SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AS A SOLUTION TO DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES

Sourajyoti Baksi and Kiran Mayi Audina
National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Hyderabad, TS
eMail :

Mehuli Das
University of Hyderabad

ABSTRACT : Sustainable tourism, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, is tourism that preserves and enhances opportunities for the future while simultaneously meeting the requirements of current tourists and host regions. The goal of sustainable tourism is to minimise or eliminate any negative effects on the natural, historical, cultural, or social environment while maintaining the economic and social benefits of tourism development.

A symbiotic relationship is formed between the authentic lives that the locals live and the benefits of tourism for those looking to travel. Sustainable tourism has emerged as a result of the need to meet the needs of visitors and locals as well as preserve the ecological, social, and cultural wealth that defines humanity's shared heritage. Forms such as ecotourism and rural tourism show that the goal is for tourism to be both a real solution for the unmodified preservation of the environment and a positive and dynamic growth factor. However, the tourism industry needs a lot of amenities and infrastructure to meet the needs of tourists. This research highlights the challenges of execution and proposes suggestions to overcome the obstacles in implementing sustainable tourism practises. With this as our context, if a model of sustainable tourism is to be implemented in an underdeveloped area, it would give the government incentive to build lines of transportation, better infrastructure, and create job opportunities for the locals.

This article showcases the example of a tribe in Arunachal Pradesh and its developmental challenges to illustrate the benefit of sustainable tourism to the ecosystem and economy. The paper discusses success stories of such a model from similar areas to highlight the infallibility of the two-pronged solution.

Keywords – Gandhigram, Lisu tribe, Custom model, Sustainable tourism, sustainable practices

Defining Sustainable Tourism: Tourism is an important part of our global culture because it lets us see new places, meet people from all walks of life, and participate in new customs and activities. It is generally regarded as a positive force because it offers numerous advantages to communities and travelers alike.

But the business is changing. We are becoming increasingly aware of the threat posed by climate change and our role in its acceleration over time. Our global community is considering ways to reduce our environmental impact across all industries.

When we take into account all of the potential sources of emissions, a 2018 Nature Climate Change study suggested that tourism accounts for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions **(Lenzen, M., Sun, Y. Y., Faturay, F., Ting, Y. P., Geschke, A., & Malik, A. (2018))**It is abundantly clear that we require a tourism model that is sustainable in nature.

Sustainable tourism, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, is tourism that preserves and enhances opportunities for the future while simultaneously meeting the requirements of current tourists and host regions. It is an ethos that underpins all tourism activities, rather than a type of product. **(Choudhary, R. (2014))** As a result, rather than being an optional component, it is central to all aspects of tourism development and management. (*Sustainable Tourism .:. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*, n.d.)

The goal of sustainable tourism is to minimise or eliminate any negative effects on the natural, historical, cultural, or social environment while maintaining the economic and social benefits of tourism development **(Neto, F. (2003, August))** By balancing the requirements of tourists with those of the destination, this is possible.

Importance of Sustainable Tourism: To ensure tourism's long-term viability, it is crucial to support the environment. When providing a tourist experience, it is necessary to take into account things like trash, contamination, the use of non-organic products, and over tourism in order to accomplish this. (Wardle, 2021)

This type of tourism also benefits local communities because participating in the decision-making process for tourism development safeguards them from inflation, preserves their culture, and generates revenue for the region. It can support the region's growth and protection in the tourism sector. This immediately transforms into a positive cycle that benefits all parties involved. It goes without saying that the tourism industry needs to keep growing. Over-tourism occurs when a large number of people visit a single location, necessitating the construction of additional lodging and activities. Tourists are diverted away from natural areas and resources as a result, harming native species and forcing locals to compete for resources.

The United Nations declared 2017 the year of sustainable tourism for development, recognizing the rise of sustainable tourism. Additionally, as corona virus stalled tourism, the advantages of its reduction became apparent.

