

Original Article

Balancing Economy and Ecology: A Geographical Analysis of Sustainable Tourism and Environmental Conservation

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Abstract

The present research paper is a conceptual study that intends to evaluate the geographical dimensions of sustainable tourism. It also reflects on the need of maintaining the balance between economic profit and environmental protection. It suggests the need of economic growth by considering the necessity of environmental conservation. It has been observed that tourism plays significant role in the economy of any country. Therefore, the government pays more attention to this industry. Tourism industry helps in developing the economy thereby contributing to the national development. It helps to generate employment and fortifies the cultural ties among the states and nations. However, it has been found that mal-tourism results in the degradation of nature, loss of biodiversity and socio-cultural issues. The present paper discusses the ways or strategies to strengthen ecological sustainability while gaining economic profits. On the basis of spatial patterns and case-based analysis, the present paper discusses the relation between the unregulated tourism and degeneration of the ecosystem. This paper also emphasizes the need of cumulative efforts such as geographic planning, pro-environmental government policies and community engagement to augment profit and maintain eco-balance.

Key words: Tourism, environment, economy, conservation etc.

Introduction

After the adoption of policy of LPG i.e. Liberalization and Privatization and Globalization, there is a remarkable growth in tourism industries. This is because of the change in the people's standard of living, the development in the technology and advancements in the medium of transports. Nowadays people consider tourism as part of solace and entertainment. Due to the emergence of social media, Youtubers, Vloggers and other media users visit many places as tourists to make videos to post them on the social platforms. The exponential growth and rapid expansion of the tourism industries have led to the issues of pollution,



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Contamination of ocean, deforestation, unnecessary migration of species and habitat destruction. The countries with historical importance, aesthetic appearance and unique natural beauties are likely to have more tourist visitors. Such countries also have to face the problem of degradation of environment. Therefore, the geographical analysis helps in noticing the loss of ecosystem due to the extreme tourist's population and mismanagement of the host countries. Such analysis helps in earning benefits from tourism while maintaining the ecological balance. With the help of geographical perspectives, one can develop the tourists' spots by considering the conservation of the environment. One can make the barren places unique ready for worth-visiting by tourists. Thus, geographic analysis will help maintain the balance between sustainable tourism and environmental conservation.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the relationship between unregulated tourism and environmental degradation
- To examine environmental impacts of tourism by reflecting on the case studies
- To discuss strategies for maintaining balance between economic growth and environmental conservation

Literature Review

After having read some relevant literature about the sustainable tourism and ecological protection, it is found that unplanned tourism results in degeneration of the local ecosystem and well-organized tourism helps to enhance profit by maintaining the environmental neatness. Case studies of coastal and mountainous areas helps us to know how planning or mismanagement can affect environment and economy positively or negatively. In some of the research articles, it is said that GIS (Geographic Information Systems) proves to be beneficial to study tourist flows, availability of resources, vulnerability of ecosystems, growth in profit or loss and proper planning of tourism. Many researchers think that sustainability in tourism is indispensable to develop the tourism industry as well as to preserve environmental resources. It is found that mass tourism results in the exploitation of local natural and human resources whereas sustainable tourism ensures the protection of local environment.

Methodology

The present research work is a conceptual study which adopts a qualitative and an analytical approach. Following activities have been undertaken to accomplish the present research article.

- Study and analysis of secondary data from journals, government publications reports, and newspaper articles.
- Case study analysis of coastal and mountainous tourism

Geographical Perspectives of Tourism and Environment

1. Geographical Distribution of Tourism:

It is seen that tourists throng prominently in environmentally sensitive regions such as coastal areas, mountainous and forest regions. The tourist inflow in such regions create environmental issues because of the extra load on the available resources. Therefore, such areas are more prone to ecological collapse than any other regions.

2. Management of Resources:

The tourist places require abundant resources to accommodate and cater to the needs of the crowd of tourists. Therefore, the tourist places need extra amount of water, food varieties and living places. Most of the times the excessive utilization and consumption of these resources result in the shortage of resources and that further create ecological

imbalance. Sometimes overcrowding leads to the emergence of chaotic situations. It can affect the carrying capacity of the regions. Therefore, tourism industries should pay attention to the geographical aspects of the regions that include the study of climate, prevalent weather conditions, availability natural resources, medical facilities, and prediction of number of tourists likely to visit the particular places during the particular period.

