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Sustainable tourism practices in Sikkim: A comprehensive study

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Abstract

Sustainable tourism represents a shift in tourism that aims to reconcile consideration of tourism growth with the need for conservation of natural resources, preservation of culture and vision control of local communities. At the heart of the concept is not just the pursuit of fun and discovery, but a commitment to responsible and ethical travel. Sustainable tourism is based on three pillars: environmental protection, cultural justice and economic prosperity. The overall goal is to maximize the value of the traveller's need for unique experiences while preserving the ecological and cultural values that undergird the past experience. Environmental protection is the mainstay of the tourism industry. This means working to reduce the carbon footprint of tourism, protect biodiversity, reduce waste and reduce negative impacts on sensitive ecosystems. Sustainable tourism is beneficial in protecting the environment as well as respecting different cultures from different communities. It refers to the preservation of local culture, traditions and heritage. Creating interaction between visitors and local communities' fosters understanding and appreciation, encouraging cultural exchange while preserving authenticity. Economic sustainability is an important part of this model to ensure that tourism directly benefits local businesses and communities. Sustainable tourism improves the health and well-being of areas by promoting local employment, supporting indigenous businesses and sharing tourism revenue.

Keywords: Paradigm shift, tourism development, fundamental pillar, natural resources, safeguarding cultural heritage, nurturing local communities, carbon footprint, cultivating meaningful, local economics

Introduction

Sustainable tourism aims to reduce the environmental impacts of tourism and preserve natural and cultural resources for future generations. It teaches responsible practices that benefit local communities, promote cultural understanding, and protect natural areas.

This approach is important in protecting the life and health of tourists and ensuring that they remain active and alive in the coming years. Sustainable tourism refers to the type of travel used for the environmental, social and economic impact of tourism.

Make adjustments to minimize this negative impact. It considers the needs of travellers, as well as the needs of the community, local businesses and the natural world. This will mean using sustainable transport, living in green spaces, consuming local and ethical food and avoiding violence. Safety tourism can relate to travel for leisure, business or event purposes, as well as trips to visit family and friends.

Literature Review

Research on community ecotourism programs provides many perspectives and insights. Ecotourism started as a branch of different tourism, but quickly established itself and even became an important factor in the development of tourism. Most studies are conducted in community settings and general conclusions are drawn from field trips.

Lindberg (1991) ^[13] shows the difference between tourism and tourism based on health. The study stated that tourism safety should be based on important principles such as accident prevention, spreading awareness and educating all stakeholders, including the community, government groups, tourism stakeholders and tourists, and promoting understanding among stakeholders.

Debabrata (2004) ^[14] described the diversity of vascular plants found in the Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve. This study collects descriptions and information of rare plants and flowers found in Sikkim hills.



Fig 1: Shows a roadmap of connecting tourism industry with sustainable development around the world

Tambe and Rawat (2006)^[15] conducted a study in the high-altitude Khangchendzonga National Park to ensure the long-term conservation of biodiversity and related livelihoods in the Alpine region of the Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve and to determine its impact on it. Farming. Good management farm KBR Character and gentle environment. A study using pastoralist stability models proved that pack animals (shepherd dogs and horses) were the most stable, followed by sheep, while yaks were not stable in the KBR West Sikkim region.

Key and Pillai (2006)^[16] conducted a study to determine the importance of ethnicity in tourism. Two communities in Belize were included in this study. The findings show that the tourism phenomenon has brought social change to two communities, the Bay of the Seine and Placencia. Tourism reduces migration to cities by providing opportunities to young people from these communities in 12 provinces. Tourism has also become a tool for social change that brings people from both communities together.

Scope of Sustainable Tourism in India

India has a huge tourism industry. It provides employment opportunities in various sectors such as sailing, adventure, health, wellness, sports, film, rural tourism and customs tourism. India is famous for its spiritual journey among tourists and foreigners. In order to promote tourism, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the public to visit India as a tourism destination in 2022.

According to the World Economic Forum Travel and Tourism Report 2019, India was ranked 34th among other countries. India has great tourism potential given its rich heritage and culture. The country has a wide variety of landscapes, including the Himalayas, beaches, deserts and forests, providing opportunities for ecotourism, wildlife safaris and other recreational activities.

India is a major destination for cultural and heritage tourism due to its rich heritage that includes ancient architecture, festivals and traditions in the region. India has a lot to gain

from international travel economically, socially and environmentally. It can stimulate economic growth and eliminate poverty by creating jobs and income for communities. It also promotes environmental protection and the preservation of history and culture.

Development of Sustainable Tourism: Sikkim

The main aim is to promote Sikkim as a tourism destination and provide opportunities for Community Eco-Tourism (CBET) in Sikkim, especially using new collaborative forest management methods to promote forests and sustainable development. Thus, forests provide income to the country. Promote harmony between people, environment, conservation and development.

The participation of local communities in tourism (hereinafter referred to as "ecotourism") will support their well-being, thus creating direct benefits in the preservation of local culture, ecology and the environment."

"The concept of 'community ecotourism' will go a long way in providing rural people with a better income-generating option. This will also mean that there will be no dependence on natural resources because it will be beneficial to transfer agricultural products from these areas. There will be greater incentives to preserve local cultures, traditions, heritage and the environment, as these will be seen as helping rather than hindering the local imprinting of the economy."

Some parts of Sikkim are suitable for sustainable tourism

Sikkim is a state in the northeastern part of India, known for its rich biodiversity, spectacular landscapes and vibrant local communities and culture. Many areas in Sikkim are ideal for tourism that emphasizes environmental protection, community involvement and responsible travel. Here are some places in Sikkim suitable for sustainable tourism.