Developing a Custom Model: The negative effects of tourism are not limited to the communities that live in tourist destinations. As tourists, many of us prefer to go to places that are safe, clean, and not overcrowded. In addition, rather than experiencing an untrue ploy for money, we typically prefer to preserve local customs, religions, buildings, and cultures.

Therefore, alternative tourism, including sustainable tourism, has a lot to offer everyone. Regions with natural resources, landscapes, or buildings that draw tourists who might want to explore and admire local destinations and cultures in an environmentally friendly way are the best places to develop sustainable tourism. However, there is no one-size-fits-all model. One must create a model to cater to the needs of a location, while keeping in mind its offerings to potential tourists.

A successful example of this being done in India is "Map My Stories," which is a project that conducts custom tours in north-eastern states such as Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, with sustainability at the core of it. The itineraries aren't run of the mill; instead, they're carefully curated, keeping in mind the local communities, the natural landscape, and an immersive experience for the travelers. Typically, the tours conducted include working with the locals, such as helping rebuild a monastery or

farming to grow your own food, and exploring locations that are to be kept secret and cannot be geo-tagged to avoid overcrowding and littering. The founder also appoints locals to lead experiences, creating jobs instead of taking them away for outsiders to sell the destination as a commodity. In this way, tourism brings in revenue for the locals, instills respect for the culture in the travelers, and avoids commodification. A symbiotic relationship is formed between the authentic lives that the locals live and the benefits of tourism for those looking to travel. (*mapmystories.com*)

Sustainable tourism as a solution to Developmental Challenges: In poor nations, tourism expansion typically occurs in ecosystems that are well-preserved and delicate, such as arid plains, coastal and mountain regions, and islands. The results of tourism development in these kinds of areas frequently vary. A lack of genuine interest in and respect for the local culture and its own economic growth are the root causes of unsustainable patterns (Tosun, C. (1998)). Cross-cultural interactions between tourists and locals or indigenous peoples are not always equally satisfying, despite the fact that tourism may offer significant social and economic benefits. Riches are brought in by outsiders, which makes natives' expectations unattainable; attire that may be startling to them; unhealthy routines, intrusive behavior; and, worst of all, arrogance, racism, sexual exploitation, and trash. (Huseynli, 2022)

Therefore, sustainable tourism development is more than just a concept discussed, agreed upon, or revised at conferences. Sustainable tourism has emerged as a result of the need to meet the needs of visitors and locals as well as preserve the ecological, social, and cultural wealth that defines humanity's shared heritage (Nijkamp, P. (2012)). Forms of it such as ecotourism and rural tourism show that the goal is for tourism to be both a real solution for the unmodified preservation of the environment and a positive and dynamic growth factor.

 The tourism industry needs a lot of amenities and infrastructure to meet the needs of tourists.

Sugiama, A. G., Oktavia, H. C., & Karlina, M. (2022). This frequently entails that many tourism-related improvements in a region be accessible to locals. Numerous

commercial enterprises may expand as a result of tourism, which may have a positive social impact. Ramkissoon, H. (2023) People have more money to spend as a result, which helps to build community spirit. Local arts and traditions will be revived in some locations. Matthew, P. V. (2022) This could be in the form of exhibits in museums, the layout of stores and restaurants, or the entertainment that is available.

The Case of Gandhigram: The Lisu tribe, also known as the "Yobin" in India, resides in the Shidi Valley and Nibodi village of Arunachal Pradesh, which are encircled by Namdapha National Park. According to the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, they are considered "encroachers" in the forests. The tribe formerly resided in nearby nations like China and Myanmar. Now, many say the tribe that lives there is a victim of geography.

What Is The Origin of The Lisu Tribe? One of the biggest Lisu villages, Shidi Valley, also known as Gandhigram village, is home to the Lisu tribe. The tribe was known to practise slash and burn farming and is thought to have descended from the Yunnan region of North-Western Tibet in the 18th century. They are thought to have started travelling south in the 19th century and eventually arrived in what is now China, India, Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand. The majority of South-West China's population lives there.

