



**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND NATURAL
RESOURCES MANAGEMENT FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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Abstract

Any form of industrial development brings impacts upon the physical environment in which it takes place. In view of the fact that tourists have to visit the place of production in order to consume the output, it is inevitable that tourism activity is associated with environmental impacts (Cooper et al., 1998: 149). For that reason, traditionally some authors have pointed out that tourism can lead to environmental negative consequences. The highly polarised nature of development also generates intense environmental problems. This reduces the quality of life for locals as well as for tourists and, ultimately, may threaten the viability of the tourist industry itself (Williams & Shaw, 1991). Depletion of The rise of the concept of sustainable development in discussions and debates concerning development has been phenomenal since the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) issued Our Common Future in 1987, reinvigorated by the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). It offers a vision of complementarity between economic growth and environment as opposed to the view that more of one means less of the other. Sustainable development is understood here to imply sustainable human development because development is, to state the obvious and oft-repeated wisdom, about people and that human societies are ultimately dependent upon their natural environment. The fundamental reason why humankind today faces unacceptable and increasing levels of poverty, inequality, and environmental penury is that the past practices of development have transgressed both of these principles. In analytical terms, sustainable development thus invokes those issues surrounding human societies and their activities, which can ultimately be specified in terms of two kinds of relations – human-human and human-natural environment relations. The economy of the Developing Countries, aiming to pursue tourism, as a development strategy needs fast and efficient implementation of Environmental Management principles in order to achieve its desired growth potential. Land and other bio-physical resources are finite. Therefore, the only way to enhance economic growth is better innovations and efficient management of resources. The paper examines the present understanding of environmental management principles and its role in achieving sustainable tourism. It further aims to explain the environmental management to clarify the interrelationship between sustainable tourism and environmental management.

Key words: *Tourism development, sustainable development, environmental management, policy, strategy, local community, developing countries.*

Introduction :

The growth of tourism as the world's fastest growing industry in the 21st century has brought with it major environmental problems, which need to be addressed and resolved in order to achieve sustainability on the short and long term. Land degradation, pollution, desertification, waste, damage of species and inadequate utilization of natural resources have caused many natural resources to be endangered or even destroyed. On the national side; fragmented legislation, ineffective enforcement, inadequate health and safety and poor environmental practices for pollution and waste management and more importantly the lack of

the involvement of people have contributed to loss of many natural resources. As a result of natural depletion in many tourist destinations internationally, the world had gathered to discuss and present solutions to eliminate inadequate utilization of natural resources. As a result many international protocols, conventions, and reports have been produced involving major governmental and nongovernmental bodies addressing the environmental crisis and providing solutions. In 1992, the world's efforts have resulted in producing the most significant document, where 178 countries gathered in a global conference in Rio and agreed on Agenda 21, which is considered to be an ideal blue print

providing guidelines and recommendations to serve sustainable development and environment as a vital component of modern tourism. In 1994, at the end of the apartheid era the Indian government announced its ambitious campaign to make tourism its number one industry in the creation of jobs and generation of foreign exchange earnings. India following its transition to the democratic stream has always realized the importance of tourism as vehicle for poverty alleviation, economic growth and achieving socio-economic equality. Part of the India transformation were major changes in its legislative and institutional structures, which involved drawing new legislation to serve the economic activities one of which is tourism with a special focus on environmental protection laws. The environmental management legislation involved both inter-governmental and public-private partnerships in order to promote and maintain the ecosystem services to serve the natural assets. The environmental management actions by the India government as well as public and private sectors have contributed significantly in producing and maintaining adequate utilization of resources, elimination of air and water pollution, and biodiversity. The environmental management legislation has also enforced regulations regarding the consuming of water and energy, land use, reduction of pollution and protection of habitats and species. Agenda 21 has been incorporated in the government legislation as guidelines to ensure adequate utilization of natural resources. Furthermore, the concept of accreditation scheme has been implemented to provide standards and performance indicators for sustainable tourism. India has at the stage no adequate certification scheme to provide guidelines and criteria to assess the tourism organizations' competencies and service delivery standards. Moreover, it has been noted through the research that the private sector has limited access to investment in most tourism development areas particularly protected areas, the government organizations and public sector have sole mandate to invest and manage protected areas with outsourcing of certain types of expertise from the private sector. Tourism in India has been dependant to a large extent on environment; yet, major environmental needs have received no proper attention to preserve the environmental assets for sustainable tourism today and for the new generations of tomorrow. This paper provides a critical analysis of the current environmental management strategies in India, providing recommendations to improve

environmental management techniques to achieve sustainable tourism.