1. **Gangtok:** Gangtok is the capital city of Sikkim and is involved in promoting cultural tourism. The city

- implements several initiatives to balance economic development with environmental protection, community engagement and responsible travel. Gangtok has implemented a waste separation and recycling program to manage the increasing waste produced by tourism. The city promotes responsible tourism by strictly managing waste prevention, promoting cleanliness and not using single-use plastics. Gangtok has introduced electric taxis and buses to reduce transportation-related carbon footprint. The city encourages walking and cycling, provides pedestrian areas and supports public transport. Gangtok encourages cultural awareness, including performing arts, local music and art, allowing visitors to learn about the region's unique culture. Gangtok is all about preserving heritage and historical sites and preserving them for future generations.
2. **Yumthang Valley:** Yumthang offers an eco-friendly trekking experience with good training to ensure minimal impact on the environment. Local communities contribute to preserving the beauty and biodiversity of the valley through conservation initiatives. Health authorities encourage responsible cultural practices to prevent challenging Alpine diseases. Palin supports responsible travel by focusing on reducing the ecological footprint and protecting the environment. Homestay and community tourism projects provide economic benefits and cultural experiences by involving local residents. Sustainable walking trails, bird watching and nature walks are available in Ravangla. The region promotes permaculture practices to ensure environmental protection.
 3. **Tsomgo Lake:** Tsomgo Lake, also known as Changu Lake, is a high-altitude glacial lake in East Sikkim District, Sikkim State, India. The region around Lake Tsomgo is actively engaged in cultural tourism to balance tourism with environmental protection and community health. Visitors are encouraged to bring back their waste and local authorities implement appropriate disposal strategies. Some areas around the lake will be limited in order to protect the fragile ecosystem and reduce the impact of tourism on the natural environment. Local instructors often train with visitors and provide information about the lake, its importance and surroundings. This not only increases the number of visitors, but also improves the livelihood of local residents. In order to reduce the impact of car pollution, environmentally friendly electric cars are generally used for transportation around the lake. Conservation measures are used to protect areas where many animal and plant species are found. This includes initiatives to protect the unique flora and fauna surrounding Lake Tsomgo.
 4. **Khangchendzonga National Park:** Khangchendzonga National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in the Indian state of Sikkim. Known for its beautiful scenery, diverse flora and fauna, and cultural significance, the park is committed to promoting tourism culture. Sustainable tourism initiatives are important for protecting habitats that are important for the survival of animals and plants. Sustainable trails and trails are designed to minimize impacts on ecosystems, preventing soil erosion and impacts on wildlife. Regular surveys help monitor the health of ecosystems, inform conservation strategies and ensure that tourism activities do not harm the park's ecological balance.
 5. **Pelling:** Pelling is a beautiful town in the western Sikkim region of India, famous for its beautiful views of the Kanchenjunga range. The region is making a concerted effort to adopt sustainable tourism practices that aim to preserve its beauty, culture and cleanse the entire community. Palin supports the walking mission focused on protecting the natural environment. The road was designed to reduce soil erosion and impact on local wildlife. The walks are led by local guides knowledgeable in good practice, providing insight into the community ecology and ensuring visitors follow responsible walks. Palin promotes community tourism through homestays, where visitors stay with local families. Organize education and awareness campaigns to educate visitors and locals about the importance of cultural responsibility and preservation.
 6. **Namchi:** Namchi is the capital of South Sikkim region of India and is famous for its religious and cultural significance. The city strives to develop a culture of tourism, which is necessary to preserve the natural environment, promote culture and improve the general health of the community. Namchi is a pilgrimage tourism destination that attracts tourists to its religious sites. Sound practices ensure that these areas are respected and religious sanctity is preserved. Namchi promotes community tourism through homestays, allowing visitors to stay with local families. Festivals and events are organized with a focus on being environmentally friendly, reducing waste and promoting sustainable practices. The city promotes equality for local residents and ensures that the benefits of tourism are shared across communities.

Conclusion

Sustainability of tourism in Sikkim or the region is important to preserve its heritage and culture while promoting economic development. A sustainable approach involves assessing the needs of visitors, the environment and local communities.

Here are some points to consider

Environmental impact

Safe tourism in Sikkim can help preserve its rich biodiversity, including plants and animals. Efforts such as waste management, water conservation activities and environmentally friendly businesses can have a positive impact on the environment.

Cultural Preservation

Sustainable tourism generally respects and preserves the cultural heritage of a region. In Sikkim, this may mean supporting and preserving local traditions, festivals and crafts.

Community Engagement and Financial Services

Sustainable tourism seeks to involve communities in decision-making and enable them to benefit businesses. Strategies that support local businesses, homestays and responsible tourism practices can improve the livelihoods of the people of Sikkim.

Challenges and areas for improvement: Despite good efforts, challenges such as tourism, poor infrastructure or damage to the environment will remain. Continuous monitoring, policy reform and community engagement are crucial to overcome challenges and improve the sustainability of Sikkim's economic development.

Government and stakeholders

The success of tourism in Sikkim can be influenced by the cooperation of the government, local community and people. Cooperation and adherence to tourism safety standards are the key to long-term success.

Education and Role

Tourists continue to play an important role in the sustainable development of the economy in Sikkim. Educating them on responsible behavior, respecting local culture and reducing environmental impact can be very beneficial. In summary, the success of sustainable tourism in Sikkim depends on cooperation between the government, local communities and tourists.

Continuous evaluation, strategic adjustment, and a commitment to balancing economic benefits with environmental and cultural protection are essential for long-term success. For the latest information on the state of tourism in Sikkim, it is recommended to consult the latest site.

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