Becoming Part of India: On Indian territory, there are 5,000 members of the Lisu tribe. On May 7, 1961, the Seventh Assam Rifles regiment arrived in Gandhigram village. After Independence, they were the first outsiders to set foot in the Lisu tribal region. Alongside the Lisus, the unit assisted in defining international borders. They also let the tribe know that the land they were on was now considered to be Indian territory.

The Lisu tribe in India was not granted citizenship in the 1980s, and they were viewed as refugees from China and Myanmar. They received citizenship in India in 1994, and they were listed as a Scheduled Tribe in 1950. Their status was not entirely clear, though.

GANDHIGRAM:

The Remote Village: Former Governor-General AS Gaurya's desire to turn those villages into a settlement for former service members led to the initial displacement of the Lisu tribe from their previous villages in 1964.

The Gandhigram village area was designated a wildlife sanctuary in 1972 after they were pushed there by the authorities. In 1983, it became the Namdapha National Park.

In 1976, the government constructed a road to link Gandhigram Village with the centre of Arunachal, but because of heavy rains and flooding, they were unable to maintain it. In order to reduce the likelihood of poaching and encroachment, the government decided that the area would be better off without any roads. The majority of the Lisu tribal members must travel through forested areas and walk for days in order to reach towns where they can sell their wares.

The Lisu community struggles to keep pace in terms of development with the rest of the country. (Kaushik & Chaudhary, 2022) However, due to its cut-off state, its pristine green cover and natural beauty remain very well preserved. With this as our context, if a model of sustainable tourism is to be implemented in the area, it would give the government incentive to build lines of transportation, better infrastructure, and create job opportunities for the locals. (Barman et al., 2010) Since only the locals have valuable knowledge of how to navigate the lands, forest cover, and waterways in the area, they would do well as local guides, teaching about their culture, history, and homeland.

The economic and educational struggles of the people would be eased as revenue and disposable income increased in the region. However, the model of sustainability would also protect their home from commodification, pollution, and overcrowding.

A Blueprint to achieve the model: All the parties involved in cultural tourism need to work more closely together in order to promote best practices through the promotion and regulation of sustainable tourism in Arunachal Pradesh. Through sustainable tourism, it is necessary to promote the strengthening of Arunachal

Pradesh's identity and cross-cultural interactions. The effective participation of a broad range of actors involved with tourism development and planning is essential to the success of Lisu sustainable tourism in Arunachal Pradesh. These actors include the public and private sectors as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like tourism groups, preservation groups, environmental groups, and community groups. The public sector actors include the ministry of tourism, the ministry of tribal affairs, the ministry of culture, the government tourism department, agency, and department of tourism. Comprehensive planning is required, according to the NATHPO sustainable tourism **Toolkit Project's 2005 Washington, DC report, "Cultural and Heritage Tourism in Indian Country."**

The state can adopt the following steps (Gohil, 2019) in planning as a means of promoting and developing sustainable sustainable tourism:

1. Create an action committee: The State government must create an action committee with the assistance of other relevant departments, both public and private, in order to provide a thorough report on the approaches and suggestions for formulating the best plan to integrate sustainable tourism with general tourism planning.

2. Develop and Complete a Tribal Community Inventory: The Lisus' resources in terms of culture, heritage, and economy should be properly inventoried.

3. To overcome the difficulties in developing sustainable tourism in the state, conduct a survey to identify gaps between the requirements for tourism and the Lisu lifestyle.

4. Analyse Potential Current Market: The government should evaluate the existing or new markets for this niche form of tourism after identifying the gaps for integrating sustainable tourism with the mainstream of tourism.

5. Establish Priorities and Goals: To encourage sustainable tourism in the state, specific policy can be drafted with distinct objectives.