Sustainable Tourism and Environmental Management:

The World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as "tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be filled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems (WTO Report 2002:7). During the 1980s, it became apparent that major global environmental changes were occurring suddenly and silently and that these changes had not been predicted by scientists. The world also became more aware that there was an element of uncertainty and risk in relation to the effect of a range of human activities on global environments. To rectify these problems, fundamental changes were required in our style of living. Tourism is most ideally suited to adopt sustainability as a guiding philosophy. There are many reasons for that:

1. Apart from transport, tourism does not consume additional non-renewal resources.
2. A community's resources, its culture, traditions, shops, leisure facilities, etc., represent the core resources base for tourism.
3. Tourism use of resources, both natural and cultural, should be non consumptive, making them renewable.
4. Tourism represents one of the few economic opportunities available to remote communities.
5. Tourism provides real opportunities to reduce poverty create employment for disadvantaged people and stimulate regional development.
6. Tourism has proven to revitalize cultures and traditions.
7. Tourism can provide an economic incentive to conserve natural and cultural assets.
8. Tourism has been shown to foster greater understanding between people and a greater global consciousness.

And so, sustainable tourism is really an issue of how best to encourage tourism growth while minimizing costs (McKrecher, 2003: 4). Sustainable tourism entails adequate utilization and management of resources to achieve economic, social and cultural needs while maintaining social, cultural integrity, ecological processes as well as biological diversity for the present as well as for the future generations. Therefore, modern tourism with its trends and characteristics cannot be promoted without

considering the environmental management as a main component of the economic aspects of tourism. The principles of sustainable tourism are various one of which is the ecological sustainability, which entails the implementation of development that is compatible with the maintenance of essential ecological processes, biological diversity and resources. As a result of the significant dependence of tourism on environment, maintaining the attractions of the tourism destination and its natural assets contributes to tourism growth and increases the popularity of the destination. Tourism through its ability to generate income is able to enhance environment, provide fund and preserve the cultural heritage of the destination. On the other hand poor tourism planning can destroy vegetation, create overcrowding, pollute beaches, eliminate open space, and ignore locals' interest. Various approaches have been introduced to maximize the tourism's consideration to nature to retain popularity as an attractive tourism destination, these approaches include: ecotourism, nature tourism, sustainable development and carrying capacity. Ecotourism is one of India's main tourist attractions; therefore, the ecotourism market cannot be sustained with adequately protected environment, which requires not only from the government but also from the tourism industry to implement appropriate environmental management programmers. Tourism as the world's largest industry is able to provide healthy and safe environment for the tourist market as well as for other industries. The co-operation between environmental and tourism issues was highlighted by the Manila Declaration (Edgell, 1990) as well as by the study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Environmental Impacts of Tourism and Its Sustainability:

As tourism moved into the 21st century, the enterprises have to make the environment a priority. Because tourism now is the world's largest industry, the environment is taking centre stage in tourism development. Tourism is not only a powerful economic force but a factor in the physical environment as well. Any form of industrial development brings impacts upon the physical environment in which it takes place. In view of the fact that tourists have to visit the place of production in order to consume the output, it is inevitable that tourism activity is associated with environmental impacts (Cooper et al., 1998: 149). For that reason, traditionally some authors have pointed out that tourism can

lead to environmental negative consequences. The highly polarized nature of development also generates intense environmental problems. This reduces the quality of life for locals as well as for tourists and, ultimately, may threaten the viability of the tourist industry itself (Williams & Shaw, 1991). Depletion of natural resources can result in water shortages; create great pressure on other local resources like energy, food, etc., that already might be in short supply or destroy beautiful scenic landscapes. Pollution from tourists has impacts on the global level that disturbs the local population of the caused community. Solid waste and littering in the nature despoil the natural environment. The more physical impacts are degradation and loss of wildlife habitats and of scenery, and disturbance and erosion of the local ecosystem caused by clearing forested land and construction of tourism facilities and infrastructure (UNEP, 2001). However tourism could be positive for the preservation of natural areas. According to Cooper et al. (1998: 164) there are no generally accepted models for environmental impacts. Basically, we need a wide overview in order to be able to develop tourism as carefully as possible, taking into consideration the wide range of possible impacts. In doing so, we will be able to achieve a satisfactory tourism development management. Environmental impacts are not unique to tourism and tourism receives a disproportional share of criticism for its negative environmental impacts. The criticisms directed at tourism from an impact of development view have tended to focus on the deterioration of natural and cultural environments that tourism can cause. The development of tourism is frequently justified on the basis of its potential contribution to the broader socio-economic development of destination areas. Indeed, tourism is generally considered an effective vehicle of development, yet the meanings and objectives of "development" and the extent to which it can be achieved through tourism, is rarely questioned. Moreover, the relationship between tourism and development remains to be an under-represented area of study and research (Sharpley & Telfer, 2002). WTTC subsequently proceeds to examine the key environmental issues under five headings, namely:

