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SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN INDIA: AN AUDIT

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ABSTRACT

It audits sustainable tourism in India through policy paradigms and comparing their outcomes at destinations. For the purpose published information of Government of India, World Bank, UNESCO and other international agencies used to understand the scenario of sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism gained importance in Tourism Policy 2002 and treated as guiding principle for future. Yet, policy framework didn't succeed to provide adequate attention to sustainability of destinations. Leakages in the implementation of policy initiatives, insufficient focus on protection of cultural and heritage destinations and weakness in safety and security measures are to be rectified. It demands valiant measures with stakeholders and host community participation.

KEYWORDS: Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Paradigms, Tourism Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a part of human civilization and it has achieved clear form in 17th century through leisure and religious pilgrims. Nations recognized the importance of tourism during 20th century by the Manila Declaration on World Tourism - 1980. Outcomes of the declaration motivated tourism potential nations to approach tourism as an industry and run the tourism in an organized form. Focus on tourism industry greatly benefits nations in foreign exchange, economic growth, employment and local area development. Benefits gained from tourism industry accelerated the initiatives of nations to increase the tourists' influx. Policy changes, special focus on tourism policy framework and implementation of New Economic Policy opened ample opportunities.

Institutional changes and advancement in transport industry supports tourism favorably and enhanced the influx multifold at global level. It gave a great opportunity for mass tourism and encouraged to satisfy tourists with low-budget at the cost of tourism destinations sustainability. Policy changes and tourism initiatives failed to provide sufficient attention to sustainability of the tourism resources and destinations.Thus, lack of environmental consideration, infrastructure facilities, standardization, and destination friendly regulations worsened the status of the tourism destinations and certainly future performance has not been guaranteed (Bhatia, 2000; NITI AYOG, 2018; APEC, 2013).

Apart from economic importance, environmental, socio-cultural and institutional sustainability of tourism destinations are vital and erosion of potentials of tourism destinations through mass tourism has to be reduced in the near future.To overcome the cited issues, sustainable tourism is emerged as a new paradigm in the industry. Sustainable tourism defined as *"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"* (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2004). Therefore, countries practicing sustainable tourism as an instrument to maintain the balance between environmental quality and tourism activity and enhance the quality of tourist experiences at destinations through the environmental quality and tourism activity (Hunter and Green, 1995; Middleton and Hawkins, 1998).

It links the culture and environment and frame strategy to achieve economic betterment of the host community and nation and soften the negatives of mass tourism (Cool and Moisey, 2008). Sustainable tourism practices widely put forward the effective management of land, fresh water and marine resources initiatives of the destinations (Frederico, 2003). Therefore, countries with tourism potential voluntarily adopted sustainable

tourism initiatives in their policies and implemented at destinations. Among these nations, India occupies prime position due to its diverse tourism resources, versatile tourism destinations and well accepted cultural heritage and history. With this back drop, the present work accounts the sustainable tourism in India with the lens of tourism paradigms, policy initiatives and sustainability issues over the period of time.

In continuation of this section, critique of previous studies followed as second and third section provides material and method. The path to tourism policies of India and practices on sustainable tourism briefly discussed in fourth section and audit of sustainable tourism dealt in fifth followed by conclusion.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section considered works related to sustainable tourism in India. Critiques of highly relevant works are discussed below.

Independent India considered tourism as a prime sector to support development at local level and economy (Dayananda and Leelavathi, 2016).In India, health related arrivals dominating at domestic as well as international level followed by holiday and recreation related trips in recent decades (Sharma and Karthikeya, 2017). However, both economic development and conservation of the environment can go hand in hand by adoption of sustainable tourism practices at the public and private sector(Kakkar and Sapna, 2012).As expected, India's tourism sector has flourished; especially Himalayan tourism is growing over the period under various categories of tourism which attained 6.8 % growth at 2018.However, by actual numbers growth of tourists' arrival is noticeably high which creates challenges in solid waste management, water supply, congestion and biodiversity and greatly affects the local society (NITI AYOG, 2018; Farhat, Rehman and Shafi, 2018). Though, this sector achieved much importance and occupied priority from the authorities, it is facing sustainability issues at destination level (Manoj, 2008).

