Sustainable Tourism in India: Collective Efforts of Tourism Stakeholders

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Some issues have become the major concern that in an Indian Tourism context what is meant by Sustainable Development, Sustainable Tourism Development, Tourism Planning and Destination Management and how are government and other Tourism stakeholders rising to the challenge, which was sited upon them by the Indian Tourism industry of implementing sustainability in Tourism?

Actually, Sustainability has become an important topic and concept in relation to Tourism planning and development (Inskeep 1991; Southgate & Sharpley 2002; Yuksel, Bramwell & Yuksel 1999).

'Sustainable Tourism refers to a level of Tourism activity that can be maintained over the long period of time because it results in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural and cultural environments of the area in which it takes place'.

The Sustainable Development initiative goes beyond such well known ideas not only in Tourism sector but also in hospitality as reusing guest linens, recycling waste materials, and changing to compact fluorescent lamps, providing eco-friendly services etc. The strategy also includes local community involvement (panchayat, local residence etc.) by supporting charities, NGOs and encouraging and supporting employees to volunteer in the community, as well as participating in global award and certification programs.

This paper will highlight the specific roles of the different Tourism Stakeholders in the development process of Sustainable Tourism.

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Introduction

Sustainability has become an important topic and concept in relation to Tourism planning and development (Yuksel, Bramwell & Yuksel 1999, Inskeep 1991; Southgate & Sharpley 2002). "Sustainable Tourism as Tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. Rather than being a type of product, it is an ethos that underpins all Tourism activities. As such, it is integral to all aspects of Tourism development and management rather than being an add-on component" (UNWTO).

The objective of Sustainable Tourism is to retain the socio-economic advantages of Tourism development while reducing negative impacts on the natural, historic, cultural or social environment. This is achieved by balancing the needs of tourists with those of the destination.

The need of sustainability arises because of negative impacts of Tourism. The UNEP identifies following impacts of Tourism on culture, which requires a Sustainable handling of Tourism development.

Negative impacts of Tourism:

- Excessive drinking, alcoholism, gambling & increased underage drinking.
- Crime, drugs, prostitution & increased smuggling.

- Barring of locals from natural resources.
- New cliques modify social structure.
- Natural, political, and public relations calamities.
- Adaptation to tourist demand and over exploitation of socio-cultural carrying capacity.
- Economic inequalities & Job level friction.
- Irritation due to tourist behaviour Language and cultural effects.
- Unwanted lifestyle changes and displacement of residents for Tourism development

All Travel & Tourism activities of whatever recreational and motivation holidays, MICE travel, adventure travel, wildlife tourism, cultural tourism, eco-tourism etc. need to be Sustainable. Sustainable Tourism is that which respects both local people and the traveller, cultural heritage and the environment. It seeks to provide people with an exciting and educational holiday that is also of benefit to the people of the host country.

The objectives of study:
- To implement appropriate processes to incorporate and engage Tourism stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism development.
- To classify the positive and negative impacts of Tourism development.
- To assess socio-economic and environmental impact assessment techniques and their application to Sustainable Tourism development.
- To identified the action plan and process for Sustainable Tourism development.
- To develop a critical awareness of the ways in which Tourism can enhance the welfare of people and protect our natural and cultural heritage.

The secondary data collection method is used to execute these objectives.

Principles of Sustainability:
Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of Tourism development and a suitable balance must be instituted between these three dimensions to assure its long term sustainability. Thus, Sustainable Tourism should:
1. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities.
2. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in Tourism development.
3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders (UNEP).

Guidelines and other Principles for Sustainable Tourism:
Many tourism and travel destinations are now following strategies which aim to ensure a sensitive approach when dealing with Tourism activities. Many of these strategies are based on a prescribed expression of principles for Sustainable Tourism. A list of guidelines, techniques and principles is presented below that are important for stakeholders who wish to be guided by the ethics of Sustainable, Alternative and Responsible Tourism. These guidelines and principles include:

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Sustainability
principles

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- Participation or support of local Economy
- Consultation of interest groups including Tourism stakeholders.
- Local tenure
- Ascertain Local Business Linkages (Tourism supports improvements in the area)
- Sustainability of the Resource Base (Sensible use of nature resources)
- Cooperation and liaison with all stakeholders
- Maintenance of Carrying Capacity
- Educational Training of staff.
- Positioning
- Integration of Tourism into local, Regional and national planning
- Reduction of consumption and waste products
- Maintain diversity of plants and animals
- Studies of environmental and social impacts
- Responsible marketing of Tourism
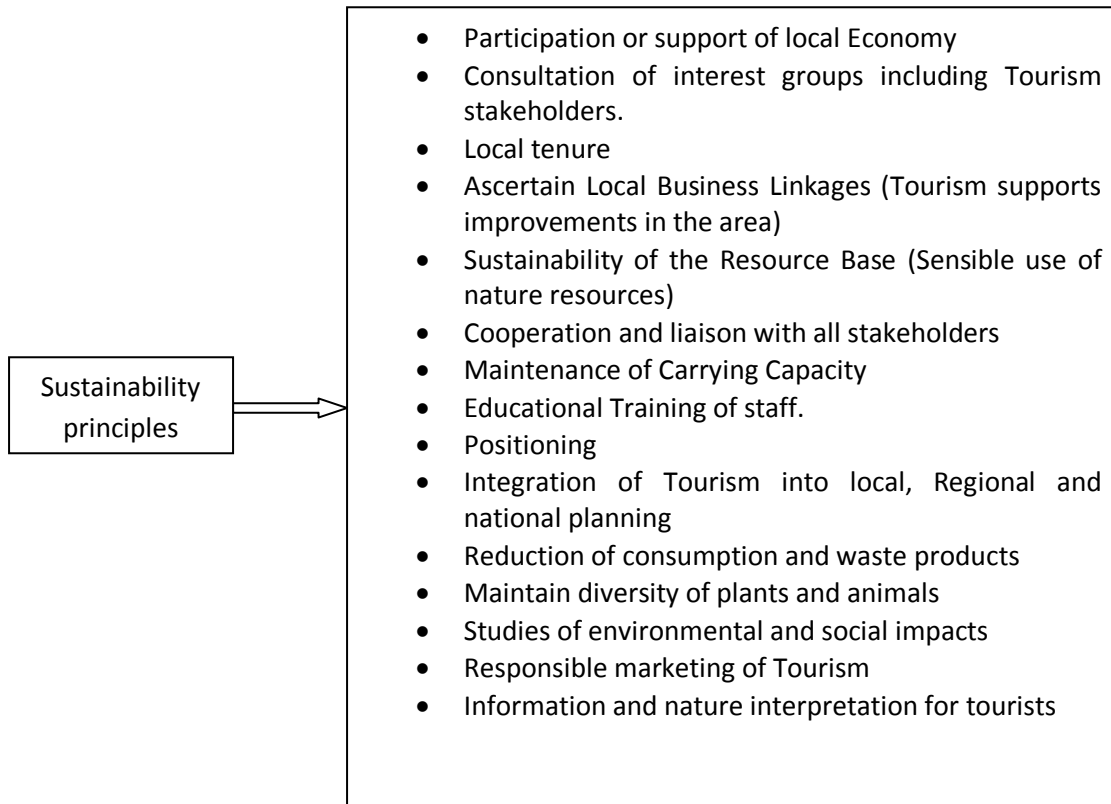- Information and nature interpretation for tourists

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Figure 1: guidelines and principles for sustainability

- Participation or support of local Economy

Local community must uphold Tourism development by being involved in setting a community Tourism goal, identifying the resources to be maintained and enhanced, and developing goals and strategies for Tourism development and management.

- Involvement and Discussion with stakeholders

Tourism programme should be developed with the help of broad-based community input. Participants could include local NGOs groups and institutions, volunteer service groups, the poor, women, local governments and their economic development departments, Tourism associations, visitor bureaus, local business group, regional council of provincial Tourism development and any other party which might be concerned in or impacted by Tourism.

- Local tenure

Tourism development must provide employment for local people. The provision of fulfilling jobs has to be seen as an integral part of any Tourism development at the local level. Part of the procedure of ensuring valuable employment is to ensure, as much as possible, the Tourism infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, shops, etc.) is developed and managed by local people.

- Ascertain Local Business Linkages

Linkages must be established among local trade in the Tourism industry in order to ensure Tourism expenditures stay within the destination rather than leak out for other states to purchase imported goods and services for tourists.