1. Global warming
2. Depletion of ozone layer
3. Acid rain
4. Depletion and pollution of water resources
5. Depletion and pollution of land resources

According to Goeldner (2003: 464) in examining the possible implication for tourism, the WTTC expresses particular concern with respect to the depletion and pollution of land resources. It states that the long-term implications of resource depletion are obviously extremely serious. Even over the next few decades the travel and tourism industry could find that:

1. Political instability or increased competition for land could lead to loss of potential new tourism destinations and degradation of existing destinations.
2. Loss of landscape and wildlife could cause a decrease in customer satisfaction with tourism products and hence lower propensity to travel to some areas.
3. Higher fuel prices could lead to operational price increases and corresponding decreases in the number of travelers in the price-sensitive markets. WTTC (2003) also presents a positive vision of tourism and the environment, stating that:
4. Tourism is an integral aspect of modern societies.
5. Global awareness of environmental damage is developing rapidly.
6. The resources of the world's largest industry can and must be harnessed to achieve environmental goals.
7. The industry has the potential to influence customer to achieve beneficial environmental effects.
8. Environmental lobbies will add pressure to develop good environmental practice.

Environmental Problems in India:

The environmental problems in India are many, most of which are a result of people and business organizations including those operating in the tourism industry. Early tourism development has given little consideration to natural resource limitations, impacts on wildlife and indigenous cultures. The human environment and development have been largely ignored. Within the process of globalization local communities' participation and nature conservation are threatened and often overlooked. If tourism is to be sustainable, it must improve the lives of local people, protect their environment and health and offer a better future. In many instances tourism can be seen as a vehicle to empower local communities and protect the environment through the development of new employment opportunities, the enhancement of local economies, preservation of indigenous knowledge and practices, public awareness and education.

Sustainable tourism can create positive opportunities for community development in remote areas. The business sector can choose sustainable tourism over other more polluting ventures. Long and short term development plans should be developed so that tourism and its benefits are spread within the area. To develop tourism in a sustainable manner it is necessary to define optimal tourism destinations in local areas and regions, ensuring enjoyment for the tourist and minimum impact or disruption for the environment and local communities. Complex and broad based local communities' involvement in tourism development requires targeted investment strategies implemented by local decision-makers. Those strategies do not exist in many areas and the development of tourism is not planned. Tourism investments are too often imposed from the outside, and the potential for sustainable forms of tourism is weakened. Alternatives to mass tourism, e.g. cultural and ecotourism can be influential in changing the nature of tourism. Tourism can benefit both tourists and local communities and allow for two-way interaction and education.

Access to natural resources and environmental degradation

Tourism is not, as many people assert, a clean and non-polluting industry. A major problem is the lack of a common understanding of what sustainable tourism or ecotourism mean. This ambiguity leads to violations of environmental regulations and standards. Hence, the environmental problems evolving from tourism are manifold. First of all the tourism industry is very resource - and land intensive. Consequently, the interest of the tourism sector will often be in conflict with local resource- and land use practices. The introduction of tourism will imply an increased stress on resources available. An influx of tourists into the area leads to a competition for resources. This competition is compounded by employees working at the tourist sites. Almost as a rule tourists are supplied at the expense of the local population. Tourist activities imply an intensified utilisation of vulnerable habitats. Investors and tourists do not necessarily possess awareness on how to use natural resources sustainably, and subsequently this utilisation often leads to a degradation of resources. Tourism is also a major generator of wastes. In most tourist regions, sewage, waste water and solid waste disposal are not properly managed or planned. Lastly, tourism is also responsible for a considerable proportion of increased volumes and mileage in global transport and hence the associated

environmentally damaging pollutant emissions. The tourism industry has not shown sufficient willingness to (internalize or) compensate the cost of conservation of biodiversity by for instance protected areas, even though they profit from it.