Thus, sustainable tourism is a comprehensive device to facilitate progress of tourism with minimum negative externalities which happened due to policy failure and substandard infrastructure establishments (Khuntia and Jitendra, 2014; Bhattacharya, 2008). It required motivating tour operators to adopt sustainable tourism practices through authoritative policies and well-defined strategies in all course of tourism process (Mamhoori, 2015). In addition, adoption of sustainable tourism could be achieved through the local entrepreneurship, involvement of local people and use of local resources which could positively contribute to development of host community with environmental protection (Kokkranikal and Morrison, 2002).

Cited studies analysed recent trend in tourism arrivals, contribution to economic growth, sustainability issues of mass tourism and need and role of sustainable tourism to manage the tourism destinations. Few studies discussed the sustainability issues and way forward for sustainable tourism initiatives. However, sustainability issues are perennial in Indian tourism sectors and some of the works clearly underline the same. At this juncture, present study makes advancement in the same area of research by auditing the sustainable tourism in India which is the major drawback of the critiqued studies. Henceforth, the observations and findings gained from this study will provide information about sustainable tourism and clues for future tourism policy making in India. In addition, causes and consequences could be utilized by the authorities to ensure better management and to pay heed in the respective areas.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

An audit of sustainable tourism in India is a study accounts policy paradigms of tourism industry and their reflections at destinations. Therefore, critique of paradigms of India's tourism policies since independence has been considered as material to analyze trajectory of sustainable tourism in India. For the discussion conceptualization given by UNWTO has been used to understand the sustainable tourism in Indian context. Secondary data and published information have been accessed from World Bank, UNESCO, Government of India and World Economic Forum sources. Policy paradigms towards sustainable tourism and their outcomes in industry have been precisely analyzed through the accessed data sets and the same strengthened by the recent empirical studies.

4. TOURISM PARADIGMS OF INDIA

Government of India initiatives and policy changes trajectory of India's tourism sector has been categorized as (i) tourism sector before 1980, (ii) independent sector with policy and (iii) sustainable tourism initiatives.

(a) Tourism before 1980

India has been aware of its tourism potential since independenceand strived to make the industry able to contribute the advancement of the nation. However, infrastructure and other facilities were shattered

and it showed poor appearance and unable to attract tourists around the world. By tourism demonstration effect from neighboring countries India took initiatives to utilize the tourism potentials and included it into the five year plan agenda. No financial assistance was made for tourism in the first plan and special funds were given during second and third plan but allocated fund did not fully released for use. Thus, it didn't gained momentum and economic growth. In fifth and sixth plan, tourism was given due consideration and actual expenditure notably heightened and Government actively involved in development of tourism. Afterward, the tourismwas given much significance and achieved the status of industry in seventh planperiod (Robert and Suresh, 2010; Dayananda and Leelavathi, 2016).

(b) As Independent Sector with Policy

Based on the economic potentials of tourism and Manila Declaration - 1980, Government of India announced tourism as independent ministry and released first National Tourism Policy in 1982. Announced policy was aggressive in marketing than a perspective plan for development. Major objective of the policy was presenting India to the foreigners as the ultimate holiday home and also aimed to modify tourism sites intopotential destinations. Further improvements in tourism policy took ten years and Government introduced National Action Plan for the Tourism in May 1992.National Action Plan - 1992 focused the tourism development through the private participation and the Government's role is confined with strategic planning and to provide creative incentives(Chaudary, 2009; Kumar and Mohan, 2012 ; Institute of Company Secretaries of India, 2018). In 2002, India announced a new tourism strategy to recognize tourism as a major growth driver and to leverage its impact on employment generation and poverty reduction (Ministry of Tourism - Govt. of India, 2002). Tourism policy 2015 assigned great importance and considered tourism as a vital sector in terms of income, employment, foreign exchange and other indirect benefits (Ministry of Tourism and Culture- Govt. of India, 2015).