- Sustainability of the Resource Base

Sustainable Tourism development has to provide for inter-generational equity. Equitable allocation of costs and profits of Tourism development must take place among present and future generations. To be fair to future generations of tourists and the travel industry, society should strive to leave a resource base no less than the one inherited. Sustainable Tourism development must, therefore, avoid resource allocation actions that are irreversible.

- Community Goals

Synchronization is required between the needs of a visitor, the place and the community. This is facilitated by broad community support with a proper balance between economic, social, cultural, environmental and human objectives, and recognition of the importance of cooperation between governments, host communities.

- Maintenance of Carrying Capacity

There is a specific need for the impact assessment of tourism development proposals to distinguish between plans which encourage mass versus quality tourism. The capacity of sites must be measured, including physical, natural, social, psychological and cultural limits.

- Training and information

Sustainable Tourism development requires the establishment of education and training programmes to improve public understanding and enhance business, vocational and professional skills especially for the poor and women. Training should include courses in Tourism, hotel management, creation and operation of small businesses and other relevant topics.

- Positioning

Sustainable Tourism development engages promoting appropriate uses and activities to reduce poverty and draw from and strengthen landscape character, sense of place, community identity and site opportunities.
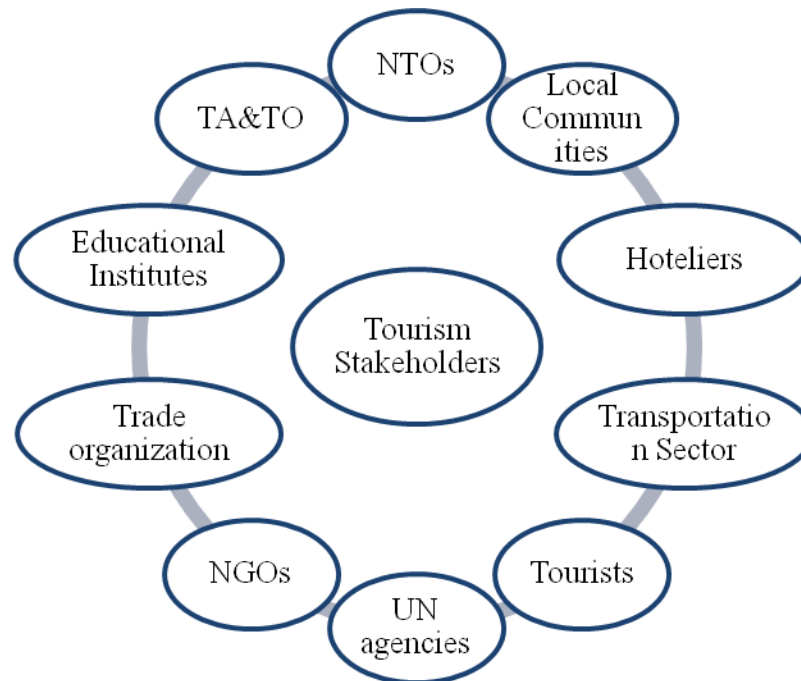

Stakeholders of Sustainable Tourism:

Tourism Stakeholders play a role in continuing of Sustainable Tourism form. This can include groups as well as individuals. "A stakeholder in the Tourism industry is deemed to be anyone who is impacted on by development positively or negatively, and as a result it reduces potential conflict between the tourists and host community by involving the latter in shaping the way in which Tourism develops. Importantly, it will highlight the specific roles of the various stakeholders in the development process in terms of their contribution to the areas of project management, product development, capacity building, consumer research or marketing communication. In addition, the phase dependency of these resource contributions will be examined (ECOFIN).The standards and concealed drives of governments often need to be taken into account when considering the objects for Sustainable Tourism development. There are other concerns as well. Central, State and Local Governments have a key role in format the planning and policies for Sustainable Tourism development. Moreover, many policies and much of the legislation adjacent Sustainable Tourism development falls in the area of governance, such as land use, labour laws, environmental regulations and waste disposal, Environmental Impact Assessment etc. One of the primary functions of the Government in enhancing Sustainable Tourism development is, therefore, to create an environment that enables or influences the private sector to operate more sustainably.

