

**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES IN
DHARMSHALA, MECLEODGANJ, DISTRICT, KANGRA
OF HIMACHAL PRADESH, INDIA**

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Abstract

With the globalisation and the present day demand for the tourism, it has become not only important but mandatory to adopt the sustainable tourism practices to maintain the resources for future generation. It would not be wrong to say that sustainable tourism practices help to make a positive impact on environment, society & economy. However people are not fully aware about the sustainable tourism. There should be an equal participation from the each and every human being who lives in society to maintain the tourism resources. Sustainability should be targeted in such a way that it could encourage the people to make them comfortable to adopt the sustainable tourism practices. Local people can play a vital role to maintain the destination & to restore the resources for future. Lack of local people participation, this is arduous to adopt sustainable tourism practices. On the other hand lack of knowledge about sustainability in the people makes it worse to maintain tourism resources for future generation. This study aims at maintaining the tourism resources, and to educate the local people in terms of tourism sustainability in Himachal Pradesh. Himachal Pradesh is one of the potential states of India in terms of tourism because of rich natural heritage, beauty and pilgrimage destinations. The need of the hour is to take onus to teach sustainability to the local community and devise such techniques to yield the better results.

Introduction: Tourism is a major sector that enables the country to earn foreign exchange. Today with the change in the technology, easy VISA formalities (Visa on Arrival), better means of transportation, better connectivity enables the tourist to visit any country any destination without any hassle. Therefore there is need to adopt the sustainable tourism practices to maintain the tourism resources for future generation. Sustainable tourism: Tourism that is economically, socio culturally and environmentally sustainable. With sustainable tourism, socio cultural and environmental impacts are neither permanent nor irreversible. (John Beech and Simon Chadwick)

www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/st-what.html

Sustainable tourism is an industry committed to making a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate future employment for local people. The positive of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development is a positive experience for local people; tourism companies; and tourists themselves. (Wikipedia)

In today's time where foreign tourist arrival is growing continuously. Even Domestic tourism is also growing .In the year 2014 no. of Foreign Tourist arrival was 7.68 million with annual growth rate of 10.2%.

<http://tourism.nic.in/writereaddata/CMSPagePicture/file/marketresearch/statisticalsurveys/India%20Tourism%20Statistics%20at%20a%20Glance%202014.pdf>

It becomes essential to adopt the sustainable tourism practices. It can reduce the concentration of tourist activity in certain area and can improve and enrich the tourist.

On the contrary the local people have the less or insufficient Knowledge about sustainability. Local people can cater the need of the tourists at the destination, so, this will help them to get employment at their local place, but still people are struggling for employment at tourism destination. Despite the fact that large number of domestic as well as foreign tourist visit Himachal Pradesh. Usually tourists are attracted by local handicrafts, souvenir and local food. The principles of sustainable tourism lay special emphasis on the participation of local

communities at tourism destination. Active involvement of local people is the critical success factor in sustaining momentum. It will help in expanding the local business opportunities.

The analysis has been done keeping in mind that despite of large number of tourist visit Himachal Pradesh, visit different tourist destination in different district, still the local community is not getting benefit from tourism and the tourism sustainability is lacking at the destination because of low or no participation from the local community. In other words people are least interested in adopting the sustainable tourism practices.

One of the biggest challenges for sustainable tourism in India is the Indian Psyche “I don’t Know why but we Indians have this habit...When we go abroad Do we throw a paper or spit on the ground? Coming back to our country we do those strange things without any fear. Sujit Banerjee, Secretary Tourism.

http://incredibleindia.org/magazines/PDF/Indiaandyou/Sustainable_Tourism_Haryana_Bandipur_Karnataka_Uttarakhand_Nilgiris_Assam_Brahmaputra_Jungle_Resort_Kerala_Sepember-India_you-October_2009.pdf

Methods:

In Order to analyze the condition of sustainability in Himachal Pradesh two destination one, Dharmshala and second Meclodganj in district Kangra were chosen, which are well known tourism destinations in terms of International cricket stadium ,Tibetan market, monasteries, Church, temples and adventurous activities like trekking. Local people of these destinations were questioned on the pre designed questionnaire and people were interviewed also, to access the condition of tourism sustainability and other correlated socio economic and cultural aspect that can influence this process directly and indirectly. More than 120 people were included in this survey that reflects the tourism sustainability practices.