(c) Sustainable Tourism Initiatives

Economic expectancy has certainly occupied a primeplace in tourism literature and policy building till 1960's. Environmental costs have been continued to be abandoned due to lack of awareness and community participation and the strong belief that tourism resources are renewable. Gradually, views have been discarded by mounting experiences about negatives of mass tourism and erosion of tourism resources and destinations' attraction (Bhatia, 2000). India accounted the externalities of the tourism industry in tourism policy 2002 and it served the purpose as a guiding star for the new policy. Subsequently, 10th five year plan has recommended tourism industry as a sustainable development driver especially for livelihood and host community development. Following that 11th five year plan comprehensively recalibrated tourism sector to take care of the negative externalities and to harness the potential of tourism sustainably. Accordingly, Ministry of Tourism - Government of India took notice of sustainability issues at various destinations and recommended theactions as follows:

➢ *„Atithi Devo Bhavah"*- Social Awareness Campaign at TourismDestinations.

➢ *„Sustained Cleanliness Drive"*at important tourist destinations - By involving schools, NGOs, industry associations and other agencies.

➢ *„Setting up of Way-side Amenities"* - Central Financial Assistance for establishment of way-side amenities for sustainable service.

Further, 12^{th}five year plan endorsed need of sustainable tourism practices at the destinations and instantaneously framed Sustainable Tourism Criteria and Strategies which aims to attract foreign tourists' arrivals. Ministry of Tourism - Government of India organized national level Workshop on Sustainable Tourism and expert committee was constituted based on the outcomes. Constituted expert committee designed the Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India in 2014. Prime objective of the criteria is to make the stakeholders aware about the sustainability issues at destinations and effective participation in sustainable tourism initiatives. In 2015, Government of India announced New Tourism Policy draft (2015) which gives high thrust to sustainable tourism practices (Chaudary, 2009; Ministry of Tourism Government of India, 2014).

5. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: AN AUDIT

Recently, Economic Intelligence Unit assessed the 10 prime tourism potential nations' performance of sustainable tourism and published the Sustainable Tourism Index in 2018.Economic, socio-cultural, environmental, political, and tourism industry sustainability are taken as dimensions to measure performance which is close to the UNWTO conceptualization. Each dimension is weighted according to their role and relevance with sustainable tourism practices. India's performance is poor and scored 36.9 points out of 100 and occupied below averagerank in sustainable tourism index. Thus, it occupied

6thposition among the 10 tourism potential countries and its score is below the overall average and slightly differs from countries like Brazil and China. Weak policy enforcement, poor governance and social deterioration are pointed out as vital reasons for poor performance.

It confirms current status of sustainable tourism in India and it raised a question that

*"why India"s tourism sector yields poor performance in sustainability dimensions in the midst of affluent polices and related initiatives?"*At this juncture, the audit of sustainable tourism analyzes causes and consequences of poor performance with backdrop of Tourism Policies and Sustainable Tourism Criteria and Strategies of India with the support of framework offered by UNWTO.

Table 1 Scores of Sustainable Tourism Dimensions - 2018

Sl. No.	Country	Dimensions					Overall Score
		Policy	Environment	Socio-Cultural	Economic	Industry	
1.	France	96.0	88.7	57.6	27.3	34.7	73.9
2.	Germany	77.5	91.0	60.9	59.7	43.5	71.7
3.	UK	65.5	84.3	58.6	40.4	35.6	62.4
4.	US	53.5	57.5	48.4	52.6	52.9	53.1
5.	Japan	35.0	73.0	65.4	16.6	26.5	46.0
6.	India	**29.0**	47.2	**28.0**	50.9	51.9	36.9
7.	Brazil	26.0	62.6	20.6	28.9	47.2	34.6
8.	China	17.5	39.4	31.3	42.0	54.8	30.8
9.	Indonesia	14.0	36.1	30.5	35.5	46.4	27.1
10	Egypt	24.0	45.5	17.0	29.2	14.9	26.5
	Average	**43.8**	**62.5**	**41.8**	**38.3**	**40.8**	**46.3**

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2017 (London-UK).