Accommodation and Hospitality industry, Travel agencies and tour operators, providers of visitor services, transporters and nature tour outfitters are all part of the supply chain which must balance bio-diversity conservation with the professional quality of visitor experiences.

In hospitality sectors the sustainability initiative goes beyond such well known ideas as reusing guest linens, recycling waste materials, and changing to compact fluorescent lamps etc. The strategy also includes community involvement by supporting charities and cheering employees to volunteer in the community, as well as participating in global award and certification programs.

Tour Operators" in various segments of travel, Tourism & hospitality sector are very active to

introduce sustainably. The traveller's code of responsibility for environmental and cultural sustainability are framed and widely publicized by the travel agencies.

NGOs are one of the stakeholders in promote Sustainable Tourism development. Their roles can range from fore fronting Sustainable Tourism development practices to simply doing research. Educational institute's research teams and scientists can be tapped to aid in the process of planning.

Local communities benefit from Sustainable Tourism through cultural integrity, socio- economic development, employment generation, and infrastructure development. Tourism revenues bring economic growth and prosperity to attractive tourist destinations which can increase the standard of living of local community. Local people also take part to develop sustainably in Tourism. The best example can be seen in the efforts of endogenous Tourism site of India including Raghurajpura, PiplI, Jyotisar, Mana village etc.

Implementation process of Sustainable Tourism Development:
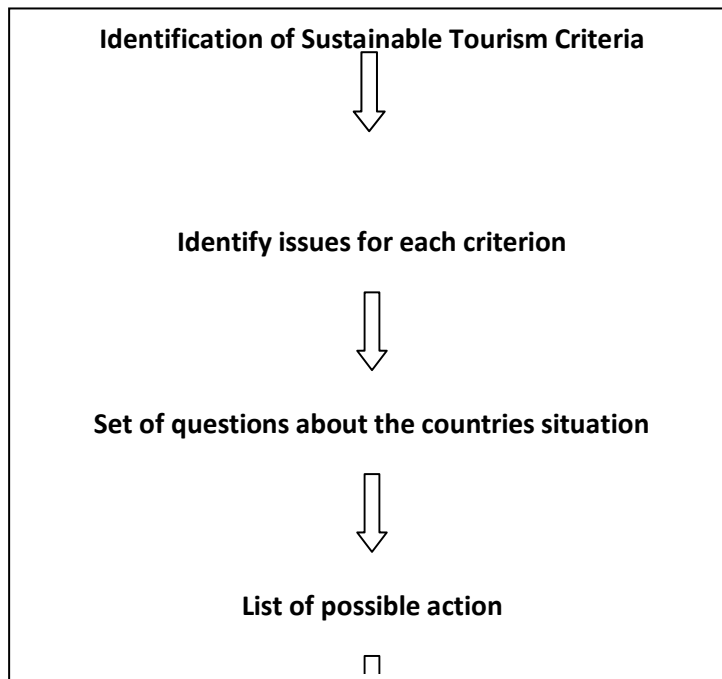The process followed by stakeholders to implement sustainable practices in tourism.

Identification of Sustainable Tourism Criteria

Identify issues for each criterion

Set of questions about the countries situation

List of possible action

Figure 3: Implementation process for Sustainable Tourism development

Conclusion
To accomplish this responsibility, Tourism stakeholders have joined hand together to work in close partnership with all national and international organizations including Ministry of Tourism, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World Tourism Organisation (WTO/OMT) etc. Stakeholders have committed in this Initiative to:
- Protect and conserve the natural environment, socio-economic and cultural heritage.

- Liaison and co-operation with local communities, panchayat and people, ensure they benefit from the visits of our customers and encourage our customers to respect the local way of life.
- Conserve plants and animals, protected areas and landscapes.
- Respect the integrity of local cultures and their social values.
- Comply with local, national and international laws and regulations.
- Oppose and actively discourage illegal, abusive or exploitative forms of Tourism.
- Work closely with business partners, local authorities, regional and national governments and other organisations to achieve Sustainable development of Tourism, provide information on activities to develop and encourage the Sustainable Tourism Development and management of Tourism.
- Communicate our progress in implementing this commitment.

Nation cannot achieve its goal of Sustainable Tourism development without the help of all stakeholders.

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