The Outcome:

After recording the answers of the people from the questionnaire following outcomes can be postulated. The observations are explained categorically in the following headings.

Government Role or the State Approach:

In the state approach a budgetary allocation is made through the plans for the development of an area. The government identifies the area and starts with the infrastructure development that is the laying of roads a network of communication and the development of the basic utilities. But ever since the United Nation world Tourism Organization adopted the theme of public private partnership there is a shift from the strong central government intervention to a more constructive participatory approach. This partnership implies systems of formal cooperation between the public (government) and the private sector with the participation of local community where the partners share the responsibility resources, risks and rewards.

Governments-Central, State and Local –have a critical role in determining the policies for sustainable tourism. [www.tourism.nic.in/.../Sustainable Tourism Report for MOT-GOI-%2](http://www.tourism.nic.in/.../Sustainable%20Tourism%20Report%20for%20MOT-GOI-%20)

The need for such partnerships arises out of the fact that:

1) The demand for tourism products and services has grown significantly and it is expected to increase manifold in future. Also the developments in information technology have made access to information easier there by making the competition sharper so the countries provide the prospective tourists with wider options. In this scenario the countries which can respond quickly to the changing nature of functioning, the government systems are more rigid and less responsive to the emerging situations than the functioning of the private organizations. Government should encourage the private sector to invest in the promotion of tourism with the participation of local community, so that tourism could generates prosperity at different level of society. Thus the partnership strengthens the country's efforts in International arena, this helps in the tourism sustainability, by catering the needs of tourist and by maintaining the tourism resources for future.

2) The participatory approach in tourism will reduce the burden from government as the private sector will also invest in the tourism related projects. The pressure on the limited sources is acute especially in country like India because there are increasing demands for satisfying the basic need of people for health education etc. If government makes the provision for providing the soft loan to local people then it will help them to establish their own venture at the destination which

will provide employment and it will help to make resources available for tourism without depending too heavily on budget. Local Government has a key role in tourism sustainability.

Governments nevertheless have a critical role in creating the context and stimulating actions to ensure that tourism is more sustainable in the future. Local government has become an important arena for discussions about the interpretation and implementation of sustainable development. (Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage 2004; UNEP 2003)

<http://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/viewFile/4571/4368>

Local Community Participation:

Local community helps to make the things happen by adopting the sustainable tourism practices. The need thus is to shift emphasis from merely promoting tourism to promoting sustainable tourism. The suggestion includes promoting sustainable tourism, increasing local participation and exploiting the rural tourism resources of the state. Tourism in Himachal Pradesh-page 8- Googls Books Result <https://books.google.com/books?isbn=8173871574>

The respondents gave positive response regarding whether local people should participate in tourism decision, many people want to participate in tourism policy making process, however local people have little knowledge about tourism or they are not well educated. In this regard formal bodies can take the final decision but they should ask the local people for their views and ideas which should be acknowledged by the formal bodies and after considering all these things final decision should be taken for policy formation.

Tourism, a factor for Sustainable Development:

- 1) All the stakeholders in tourism development should safeguard the natural environment with a view to achieving sound continuous and sustainable economic growth geared to satisfying equitably the needs and aspirations of present and future generations;
- 2) All forms of tourism development that are conducive to saving rare and precious resources, in particular water and energy, as well as avoiding so far as possible waste production, should be given priority and encouraged by national local public authority.
- 3) The staggering in time and space of tourist and visitor flows, particularly those resulting from paid leave school holidays, and a more even distribution of holidays should be sought so as to

reduce the pressure of tourism activity on the environment and enhance its beneficial impact on the tourism industry and the local economy.

4) Tourism infrastructure should be designed and tourism activities programmed in such a way as to protect the natural heritage composed of ecosystems and biodiversity and to preserve.

The WTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism Article 3 Cultural tourism in India (S.P Gupta, Krishna Lal, Mahua Bhattacharyya) D.K print world (p) Ltd.New Delhi pp, 408

The same thing found in this survey that tourism sustainability means the overall development. Tourism sustainability generates prosperity at different level of society. Tourism sustainability controls negative impact on the environment. In the present scenario where the whole world is like a global village. Interrelation of countries & people has increased rapidly due to the strong globalizations and better connectivity. The stake holders of tourism industry should not only attract the tourists at the destination but should equally focus on tourism sustainability to maintain the resources for future generation.

Training and education programs:

It is found in the study that to adopt sustainable tourism practices are arduous because all local people are not well educated. People require certain kind of awareness campaign for adopting sustainable tourism practices. Creation of awareness as well as making available the requisite facilities will be given high importance during 12th five year plan. [www.tourism.nic.in/.../Sustainable Tourism Report for MOT-GOI-%2](http://www.tourism.nic.in/.../Sustainable%20Tourism%20Report%20for%20MOT-GOI-%202)

Out of 120 people who were asked question number 8. Local people were not aware about training and development programme runs by government for tourism sustainability. It comes out to be 12.2% of the sample. It means government is not very much concerned in running the training and education development programmes for tourism sustainability or the

Programme which are run by the government are not sufficient to teach about tourism sustainability, this is a big barrier in adopting the sustainable tourism practices for local community, which should be improved. Tourism sustainability starts with local community.

Government can run short term course for the local community to learn about tourism sustainability and how employment opportunities can be generated at the destination. MSME (Micro, small and medium enterprises) can play an essential role for establishing small/medium sizes business units at the destination. Tourists are always attracted by Local handicraft, souvenir, and local food. Local community can play an important role for selling these things to tourists because they better know the authenticity of these things. However language can become barrier in this case this thing found during the study, hence local government can run an education programme to overcome language barrier.

Role of tourists in promoting tourism sustainability:

It is found in the study that tourist role is significant while promoting the tourism sustainability at the destination. Tourist visits the destination and leaves their footprints at the destination. Much tourism impact result from tourist's lack of information about the impact they have on physical and socio-cultural environment.

Preparation for tourism should be integrated with the training of the citizen for his civic responsibilities. In this respect, governments should mobilize the means of education and information at their disposal and should facilitate the work of individuals and bodies involved in the endeavour. Preparation for tourism, for holidays and travel could usefully part of the process of youth education and training. For those reasons, the integration of tourism in to youth education constitutes a basic element favourable to the permanent strengthening of peace. A.K.Bhatia The business of tourism (Concept and strategies) pp-35. Tourism plan should include strategies to promote tourist education to learn about and respect about human and natural heritage of the host community. Tourists should not use those products, services, transportation that endangers the local ecology, society and culture. Tourist should act responsibly through respecting national laws cultural values, social norms and tradition and by following environment regulations in natural and cultural site. This can contribute to tourism sustainability at the destination. Tourists have the direct impact on the tourism destination.

The sociology of tourism implies tourist coming in to contact with society at the host country and leaving behind an impression with the community members, leading to societal make up and

interrelations. Oxford-Tourism Principles and practices.Sampad KumarSwain, Jitendra Mohan Mishra.pp 152.Tourist impact is crucial at the destination.

Local Handicraft, Souvenir, Food:

Tourists are attracted by the local handicrafts, souvenir and local food. Handicrafts, souvenir serves as a reminder for the tourists, and also tourists like to enjoy the authentic food of destination. This thing helps local people to get employment at the destination.

Conclusion:

It is evident from the above discussion that is based on the questions asked from the Local people from the questionnaire attach below that people wants to contribute in tourism sustainability, however people are not fully aware about sustainable tourism practices that how they can contribute in this regard. The findings have revealed that local people acknowledge the need to be involved in tourism decision making process regardless of their literacy level. Local community wishes to play an active role in tourism development. While making tourism policies local people need to be consulted so that the outcome meets the stakeholder's needs and addresses their concerns.

