Tourism Development and Sustainability Issues

Dr. Suvarna Sathe
HOD, Department Of Hotel Management, TMV, Pune-37

Abstract

Tourism which was once considered a smokeless industry has portrayed various aspects and dimensions which have shown that it is as harmful as other industries. Thousands of research papers, articles, conferences, and thesis are devoted to analyzing and explaining how tourism is causing social, cultural, environmental, and economic ill effects of tourism. Researchers, policymakers, environmentalists, and NGOs are promoting policies and implementing measures to ensure sustainable tourism development.

The major components of tourism are the destinations, local community, tourists, and infrastructure. The most discussed components from a sustainability angle are the destinations and the community. They are the ones bearing the effects of tourism development directly or indirectly. Destinations and community are inseparable and one has to think about the sustainability of both simultaneously.

The article elaborates on why sustainability issues are frequently arising in tourism development? What does tourism development mean for the local community and destination?

The article is based on Secondary data.

Keywords

tourism, sustainability, tourists, local community, tourism development, tourism destination.

Tourism Development

A starting point of tourism is an attraction for tourists. It can vary from natural to manmade attractions. Attractions when combined with fringes like accommodation, transport facilities, accessibility, and availability take a form of tourism development. The more the fringes are developed more inclined a tourist is likely to visit an attraction. In the initial stages of tourism development barely ever community at a destination is taken into consideration.

"Developing tourism does not mean destroying the physical environment at a destination and disturbing the social fabric of the community at a destination." (Begum M.S. Fatima 2021).

"Host community has a favorable approach towards sustainable tourism and the residents believe that the tourism should be well planned to protect the environment at a destination. (Rathnayaka, C et al 2020).

At a starting point of tourism development, the involvement of the host community is desired. Local people are aware of the issues, challenges, and development needs at a destination better than any outsider. Tourism development is always welcomed by the host community as it has obvious benefits like building and investment in new infrastructure, local employment, getting recognition on a map, and boosting the local economy. More popular the destination becomes more intense and increasing are the tourist demands. This may build pressure on the host community. In tourism development sharing resources is inevitable. Roads, water, electricity, public facilities, local markets, and nature all become commonly available for tourists as well as the local community. If the inflow of tourists exceeds the host population there is bound to be a dispute between the both.

The sustainable tourism development concept is initiated in the perspective of resolving such conflicts and increasing the life of a tourism destination.

Local community and Tourism Destination

A tourist destination for a tourist is a native place for the local community. The host community is always more concerned about the effects of tourism development on their dwellings, cultural and social fabric than the policymakers or the tourists.

"The policymakers who think that tourism could positively change and economic benefits for the community try to build the capacity of a host population to the tourism development. But those who perceive more negative impacts for the same aspects would not be willing to build the capacity of the local community with the tourism development. In any case, tourism affects the economy and lives of the local community. Sometimes there are real and perceived fears attached to the tourism development."(Ma'rofRedzuan, 2011)

The tourism destinations are of many types and are serving many purposes to a tourist. Leisure being the most sought out outcome of any tourism takes forms of beach tourism, resort and spa tourism, exotic locations in natural and manmade settings providing all kinds of luxury to the tourists. Most of the time, such recourses at a destination are solely created for tourists' use and are beyond the means of the host population. The local community may feel deprived and are hostile towards any such destination development. The destinations with fragile natural environments portray this problem more prominently.

"One needs to find an integrated approach and co-operation from the host community to make them see the benefits of tourism. They need to be assured that their quality of life and integrity of their natural and cultural resources is maintained in tourism development. Only then the sustainable tourism development can be achieved. (Garcia-Saez& Carlos, 2022).

Islands, seashores, sanctuaries, hills, desserts, and mountains are much more sought after locations by tourists." From the host point of view development of tourism at such destinations can mean the devastation of natural resources, crowdedness, and changes in the ecosystem apart from changes in socio-cultural pattern."(Wong et al 2022).

Fragile ecosystems which are home to indigenous communities are more prone to negative impacts of tourism development. It is more out of fear which is justifiable at their end. Interaction with people from different cultures every day can become a part of your life, you may end up losing your indignity, culture, and your way of life. They may resist portraying their home, the native place being showcased as a tourist attraction.

"One cannot deny the pros and cons of tourism development on the local community. The major cons being the increase in crime rate, problems caused by crowding and congestion, environmental destruction, degradation of natural resources and most important being affecting community's norms and culture."(Jehanet, al 2022).

