tourism, a greater number of MSMEs were introduced by giving proper training to women and local people. Additionally, it provides support to the development of the tribal community through tribal dance groups and cultural groups and encourages them to take on roles in other initiatives; moreover, the local community will benefit, and through tourism, their lifestyle will be improved. The initiatives are focused mainly on women's empowerment. The women received training in starting various units, involving bamboo handicraft units, spices and tea powder units, Pappad-making units, pure coconut oil-making units, chili Kondattom and bitter guard Kondattom units, Nettippattam and dry flower-making units, candle making, paper bag, ethnic food units, pottery, and mushroom and curry powder units. A total of seventy four families were involved in various activities.

Socio-Economic and Environmental Benefits of Eco Tourism

Tourism revenue generated can be channelled to the management of protected areas. It can diversify the local economy, particularly in rural areas where agriculture employment may be sporadic. It serves as an effective tool for visitors by creating awareness and helps in instilling in them a degree of concern for their ecosystem.

Challenges in promoting Sustainable Tourism

Developing Eco-tourism in tribal areas presents significant challenges. The lack of basic infrastructure, including roads, electricity, and water supply, can hinder the growth of eco-tourism. Limited awareness about eco-tourism among people and a lack of skilled resources to manage the industry can also impede the success of this initiative. Additionally, eco-tourism can have a negative impact on the environment and local communities if not managed sustainably, which can further damage the community's way of life.

Suggestions for the Betterment of Sustainable Development

- South India has a rich cultural and natural heritage, which can be leveraged to develop eco-tourism. Identification of the unique features and attractions of the region, such as the traditional handicrafts,

the tribal customs and traditions, and the wildlife and natural landscapes can be useful in the sustainable development.

- The tribal communities should be involved in the planning, development, and management of sustainable tourism projects. Their knowledge and expertise should be tapped to ensure that eco-tourism projects are developed in a sustainable and culturally sensitive manner.
- Collaboration and networking with other stakeholders, such as government agencies, NGOs, and private sector entities, can help to promote the development of eco-tourism projects and ensure their sustainability.
- The tribal communities should be provided with training and capacity building opportunities to enable them to participate fully in the development and management of eco-tourism projects. This includes training in hospitality, tour guiding, marketing, and business management.

Notions for the Sustainable Tourism Development

It is essential to address these challenges and ensure that eco-tourism benefits the tribal community in a sustainable manner. A participatory approach that involves the local community in decision-making and the adoption of sustainable tourism practices can help address these challenges. Effective policies and programs that provide financial assistance, training, and capacity building to the tribal areas can help promote ecotourism as a sustainable business model. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the industry can help ensure that Eco-tourism benefits to community while preserving their environment and culture.

Conclusion

Sustainable Tribal Tourism promote the development of locally generated goods, apart from the development of direct and indirect jobs, and have essential multiplier effects as money is recycled into communities. Also, the sector offers substantial improvements in the tribal region development. From a socio-economic and cultural point of view, tribal tourism offers a variety of opportunities. It will raise educational opportunities, protect local communities, and strengthen identity. Tribal tourism would contribute to an expanded understanding of the value of the ecosystem and local biodiversity and emissions control initiatives. In recent years, there has been a significant move towards more sustainable and eco-friendly practices in the global travel industry. With the world facing the impacts of climate change and environmental destruction, the tourism industry has become a crucial actor in championing sustainable and eco-friendly initiatives. The shift in paradigm is particularly evident in areas such as South Indian states, where the combination of a vibrant cultural heritage, varied ecosystems, and a flourishing tourism industry calls for a greater emphasis on sustainability.

END NOTES

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