It is observed that government is focused on the quantity of tourism which means state is focusing on more in quantity i.e. the number of tourists visiting Himachal Pradesh rather than focusing on the tourism sustainability.

It has been found that to promote tourism in the state the local community role should be taken in to consideration. Training and education programs play an important support role to learn about tourism sustainability, which should be run by government for local community. The lack of financial capital remains the greatest hindrance for local communities to invest in the tourism industry. There should be provision of soft loans in order to encourage local communities to invest in the industry. In turn this would create employment opportunities to local community, which will reduce poverty, improve living standards and make them much more supportive for tourism development.

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Interviews

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2. Deepak Katoch, Kotwali Bazar Dharmshala. (Interviewed: 05th September 2015)
3. Raj Kumar Kotwali Bazar Dharmshala (Interviewed: 19th September 2015)
4. Poonam Kotwali Bazar Dharmshala (Interviewed: 19th September 2015)
5. Lekh Raj Kotwali Bazar Dharmshala (Interviewed: 19th September 2015)
6. Lakhinder singh Kotwali Baser Dharmshala (Interviewed: 9th October 2015)
7. Sourabh, Bhgrotara Village Sakoh Dharmshala (Interviewed: 9th October 2015)
8. Rajat saphaiea Village Sakoh Dharmshala (Interviewed: 9th October 2015)
9. Nitin, Village Sakoh Dharmshala (Interviewed: 9th October 2015)
10. Arminder Chand, Village Sakoh Dharmshala (Interviewed: 23rd October 2015)

11. Renu rani, Village Sakoh Dharmshala (Interviewed: 23rd October 2015)
12. Kashika Sadana Village, Sakoh Dharmshala (Interviewed: 23rd October 2015)
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14. Kanika katoch, Village Sakoh, Dharmshala Interviewed: 23rd October 2015)
15. Tulsi ram, Village Sakoh, Dharmshala (Interviewed: 24th October 2015)
16. Krishan Chand, Sakoh, and Dharmshala (Interviewed: 24th October 2015)
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21. Tenzin, Cheelgari, Village, and Dharmshala (Interviewed: 14th November 2015)
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23. Jamyang, Mecleodganj (Interviewed: 19th December 2015)
24. Lohsang, Mecleodganj (Interviewed: 19th December 2015)
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27. Kensum, Mecleodganj 20th December 2015)
28. Dipen Awasthi, Mecleodganj (Interviewed: 20th December 2015)
29. Chingari, Village, Bhagshu Nag, and Mecleodganj (Interviewed: 20th December 2015)
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32. Kewal chand, Village, Dharmkot, Mecleodganj (Interviewed: 9th January 2016)
33. Thubtan, Village, Dharmkot, and Mecleodganj (Interviewed: 9th January 2016)
34. Jaydeb, Village, Dharmkot, and Mecleodganj (Interviewed: 9th January 2016)
35. Shilpi Gaur, Village, Bhagshu Nag, and Mecleodganj (Interviewed: 9th January 2016)

Local People questionnaire on sustainable tourism:

- 1) I understand the concept of sustainable tourism. Yes.../No...
- 2) I like to interact with the tourist. Yes.../No...
- 3) I feel comfortable while interacting with foreign tourists. Yes.../No...
- 4) I like to design local handicraft/Souvenir. Yes.../No...

- 5) Tourist likes to buy local handicraft/Souvenir. Yes.../No...
- 6) I am conscious for protecting the local sightseeing. Yes.../No...
- 7) Tourism helps in the expansion of local business opportunities. Yes.../No...
- 8) Government runs training and education programmes to teach about tourism sustainability. Yes.../No
- 9) Government welcomes suggestions given by local community for tourism promotion. Yes.../No...
- 10) Government sector and private sector work together for maintaining the tourism resources .yes.../No...
- 11) Tourism sustainability generates prosperity at different level of society. Yes.../No...
- 12) Tourism provides money for keeping the tradition alive for future generation. Yes.../No....
- 13) Foreign tourist arrival at a destination helps in cultural enrichment. Yes.../No...
- 14) Tourists role is significant at the destination while maintaining the tourism sustainability. Yes.../No...