Case Studies

Case studies prove to be significant to understand the exponential growth in the tourism industries located in the coastal, mountainous and forest zones and its impact on the environment. The impacts can be positive as well as negative. The positive impacts include the conservation funding and infrastructure development while the negative impact includes the loss of biodiversity, contamination of ocean, glaciers retreat, waste accumulation, depletion of natural resources, pollution and toxicity etc. The following evidences throw light on the increase in the number of tourists and the negative impact on the indigenous ecosystem.

1. Coastal Area of Sundarbans:

The Sundarbans is a famous tourist spot located in West Bengal. The International organization UNESCO has declared it as World Heritage Site. The indigenous people residing there have their income sources through these tourists' visits. They have to depend on these tourists for their livelihood. Though this place has great earning source through tourism, these places are getting damaged due to the mismanagement of the tourism industries. The mangrove ecosystem is getting negatively affected by the pollution and contamination caused by the tourists. Lack of waste management also leads to the loss of biodiversity. It encourages the migration of some species due to the encroachment on the habitat of some species. But nowadays, due to the awareness about the environmental conservation and global warming, the tourism industry is trying to employ sustainable practices to mitigate the loss of ecosystem.

2. Adventure Tourism in Himalayan Mountain Ridge:

Trekking in Himalayan mountains is considered as the most challenging and adventurous thing. Himalayan trekking is a dream for many trekkers. Therefore, this place has become the prominent tourist spot. Since this area is environmentally vulnerable and sensitive. Any anti-environmental activity in such places can cause damage to the local ecosystem. Such places are facing the issues like garbage disposal, plastic waste heaping, deforestation and melting of glaciers etc. Though tourism in these places have has resulted in financially benefits, these places are now under the burden of overcrowding. Therefore, sustainable practices can prove to be beneficial to maintain the balance between economic and environmental.

Strategies for Sustainable Tourism

1. Eco-conscious Tourism:

One of the major strategies leading to sustainable development is the dissemination of the idea of eco-conscious tourism. Such tourism is committed to ensure the mitigation of ecological problems. It also helps instilling the environmental values among the tourists. It can make the tourists think about their responsibility as a protector of the nature.

2. Inclusion of Indigenous Community:

While devising the policies and plans for tourism, local community must be taken into consideration. The knowledge of the local people about their ecosystem proves to be

extremely significant. These people should be made aware about the importance of environmental conservation along with earning money.

3. Government Policies:

It becomes very difficult to carry out certain practices without the intervention of strict government laws. The Indian constitution includes many laws for the protection and conservation of the environment. The Article 21 in Fundamental Rights speaks about the right to clean and healthy environment that entails the pollution-free environment. Article 48 A in Directive Principles speaks about the protection of forest and wildlife, it also states that the State should improve and protect the environment. In Fundamental Duties, Article 51 A (g) speaks about the duty of every citizen to protect and care the environment and be kind to the creatures. Thus, government policies can create strong impact on the practice of environmental protection.

4. Use of GIS and Remote Sensing Technologies:

This technology is very helpful in supervising environmental happenings and maintain ecological balance with prior planning. We can monitor deforestation, pollution and climate change. It can be used to track natural resources like water and forests. We can predict natural disasters such as earthquake, tsunami, cyclones etc. Weather forecasting, traffic management and identification of location etc. are essential for the growth of tourism, so these technologies prove to be beneficial.

5. Establishment of Eco-friendly Infrastructure:

The use of GIS and other technologies are essential to establish eco-friendly and ready-to-face natural disaster infrastructure. Such infrastructure can mitigate damages to the environment.

Conclusion

To sum up, it is found that sustainable practices are essential to protect the environment. It ensures long-term economic and ecological benefits. Sustainable tourism is possible only if there is the participation of local community, inclusion of technologies and control of government rules and regulations. Mismanagement and ill-organization in tourism can lead to the degeneration of the nature. There should not be insistence only on earning profit from tourism industry. We must think about maintaining the balance between profit and protection of nature. Specifically speaking, economic growth at the cost of ecological degradation is futile and it has drastic and danger future repercussions. Geographical approach thinks about the environmental vulnerability, resource utilization, crowd management and spatial planning etc. with this approach we can initiate sustainable tourism. The study concludes that there is association between the damage to the nature and extreme irregular tourism. It is also concluded that sustainable practices lead to the growth of tourism economy and protection of the environment.

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