Research Article

Issues And Challenges Of Sustainable Tourism Development In Eastern Himalaya

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Tourism is an important and flourishing industry in the country. It is termed as a useful measure for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development in India. The present paper analyze the problem and prospect of north east India tourism development and highlight the perception of the national planners on Five Year Plans as reflected tourism management of the country. This research works suggest that the present process of tourism development adopted by government in various corner needed to revise towards the basis of community participation, which can become overwhelm tools for sustainable tourism development and, endorse local self-government to play more proactive and decisive role to step forwards democratizing tourism management dealing with the challenges which create it more sustainable and equitable benefits of the economy.

Keywords: Tourism, Sustainable Development, Community

Introduction:

Tourism is one of the largest and dynamically developing sectors of economic activities, and thus also become one of the world's largest service industries with sizeable economic benefits and immense opportunities. The term 'tourism', however, is subjected to a diversity of meanings and interpretations. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines tourism as comprising 'the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purposes' (WTO, 1994). According to this definition, a tourist may be visitors who stay as well as those who visit for part of a day (Lickorish & Jenkins, 1997). Tourism itself depends a lot on the existence of improve nature and landscapes as well as a healthy environment. If natured is plundered, landscapes are destroyed or water, energy and soil resources are over-exploited, the economic basis of tourism is also undermined (Narasaiah, 2004).

The term 'sustainable tourism' and 'community' development', increasingly seen in various combinations, have become the buzzwords of tourism development of the 1990s. Yet the concept of 'community development' did not really enter the vocabulary of academics and other professionals in the tourism industry until the latter part of the 1970s (Joppe, 1996). It becomes more widely used in 1980s. In 1988, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defined sustainable tourism 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'. Later in 1992, the 'Earth Summit' in Rio established the triple principles of environmental, economic and social sustainability. Since then, the principles of sustainable tourism have been adopted by the tourism industry worldwide.

Sustainable tourism can be 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' (UNWTO, 2005). The pillars of sustainable tourism are environmental integrity, social justice

and economic development. Sustainable tourism development practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. It principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability (UNWTO, 2005). Sustainable development is therefore about creating a better life for all people in ways that will be as viable in the future as they are at present. In other words, sustainable development is based on principles of sound husbandry of the world's resources, and on equity in the way those resources are used and in the way in which the benefits obtained from them are distributed (Uniyal & Sharma 2013). In simple term, Sustainable tourism is the concept of visiting a place as a tourist and trying to make a positive impact on the environment, society and economy.

According to Uniyal and Sharma, to pursue the concept of sustainable tourism development, tourism activity must comply with the following four key principles collectively referred as VICE principles:-
1) Visitor Satisfaction (Visitors must be satisfied with all aspects of the tourism product);
2) Industry Profitability (The return to the industry must allow for reinvestment and growth);
3) Community Acceptance (Account must be taken of the host community's present character and future aspirations);
4) Environmental Protection (The natural, cultural and historic resources on which the industry is based must be protected).

It is a derivation of general concept of sustainable tourism development which attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment and conservation of local ecosystem. And, the view of sustainable tourism development is one that uses resources sustainably, that reduces over consumption and waste, that maintains cultural, social and natural diversity and that integrates tourism development into national development policy (Raju, 2007).

A community participation approach has long been advocated as an integral part of sustainable tourism development. It is envisaged that the approach can increase a community's carrying capacity by reducing tourism's negative impacts while enhancing its positive effects (Haywood, 1988, Jamal & Getz, 1995). According to Connell (1997), participation is 'not only about achieving the more efficient and more equitable distribution of material resources: it is also about the sharing of knowledge and the transformation of the process of learning itself in the service of people's self-development'. Arnstein (1969) states that the purpose of participation is power redistribution, thereby enabling society to fairly redistribute benefits and costs. In the context of tourism planning, Haywood (1988) defines community participation as 'a process of involving all stakeholders (local government officials, local citizens, architects, developers, business people, and planners) in such way that decision-making is shared'. This means that the tourism activities are developed and operated by local community members, and certainly with their consent and support. Environmentally, sustainable development crucially depends on the presence of local support for a development.