6. Develop Strategies/Projects and Identify Resources: Initiatives can be started through collaborations between the public and private sectors. To launch a Lisu sustainable tourism project in the state, ideal locations can be found.

7. Examine the project's potential effects: A thorough feasibility study must be carried out in order to weigh all the advantages and disadvantages without compromising the development of tribal communities.

8. Test Strategies in the Community: Increase community awareness and sensitivity to develop the strategies with the involvement of those community tribes in such projects among the Lisu tribes. An example project can be started to explore the options.

9. Official Endorsement and Implementation of the Plan: The plan can be implemented and monitoring and stringent follow-up can begin after it has been reviewed and approved by all relevant authorities. A suitable marketing plan must be developed in order to advertise Lisu sustainable tourism as a tourism product to both hosts and visitors. Visitors centres, tribal departments, cultural departments, tribal research institutes (TRIs), and books and guides on sustainable tourism can all provide this information. This technology can also be applied to marketing materials like brochures, audio, and video.

To raise awareness about the potential of Lisu sustainable tourism, its destinations, sites, and requirements, there should also be a need to conduct special training workshops for tour operators, travel agents, guides, taxi drivers, hoteliers, and others directly or indirectly involved in the tourism industry. The educational value and cultural significance of these tribes can be improved and enriched with the help of researchers in this field and tourism experts. A few examples of government programmes under the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Ministry of Culture** include "Financial Aid for Persons distinguished in Letter, Arts, and Such Other Walks of Life," "Conservation Cum Development (CCD)," "Implementation of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA, 2006)," "Scheme of Assistance to State Scheduled Tribes and Finance Development Corporations (STFDCs")," Finally, the planning of sustainable tourism can be facilitated by the Ministry of Tourism at the national and state levels, which can also project it as a seamless component of the Indian tourism sector. (Gohil, 2019)

Opportunities

Resource Optimization: The reduction of tourism's negative effects on the environment and local communities is the ultimate aim of sustainable tourism. This entails making the best use of resources to prevent overconsumption, aiding in the preservation of the environment, and making an effort to respect and honour regional traditions and heritage.

Mutual Benefit: Making the long-term future of travel more viable is a key goal of sustainable tourism, and this is accomplished through education and a change in behavior. Sustainable tourism also aims to benefit the local communities on an economic and social level, fostering a dynamic based on mutual benefit and a give and take approach.

Challenges

Ecological Sustainability: Delivering a practical model of ecologically sustainable tourism is one of the main obstacles to sustainable tourism. There has been a lot of talk about sustainable tourism, but there isn't enough clear advice or direction on how to put the theory into practise. Businesses moving towards sustainability need advice on the terms and approach of sustainable tourism that is both practical and financially viable. (Dolma Foundation, 2019)

Commitment to Locals: The community is the strength of the travel industry, yet without appropriate arrangements and systems, this open door can be dangerous. In order to prevent inequality in our decision-making, we must exercise caution when involving the community. Another important aspect of community participation is making decisions. It is essential to note that, in order to maximise the community's socioeconomic benefits from tourism, community participation in decision-making is not only desirable but also necessary.

Fragility: Sustainable tourism is a delicate aspect of the tourism industry. Conservation and restoration of the environment is a nuanced subject that is extremely challenging to replicate and explain to laypeople.

Guaranteeing equitable distribution of income: An enormous number of maintainable exercises takes place in government-controlled safeguarded regions like public parks, natural life protection regions, etc. Additionally, proper income distribution is very important because sustainable tourism involves the local community. Fair income distribution is a crucial obstacle to sustainable tourism because, as is often the case, elite community groups benefit most (Medina, L. K. (2005).