Destination and host community are inseparable and an adverse effect on the one affects the other adversely. In the short span of time sometimes the host community may gain economic benefits but one needs to measure the environmental costs attached to it. The degradation of natural resources is mostly irreversible and the damages caused to the environment cannot be compensated by economic benefits. Ultimately changes in the environment lead to changing life pattern and affects society at large.

"The concept of sustainability implies taking into account economic, environmental, and socio-cultural aspects by planning and management of tourism." (Niedziółka, Iwona2022).

Tourism exists because an attraction or destination can give a wow experience to a tourist throughout. Even a man-made destination depends on the external environment for many things. Favorable weather conditions, potable water supply, the surroundings, and settings in which the destination exists, all are part of some community that is ultimately affected by tourism activities. If destinations survive tourism would survive. If communities at a destination are unhappy about how tourism is developing at a destination it may lead to hostility towards the tourism and the tourists.

Tourism, Tourists, and Sustainability

As host and local community are inseparable, tourism and tourists are inseparable. Tourism is initiated on tourist demand. The path of tourism development is always led by tourist demands. What types of facilities are required by tourists at a destination? What kind of transportation is preferred by the tourists to reach a destination? What activities tourists would like to peruse on visit and so on. Though a tourist might have many motives behind taking up a trip these basics are inevitable to

comply for tourism developers. Mostly when on a leisure trip or vacation a tourist expects more and many things at one go at a destination. Variety of food, variety of entertainments for all age groups, many options of accommodation and transportation, more fun and relaxation for everyone on board for the trip.

Some tourists may never come out of their tourist bubble to embrace the destination as it is. The additional facilities for such tourists mean more pressure on local resources. The mindset of a tourist is set once you oblige to provide anything on demand.

"The traditional destination development pattern ignores the sustainability concept and it importance. Sikkim attracts tourists because of its scenic beauty and multi ethnic culture. It is observed that more the mass tourists are happy at Sikkim less the local community is likely to be happy."(Swamy et al, 2017).

One cannot lead the tourism development take demand and supply parameter as a rule of thumb. A destination can only sustain if the local community can sustain the tourism development.

Various efforts are made to increase local population in core tourism. Devising community based tourism, promoting more sustainable forms of tourism, involving local community at a grass root level in tourism development can be the few measures named in the efforts to make the tourism development more meaningful and sustainable for the host communities.

"If the local community perceives the benefits of tourism they are willing to participate in tourism development. The host community must accept and respect the cultural differences of tourists and learn to tolerate within the restricted framework of social and cultural framework of the region. Stake holders and policymakers should not ignore community involvement in tourism development. Local community can enjoy the participation in tourism development if it improves their income resources and quality of life."(Jaafar et al, 2015).

"Concept of sustainable tourism development is need of an hour. Many forms of tourism which can provide sustainable tourism are promoted by tourism suppliers. Though these forms of tourism are sustainable the effects of tourism development on the environment, culture and life of host community are inevitable. One should be able to manage the tourist flow without negative impacts of tourism. It's a task which requires a lot of skills."(SuvarnaSathe et al, 2019).

Achieving sustainable tourism development, tourist satisfaction along with community participation needs a long term and consistent strategy. New approaches are being suggested by various researchers.

"Placemaking is one such approach, which goes to the core of what builds places and local communities. Quality placemaking leads to the development of a sense of place, increases social cohesion, and stimulates the long-term regeneration of public spaces, which contributes to tourism attractiveness. The modern tourism development can surely use this concept for creating harmonious relationship between the tourists and the local communities."(VodanovicLukic, Ives, 2021).

"Though various approaches and models are suggested for sustainable tourism development, each destination has unique features, various cultural backgrounds of the host communities, various forms and types of tourism developed as the historical, geographical and natural resources available. Hence no one model can work the same way at two different destinations." Petkova, Elena. (2012).

"Tourism is like a spider web woven with tourists, environment, society and economy. You touch the one and its vibrations would be felt throughout all the sections."(EsmaeilZaei et al, 2013).

It is delicate and strong at the same time. Today's tourism industry has survived the scars of Covid-19 and hard hit economic depression. Still it is going on strong and bouncing back to serve its customers well. The important components of tourism are its pillars tourists, destination, host community and sustainability. There is no one set formula for effective and sustainable tourism. But one cannot deny the need for policies to make tourism an effective model for growth and development of society.

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