Tourism Governance and Policies:
Travel and Tourism in India is an integral part of Indian tradition and culture. From ancient time, the rulers in different parts of India built luxuries palaces, enchanting gardens, marvelous temples, grant forts, tombs and memorials giving expression to the depths of one's feelings and sentiments which make India a tourist paradise. The dimension of tourism change into trade and commerce developed added to the growth of the Indian tourism industry in the 19th and the early part of the 20th Century. The growth of modern, organized tourism however was slow. It was only after the 80s that tourism as an industry picked up speed (Bezbaruah, 2000).

Tourism in the Five Year Plans:
Though India had a good amount of tourism activity when it became independent, it did not figure in the Indian Constitution of India except some of its components were mentioned in the Central or State lists. The Five Year Plan is like a mirror of the country's perception about the direction of socio-economic progress. Therefore, it is useful to have a look at the perception of the national planners on tourism as reflected in the Five Year Plans of the country (Bezbaruah, 2000). The allocations for tourism from the First Plan onwards and the number of plan allocation depicted in the following tables:-

Table-1 Government Allocation for Tourism Development in India under Five Year Plans		
Five Year Plans	Time Period	Plan allocation (in Rs)
First Plan	1951-1956	0.00
Second Plan	1956-1961	336.38 Lakhs
Third Plan	1961-1966	800 Lakhs
	1966-1967*	58.50 Lakhs
	1967-1968*	87.65 Lakhs
	1968-1969*	183.81 Lakhs

Fourth Plan	1969-1974	36 Crores
Fifth Plan	1974-1979	133 Crores
Sixth Plan	1980-1985	187.46 Crores
Seventh Plan	1985-1990	326.16 Crores
	1990-1991	83 Crores
	1991-1992	90 Crores
Eight Plan	1992-1997	773.62 Crores
Ninth Plan	1997-2002	793.75 Crores
Tenth Plan	2002-2007**	2900 Crores
Eleventh Plan	2007-2012*** Revised ****	3112.71 Crores 5156 Crores

Source: Five Year Plans, Government of India, *Indian Tourism; Economic Planning and Statistics, **Annual Report 2002-2003, Department of Tourism, Government of India, ***Annual Report, 2011-2012,

Department of Tourism, Government of India, ****Report of the Working Group on Tourism, 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

During the first Five Year Plan, there was no provision for tourism development. The second Five Year Plan constitutes tourism in a planning process which create transport and accommodation facilities at major tourist centers. Third Five Year Plan encourages adventure tourism and India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) was also set up in 1996 to develop tourism infrastructure and promote tourism destination in India. Fourth and Fifth plan was expansion and improvement of tourism infrastructure and became the symbolic model of resort tourism in India.

During the sixth Five Year Plan, 'Tourism Policy 1982' was announced which precise the development objectives and provided an action plan on 'travel circuit' concept to maximize the benefits of tourism. Taking steps towards a sustainable basis and as such there will be no adverse effects on the environment. Seventh Plan stated tourism as a plan objective and thus became a watershed plan for tourism development in India. In 1986, the government of India set up National Committee on Tourism, Tourism Finance Corporation (TFCI) was also set up in 1988 to finance tourism projects according the recommendation of National Committee on Tourism.

The development of tourism has been increasingly built up in the Five Year Plan as it contributes a lot of earnings in the economy of the country. The eight Plan proposed to achieve diversification of tourism products, accelerated growth of tourism infrastructure, effective marketing and promotional effort in the overseas markets and removal of all impediments to tourism with the help of public sector enterprises. In 1993, The Tourism Synergy Programme was prepared by government to enlist the activities and infrastructural components of various agencies. It was further modified and converted into a 'National Strategy for the Development of Tourism' in 1996, aimed at achieving understanding of the significance of tourism, higher plan allocation and introduction of a new schemes for accelerated development of tourism. The ninth plan policy framework on tourism introduces a new element of policy like infrastructural development for domestic tourism, brings out the importance of people's participation at the grass root level for development of tourist facilities, and for creating a tourist-friendly environment. During this plan, a special measure to be undertaken for development of the North –east region of India also makes a special reference to regional development.