(a) Environmental Quality and Policies

Provision of inter-linkages and coordination among the department of civil aviation, environment and forest, railways and home with tourism sector was recommended as basic principle of policy by Tourism Policy - 2002. Management of environmental quality at destinations precisely connected with the specified departments. However, policy initiatives of the specified departments individually developed the policies without including the need and role of the tourism sector. Similarly, Tourism Ministry of India is also independently making new policies and changes in its departments without considering mentioned departments.

The failure of inter-linkages among the departments reflected in policies, which affect the environmental quality and tourism development as a whole and we could see the same in famous tourism destinations. Pydithalli Jathra is a popular cultural tourist attraction that brings together more than one lakh people and generate huge amount of solid waste at the destination. Of the total, 20 percent coconut shells, 50 percent plastic bottles and covers, 20 percent banana peelings, and the rest are food materials. Radhasapthami is the biggest festival held in Arasavalli sun temple, Srikakulam. Here solid waste consists 50 percent of bottles, plastic covers, 10 percent paper, 10 percent hair, and 30 percent food left out. In Jammu and Kashmir, each tourist dumps on an average 1kg plastic every day at tourist destinations. For areas where tourist attractions are highly concentrated, waste disposal is a serious problem. Trekking visitors generate a lot of waste in the mountain areas of the Himalayas and Darjeeling. In addition, tourism industry lavishly uses the water and land resources and spoils the quality of the same and leads the resource scarcity issues in regions like Rajasthan. These failures warrant judiciary intervention and courts are seen as a last resort to settle conflicts and provide suitable solution (Mehta, 2013; Banothu, 2016; Sharma, 2009; Priyadarsini, 2016; Kirti and Batra, 2018; Rising Kashmir, 5 June 2018).

Environment Performance of the World Countries - 2018 published by World Economic Forum and Yale Centre for Environmental Law and Policy also confirms the same with analysis and Environmental Performance Index. Air quality, water pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, greenhouse gases and other factors have been taken into account to estimate the environmental performance index. In Environment Performance Index ranking, India got 177th rank out of 181 countries and poor governance highlighted as major reason for performance (Environment Performance Index, 2018; YES BANK and CII, 2017).

Table 2 Environment Performance of World Countries - 2018

Sl. No.	Country	EPI	Environmental Health	Ecosystem Vitality	EPI Ranking
1.	France	83.95	95.71	76.11	2
2.	UK	79.89	96.03	69.13	6
3.	Germany	78.37	88.68	71.50	13
4.	Japan	74.69	92.99	62.48	20
5.	US	71.19	93.91	56.04	27
6.	Egypt	61.21	68.61	56.28	66
7.	Brazil	60.70	67.44	56.21	69
8.	China	50.74	31.72	63.42	120
9.	Indonesia	46.92	45.44	47.90	133
10.	**India**	**30.57**	**9.32**	**44.74**	**177**

Source: World Economic Forum and Yale Centre for Environmental Law and Policy-2019

(b) Social and Cultural

National Tourism Policy - 2002 agreed that protection of socio-cultural assets and up- gradation of environmental quality at cultural sites are vital to sustain the industry. The New National Tourism Policy - 2015 draft also duly endorsed the same by introducing relevant policy initiatives. In reality, protection, maintenance and enhance the environmental quality at the destinations are considerably poor over the period due to the spillovers of policy failures. Though, India own 36 heritage sites and 6 per cent of its geographical area has been treated as protected cultural sites. However, performance, protection and development not equal to other countries like France, Germany and other developing countries. It has been confirmed by the World Bank and UNESCO publication of World Heritage Sites and their Protected Area – 2019 (World Bank - 2018; UNESCO, 2019).