Effective Communication among Stakeholders: Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism that benefits the environment, cultural heritage, and locals as well as tourists. It all boils down to making a positive impact on the economy, society, and environment, which necessitates effective communication. Sustainable tourism looks forward to collaborating with indigenous communities and respecting their beliefs and culture (Robinson, M. (1999). Therefore, for sustainable tourism to reach its full potential, an effective and efficient operational environment requires effective and challenging communication between authorities, tourists, and the community.

Nature of Seasonality: In addition to being one of the obstacles to sustainable tourism, seasonality in tourism is one of the major issues that must be resolved. Marketing, the labour market (job nature and quality, skill availability, employment sustainability, etc.), business finance, shareholder management, and all aspects of operation are all affected by seasonality.

How can we tackle these obstacles?

While we may not be able to achieve full sustainability, we can always make it work by ensuring a collaborative effort. The steps to becoming more sustainable are listed below. (Dolma Foundation, 2019)

Education of Travelers: Responsible travel choices should be taught to travellers. For instance, taking small steps like filling up a water bottle and staying in a homestay are merely initiations for larger programmes.

Programs administered by the government: Sustainable tourism cannot be achieved solely by the private sector; working together with the government provides greater opportunities and mechanisms for addressing shortcomings. Tourism should be developed only within the parameters of sustainable development, and the government must consult with and implement policies that encourage sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism necessitates well-integrated planning; consequently, the government must participate in addressing issues and developing new opportunities (Dwyer, L. (2005).

Involvement of Local Communities: The local community is a major stakeholder, and they must participate in tourism decision-making if they want to influence how their communities grow into tourist destinations. As a result, ensuring the association of local communities is crucial to the successful operation of the model.

Non Governmental Organizations: (NGOs) are crucial in overcoming sustainable tourism's obstacles. NGOs can contribute to the improvement of tourism prospects by addressing important issues such as community opposition, corruption, violations of human rights, and employment discrimination (Wondirad, A., Tolkach, D., & King, B. (2020).

Conclusion

There are numerous opportunities for the tourism industry to develop and grow into something that is simultaneously beneficial to tourists, local communities, and the planet. Although the industry is not in any way harmful, there are many opportunities for it to become so.

However, for this to be possible, it is important that it not just be used as a string of buzzwords at events but be looked at as a realistic solution for a better path forward for the tourism industry and its stakeholders.

A worrying trend is to assert that any small-scale, ecologically or culturally oriented type of tourism is sustainable, especially when produced by or for locals, in the current climate of wanting to promote sustainable tourism. In the absence of precise

and reliable indicators and monitoring, it is impossible to comment on a company's sustainability until many years after its inception, after comparing its operations and impacts to the state of the environment at the time of its establishment, in the absence of precise and reliable indicators and monitoring. Since the term "sustainable development" wasn't coined until 1987, it's still too early to call an establishment sustainable with certainty. The way forward for research in this area is to establish comparable parameters by examining negative and positive impacts of tourism and laying down achievable goals that are in line with global sustainability policies (Sharpley, R. (2000)).

References

- *About*. (n.d.). Map My Stories. Retrieved December 11, 2022, from https://www.mapmystories.com/about
- Barman, A., Singh, R., & Rao, Y. V. (2010). Empowering Tribes Through Cultural Tourism in India – A Dream Project on ICT Integration. *SSRN*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1718126
- Choudhary, R. (2014). Sustainable Tourism in India: Collective Efforts of Tourism Stakeholders. *International Journal of Business Management Available at www. ijbm. co. in*, *1*(1), 77-84.
- Dolma Foundation. (2019, January 20). *Sustainable Tourism: Challenges and how to overcome them*. LinkedIn. Retrieved December 11, 2022, from https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/sustainable-tourism-challenges-how-overcome-them-dolma-eco-tourism/
- Dwyer, L. (2005). Relevance of triple bottom line reporting to achievement of sustainable tourism: A scoping study. *Tourism Review International*, *9*(1), 79-938.
- Gohil, N. (2019). Potential and Planning for Tribal Tourism in India: A Case Study on Gond Tribes of Madhya Pradesh State, India | Gohil | Scholedge International Journal of Multidisciplinary & Allied Studies ISSN 2394-336X. SCHOLEDGE Publishing. Retrieved February 26, 2023, from https://thescholedge.org/index.php/sijmas/article/view/602/544
- Huseynli, E. (2022, February). SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND ITS ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL BENEFITS TO THE HOST DESTINATIONS. 20. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358738272_SUSTAINABLE_TOURISM_AND_ITS_ENVIRONMENTAL_ECONOMIC_SOCIAL_BENEFITS_TO_THE_HOST_DESTINATIONS/link/62127ccbf02286737cafeac3/download
- Kaushik, M., & Chaudhary, S. (2022, May 13). *Living In An Isolated Corner Of India Without Connecting Roads For Over 4 Decades: Lisu Tribe*. The Logical Indian. Retrieved February 24, 2023, from https://thelogicalindian.com/northeastindia/lisu-tribe-Gandhigram-village-arunachal-pradesh-35539