The approach in the 10th plan towards tourism signifies a distinct shift from the approach adopted in the earlier plans. Recognizing India's vast potential for tourism as against a very thin global presence, the plan envisages cutting across all barriers and the plan articulates to look and develop the new trends include long haul travel, neighboring country travel, rural and ethnic tourism, wellness and health holidays (Khan, et al. 2014). In 2002, National Tourism Policy was brought out by the Ministry of Tourism. Positioning and maintaining tourism development as a national priority; enhancing and maintaining the competitiveness of India as a tourism destination; improving India's existing tourism products and expanding these to meet new market requirements; creating World Class infrastructure; and developing sustained and effective marketing plan and programmes are the key objectives of the Tourism Policy 2002.

As per the working strategy for the 12th Five Year Plan, the Ministry of Tourism has adopted a 'pro-poor tourism' approach which could contribute significantly to poverty reduction. More than half of Tourism Ministry's Plan budget is channelized for funding the development of destinations, circuits, mega projects as also for rural tourism infrastructure projects. The Ministry also ensured that 10% and 2.5% of its total Annual Plan (2012-13) outlay went to the tourism projects in the North-Eastern region and the tribal areas respectively (Govt. of India, Press Information Bureau release, dated 4.5.2013)

Issues and Problems of Tourism Development in Eastern Himalaya:
In this analysis, the term 'Eastern Himalaya' includes the north eastern region, seven sisters of the state like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura. Even though the eastern

Himalayan region has immense potential for tourism development and endowed with diverse tourist attractions and each state has its own distinct features. Even though there are certain measures to promote tourism (Ministry of tourism has been released an amount of Rs 85.52 crores in 2014 – 15 for promotion and development of tourism, annual report, 2014-15), the region is one of the least visited areas of the country by both domestic and international tourists which are several factors apart from the well-known infrastructural deficiencies.

By the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, a geo-political line known as the 'Inner Line' was drawn along the foothills and the tribes living beyond this line were 'left to manage their own affairs' and 'no British subject or foreign citizen could cross the line without a license, and trade or possession of land beyond the line was severely restricted'. After Independence, the Inner Line has been continued in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram. Any Indian citizens from outside the above states are obliged to obtain permit called 'Inner Line Permit' to enter into these protected states which made excluded from the outside world through legislative actions since the colonial British policy of non-interference, it may due to allege protected culturally divergent hilly people.

Restriction is also imposed on foreigners from entering certain parts of the region. Under the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958, all areas falling between the 'Inner Line' and the International border of the State have been declared as Protected Area. The regulation states that a Prote cted Area Permit (PAP) is required for non-Indian citizens to visit certain areas in the North-East India. Besides, the formation of ethnic nationalism in the region is now known to the outside world as a region in turmoil. The region is one of the most troubled regions in India (Bhaumik, 2009). The South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) in 2006 counted 109 rebel groups in northeast India and only Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram were found to be without one.

Geographically, North east India is one of the most physically inaccessible region in India due to the region's geographical attributes like land-locked, remote and narrow physical connectivity to India (only through the 32 km wide Siliguri neck in East Bengal) and 'bordered' status of the region (90 per cent of the region's border are 'partially closed' international borders), inadequate transportation facilities and heavy monsoon rainfall and intermittent landslides during a long rainy season are not conducive for development of mass tourism (Saitluanga & Hmingsangzuala, 2014).