Table 3 World Heritage Sites and Protected Area

Sl. No.	Countries	No. of Sites	Protected Area (%)
1.	China	53	15.4
2.	France	44	25.8
3.	Germany	44	37.8
4.	**India**	**36**	**6.0**
5.	U.K.	31	28.7
6.	U.S.A.	23	13.0
7.	Japan	22	29.4
8.	Brazil	21	29.4
9.	Indonesia	8	12.2
10	Egypt	7	13.1

Source: World Bank - 2018 and UNESCO, 2019.

On the other hand, India is having 870 protected national terrestrial and marine sites which account 5.02 per cent of the total geographical area. Already India has noticeably low performance in protecting heritage sites and threat on terrestrial and marine resources aggravate the sustainability issues in tourism industry. Especially three major natural World Heritage Sites namely the Western Ghats, Sundarbans National Park and Manas Wildlife Sanctuary are facing threats from mining activities, oil and gas exploration, dam construction and unsustainable water use (The Times of India, 12 April 2016; Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Govt. of India, 2019).

Table 4 Protected Terrestrial and Marine Sites and Areas of India

Sl. No.	Areas	No.	Total Area (km2)	% of Total Area
1.	National Parks	104	40501.13	1.23
2.	Wildlife Sanctuaries	544	119775.80	3.64
3.	Conservation Reserves	77	4356.49	0.13
4.	Community Reserves	127	525.22	0.02
Total		**870**	**165158.54**	**5.02**

Source: Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Govt. of India, 2019.

(c) Host Community and Tourism Industry

Sustainable tourism issues related to host community and tourism industry analyzed through community participation and skill development for host community and crime rate and security issues. Effective implementation of sustainable tourism requires skill development and community participation at all stages of the tourism destinations which unfortunately lacks in India. Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India is highlighted the need for indictors to standardize the hotels and other service providers of the industry in sustainable tourism practices. However, it's emphasis for skill development and sub-sectors and host community is significantly low. Though, policies are initiated lack of executive mechanisms for implementing them badly affected skill formation, stakeholders at bottom levels has no incentives or motivations to implement sustainable practices. It therefore, ascertains that sustainable practices need strong policy instruments and regulatory measures which the India lacks (Sustainable Tourism Index, 2018).

Apart from policy mismanagement, terrorism and crime against women negatively affect tourist inflow particularly in India. Especially, incidences of crime at popular tourism destinations scale back the foreign tourist influx. It affects the India's rank in safety and security at world level. According to peace and security measures, India got 131th rank in Women, Peace and Security Index out of 153 countries in 2017 and obtained 137th position in Global Peace Index out of 162 countries in 2018 (Women, Peace and Security Index, 2017; Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018). Therefore, sustainable development of host community and tourism industry of India urgently needs suitable policy framework to solve the sustainability issues of host community and tourism industry.

6. CONCLUSION

India realized importance of tourism potential after gaining independence and paid much attention only after 1980's. At the beginning, tourism policies accelerated the initiatives of tourism growth through the means of income, employment and a contribution to national income and negative externalities didn't paid a due consideration. Significance of sustainable tourism gained momentum a bit later in tourism policy 2002 and stated that sustainability should serve a guiding star for this policy. Nevertheless, policy framework didn't succeed to provide sufficient attention to sustainability of resources and destinations. Policy failure and lack of coordination among departments leads to tourism mismanagement and stimulate sustainability issues at various destinations. Air and water pollution, solid and liquid wastes, and unhygienic conditions are noticeably high as mentioned by worldwide organisations and research agencies. Lack of environmental initiatives, failure of protecting social and cultural assets, crimes and other security measures, unskilled manpower and lack of community participation are major reasons for unsustainability and poor performance of sustainable tourism in India. Over the period, though policies are framed but lack strong executive mechanisms for implementation, stakeholders and host community participation. Therefore, it demands a great deal of commitment from the authorities and coordination of departments to take bold steps for promotion of sustainable tourism in India.

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