Local communities and natural resources:

In general, the tourism industry should engage in promoting sustainability as a hallmark for investors. More specifically, the investors in tourism should strive to adopt environmentally sound technologies or other measures to minimise the consumption of the local ground water. Using various types of resources in a sustainable manner is of course also crucial. There is a need to use ecological materials and installation of renewable sources of energy systems (solar energy) in all new buildings and new constructions. Furthermore there should be an acceleration of installation or solar/wind power in all public work projects of communities where tourism will be introduced. Pollution of ground and coastal waters must be prevented, and recommendations made (perhaps even legislation) for tourism investors to invest in proper sewage treatment facilities. Appropriate waste disposal systems and ways to separate garbage into organic and non-organic waste should be developed. Organic waste can be composted and possibly reused on hotel gardens or even for local farming. This could be done through collaboration with local residents. Residents could organise themselves and manage the allocated dumping sites and hence benefit from the system in receiving payment from the hotel for services rendered. A system to separate the different materials, and recycle some should be in place at the land-fill site thus reducing the waste even further. To avoid degradation of the natural environment, tourism projects can help finance protected areas and safeguard ecologically sensitive regions against further environmental deterioration. By empowering local populations and have them participating in the entire process, sustainability will be ensured as it becomes accepted by and adjusted to the local communities. A protected area may certainly also be a suitable tourist-attraction, where tourists can experience amazing nature and learn about conservation and traditional uses of natural resources in the area. Investors in tourism should always respect the traditional land tenure system in the area and the traditional user-right systems of resources. In regard to this the communication and consultation with the local communities about resource-use are important. Tourism investors should not exclude

local people from using local resources, and thus take away what they depend on for maintaining their well-being. The tourism industry can and must take initiatives to implement the polluter-pays principle for pollution related to tourism operations. This may be organised and carried out through local tax systems or through funds established by the tourism industry for local community development. The polluter-pays principle should be applied for minor pollution only and should not be developed into a possibility for investors to pay a symbolic fine for imposed irreversible negative impacts on the local environment. Inaccurate and/or mild environmental legislation may possibly attract more foreign investors contributing to fast economic growth and development but without environmental damage as a consequence. To avoid the dilemma, South Africa will have to face in choosing between economic development or environmental protection international and multinational companies enterprises must be committed to follow the environmental standards of the country.

Coastal Protection:

Tourism is one of many South African economic activities with a special focus on coastal areas. The two most popular locations for holiday makers are the mountains and the coast. New concepts including the whole watershed area seem to be the best approach, especially when aquatic pollution problems are considered. Most problems are related to conflicts between different uses and access restrictions. Tourism leads to increased traffic flow and overcrowding in already densely populated areas.

Therefore tourism adds substantially to the following pressures:

1. Pollution by waste water, garbage, heating, noise and traffic emissions.
2. Encroachment of buildings, facilities and roads close to the coastline.
3. Beach erosion due to building, dune removal and dredging.
4. Excessive use of natural areas.
5. Destruction of natural areas to accommodate tourism or other needs.
6. Inter-sectoral competition and conflict over (marine and terrestrial) space.
7. Exclusion of local communities from any role of significance in decision-making.
8. The loss of natural and architectural heritage in the face of rapid expansion.
9. Strain on public utilities and facilities.
10. Displacement of local population.
11. Creation of restricted exclusive zones that are off-limits to the local people.

12. Loss of business to the local enterprises as all-inclusive resorts supplies all the needs of their guests.

Additional typical tourism impacts are socio-economic conflicts as property and general costs of living are increasing and small communities can be overrun by summer guests, changing the social structure significantly. Foreign customs and expectations can create conflicts and a deterioration of cultural and regional values.

Proposed action plan for sustainable tourism development:

A proposed action plan includes:

1. Promoting, at the national, regional, and community levels, the development of tourism in harmony with the natural and cultural environment, through development, education, and training programmes.
2. Developing tourism strategic development plans that promote environmentally sound and economically, culturally, and socially sustainable development.
3. Drawing up strategic plans to protect the health and safety of tourists, in close collaboration with health authorities, tourism operators and security service providers and the police in all areas, as an essential component of good service offered at different sites, as well as designing promotional activities that take into account the social-cultural and economic conditions of the country.
4. Developing, adopting, and implementing legislation to promote responsible practices in tourism development.
5. Collaborating with the private sector and local communities in formulating criteria for the sustainable use of natural resources.
6. Involving local communities to design programmes aimed at raising awareness for the development of sustainable tourism at all levels of society, promoting and facilitating their full participation.
7. Elaborating environmental impact studies for the design of tourism projects, in order to ensure sustainable development.
8. Working with national authorities to use tourism earnings as one of the means to alleviate poverty and generate employment in the country.