- Kaushik, Mrinalini. "Living in an Isolated Corner of India Without Connecting Roads for Over 4 Decades: Lisu Tribe." *Living in an Isolated Corner of India Without Connecting Roads for Over 4 Decades: Lisu Tribe*, 13 May 2022, thelogicalindian.com/northeastindia/lisu-tribe-gandhigram-village-arunachal-pradesh-35539.
- Lenzen, M., Sun, Y. Y., Faturay, F., Ting, Y. P., Geschke, A., & Malik, A. (2018). The carbon footprint of global tourism. *Nature climate change*, *8*(6), 522-528.
- Mathew, P. V. (2022). Sustainable tourism development: discerning the impact of responsible tourism on community well-being. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, *5*(5), 987-1001.
- Medina, L. K. (2005). Ecotourism and certification: Confronting the principles and pragmatics of socially responsible tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *13*(3), 281-295.
- Neto, F. (2003, August). A new approach to sustainable tourism development: Moving beyond environmental protection. In *Natural resources forum* (Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 212-222). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Nijkamp, P. (2012). Economic valuation of cultural heritage. *The economics of uniqueness: Investing in historic city cores and cultural heritage assets for sustainable development*, *75*, 75-103.
- R. (2022, April 14). *Sustainable Tourism Guide: What Is, Why Important, Examples and More. . ..* Revfine.com. Retrieved February 26, 2023, from https://www.revfine.com/sustainable-tourism/
- Ramkissoon, H. (2023). Perceived social impacts of tourism and quality-of-life: A new conceptual model. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *31*(2), 442-459.
- Robinson, M. (1999). Collaboration and cultural consent: Refocusing sustainable tourism. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, *7*(3-4), 379-397.
- Sharpley, R. (2000). Tourism and sustainable development: Exploring the theoretical divide. *Journal of Sustainable tourism*, *8*(1), 1-19.
- Sugiama, A. G., Oktavia, H. C., & Karlina, M. (2022). The Effect of Tourism Infrastructure Asset Quality on Tourist Satisfaction: A Case on Forest Tourism in Tasikmalaya Regency. *International Journal of Applied Sciences in Tourism and Events*, *6*(1), 65-71.
- *Sustainable tourism .:. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*. (n.d.). Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved December 11, 2022, from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabletourism
- Tosun, C. (1998). Roots of unsustainable tourism development at the local level: The case of Urgup in Turkey. *Tourism management*, *19*(6), 595-610.
- Wardle, R. (2021, October 21). *What is sustainable tourism and why is it important?* FutureLearn. Retrieved December 11, 2022, from https://www.futurelearn.com/info/blog/what-is-sustainable-tourism
- Wondirad, A., Tolkach, D., & King, B. (2020). NGOs in ecotourism: Patrons of sustainability or neo-colonial agents? Evidence from Africa. *Tourism Recreation Research*, *45*(2), 144-160.