Challenges of Sustainable Tourism Development in Eastern Himalaya:
Some of the important challenges of tourism development in the eastern Himalaya have been highlighted in the following points:

1) Community Based Tourism Management:
Tourism is an economic activity so it becomes necessary to spread its benefits to the community. There is a close link between the community and tourism. The natural and built environment provides many of the attractions for tourist and coupled with this tourism development can have both positive and negative impacts on the environment. Sustainable tourism development depends on protecting the environmental resources for tourism (Sharma & Bansal, 2010). The partners for sustainable tourism development are the tourism industry-owners and managers of tourism commercial enterprise, the environment supporter advocates for environmental conservation, and the community residents, community groups and leaders and the local authorities which are required to meet the basic needs of the country. The people living next to a resource are the ones best suited to protect, develop and maintaining the particular thing. The consciousness of the sustainability of the tourism location to the management practices of the communities is directly or indirectly dependent on the scene for their livelihoods. A salient feature of community-based sustainable tourism is that local knowledge which is usually utilized alongside wide general frameworks of tourism business models. This allows the participation of locals at the management level and typically allows a more intimate understanding of the environment. There has been the promotion of sustainable tourism practices surrounding the management of tourist locations by locals or the community. The tourist hotspot in the north east India has potentiality to enhance sustainable tourism development when the native people actively participated at the stage of planning, decision making and implementation.

2) Agro-Tourism:
In the eastern Himalayan region, people practices different types of cultivation from the time immemorial. Their way of life, culture and tradition are closely related with agriculture and its related activities. The various tribes in this area have their own ethnic identities which forms multi-functionality of farming. It gives an opportunity to experience the interesting, exciting, simple and forthright life with the villager, chance to share their culture, custom and ethos, taste the local foot habits, relax and refresh in the pure natural environment. Promotion of agro-tourism is a big challenges in the rural hilly areas of north east India.

3) Permaculture:
It is an important approach to land management and settlement design that adopts arrangements observed in flourishing natural ecosystem. The principles of permaculture suggest observing and interacting with nature, obtaining yield, capturing and storing energy, drawing from natural patterns, producing zero waste,

accepting feedback and regulating self. In short, it is a lifestyle of practices and working without harmful activities of nature. The tribal and hilly peoples in the eastern Himalayas are experiencing community services of natural resource management, preserving forest and agricultural areas for future generation, their traditional norms, ethos and culture closely linked with permaculture. Therefore, this region can become a hotspot of permaculture activities in India.

4) Forest resource based tourism:
According to 'India State of Forests Report (ISFR) 2021', north-eastern states have a total forest cover of 1,69,521 square km, out of their total geographical area of 2,62,179 sq km, which is 7.98 per cent of the country's geographical area. Some part of the area is rugged topography with remote and difficult to access of transportation facilities, however, it is an interesting space to promote trekking, adventure and eco-tourism. Apart from this, bamboo species in this region is closely related with the traditional values and practices of the tribal communities which could bring a prosperous tourism development. The Bamboo shoots/sprouts festival etc, has been interesting to promote different dynamic ethnic culture of the region.

Conclusion:

The dynamic of nature of tourism make it critical to scan the external and internal environments to ensure a healthy and viable tourism industry. A large number of stakeholders are involved in this system. There is growing recognition that the interdependence of these stakeholders is essential for sustainable pro poor tourism (Sharma & Bansal, 2010). It can no longer work in isolation of the environment and local communities or avoid the social and cultural consequences of tourism (United Nations, 2003). Government of India formulates a policy for tourism development in the country since the beginning of Five Year Plan, introduced various schemes and projects especially the exploration of precious potential resources for the growth of tourism in India. However, the Five Year Plan portrays that most of the tourism projects are concerted in the development of infrastructural facilities without participation of local residents. Even though the eastern Himalaya has potentiality to attract tourist inflow in and outside the region, but, it is still an infantile stage. The very big question is that how to manage valuable tourist destination, policy and other related issues? The present study reveals that process for tourism development adopted by government in various corner needed to revise towards the basis of community participation which can become a unique and extraordinary tools for sustainable tourism development. This paper also suggested that promotion of local self-government to play more proactive and decisive role in tourism sector of the country.

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