Promoting tourism towards sustainable development:

Tourism is considered a mean for income generating for the local communities. Actually the government has been considering helping the local government to develop income generating at the conservation area as an Eco-tourism base

on the local community participation with exploring the potential ecosystem. Hopefully through these Eco-tourism activities the income generating for local communities will be increased and the ecosystem will be more protected with sustainable resources. The government should manage the activities of local communities to achieve Ecotourism by introducing recycling of domestic waste to a consumption product. Developing tourism for poor community's growth in the country has great advantages such as: It will increase the participation of local communities of the informal sector which provides opportunities for producing handicraft of recycling products. Tourism areas that have an asset from cultural, wildlife, scenery, etc., will increase access of the poor to achieve additional income generating if they explore these potentials in a sustainable manner, such as developing the city which implement a cleaner production as a green city. Tourism can be more labour intensive if they could diversify the activities around the areas such as building and running hotels or cottages, improving management of domestic waste, involvement in minimising the use of non-renewable energy and materials, extensive use of recycled materials and Eco-farm implementation.

Maximize the potential of tourism for eradicating poverty by developing appropriate strategies in cooperation with all major groups, local communities and indigenous.

Increase of local community's capacity and capability on managing of their environment.

Such initiatives can achieve the following benefits:

1. Increasing the benefit (income generating, knowledge, etc.) from sustainable tourism resources for the population in the local communities.
2. Maintaining the cultural and environmental integrity of the local communities.
3. Enhancing the protection of conservation area.
4. Developing technology of cleaner production for supporting tourism activities.
5. Managing of local conservation resources.

Possible tourism industry actions:

1. Promote sustainable tourism products, using market related instruments and incentives, such as contests, awards, certification, model projects, culturally sensitive quality labels covering both environmental and social sustainability.
2. Reduce inappropriate consumption, use local resources in preference to imports in a sustainable manner; reduce and recycle

waste, ensure safe waste disposal, develop and implement sustainable transport policies and systems, e.g., efficient public transport, walking, cycling in destinations.

3. Provide tourists with authentic information, enabling them to understand all environmental and related aspects (e.g., human rights situation) of tourism when selecting any destination or holiday package; educate visitors in advance of arrival and give guidance on 'dos' and 'don'ts'; make tourists aware of their potential impact on and their responsibilities towards host societies.
4. Provide information on respecting the cultural and natural heritage of destination areas; employ tour guides who portray societies honestly and dispel stereotypes.
5. Ensure that the marketing of 'green' tourism reflects sound environmental policy and practice; use non-exploitative marketing strategies that respect people, communities and environments of destinations, dismantle stereotyping, integrate sustainable tourism principles when creating new marketing strategies.
6. Train staff to foster tourist responsibility towards the destinations, encourage multicultural education and exchange.
7. Actively discourage exploitative sex tourism, particularly sexual exploitation of children, and tourism which causes or contributes to social problems.
8. Adopt, observe, implement and promote codes of conduct.
9. Reduce financial leakage and support local economies by buying food and resources locally, develop long-term partnerships with local operators, businesses and suppliers; train and hire local staff and contract with local businesses, promote management opportunities for women; prefer accommodations owned, built and staffed by local people, promote locally made handicrafts and traditional products.
10. Encourage clients to study and understand their destinations, respect local cultures and co-ordinate visits with local communities, authorities and women's organisations, being aware of and sensitive to local customary laws, regulations and traditions, respect historical heritage and scientific sites.
11. Educate staff to avoid negative environmental and cultural impacts and create
12. incentive schemes to promote sustainable behaviour.

Conclusion:

The concept of community-based tourism provides substantial benefits of resources utilisation at community level as well as encourages a more sustainable use of these resources. The concept of community-based tourism provides substantial benefits of resources utilisation at community level as well as encourages a more sustainable use of these resources. However, the management of resources and the community that utilises these resources becomes a crucial issue, and the research proposes that through building up a representative and transparent community based organisation can assist the national government in adequate management of resources and facilities, dealing with conflicts of interests as well as enforcing the government regulations in terms of environment protection, human resources development and sustainability of the area. Community based tourism management creates suitable environment for tourism development to take place in the spirit of volunteerism and to strengthen the non-government organisations to take part in the development process. Furthermore, community based tourism can:

1. Make use of the traditional knowledge systems, and activities can be arrived at in line with the ability of the target group to deliver.
2. Be an effective and sustainable mean for making use of the available natural resources.
3. Result in clear and substantial economic benefits with well-established and implemented strategies.
4. Encourage community to claim access to land and natural resources.
5. Encourage partnerships among all stakeholders.

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