Management of Sustainable Tourism in India: An Essential Facet that Calls for Careful Attention and Effective Strategies

SHIVAM YADAV[1] AND UTTAM KUMAR*[2]
[1]Research Scholar and [2]Professor
Department of Geography, MMH College, Ghaziabad (U.P.) India

ABSTRACT

The tourism and hospitality sectors are expanding rapidly in India and elsewhere. The Indian government appreciates the role that tourists play in boosting the economy and culture of the country.Most developed and developing countries owe their success to the tourism industry, which provides vital services such as job creation, infrastructure development, and the alleviation of poverty. The objective of this article is to evaluate the importance of implementing environmentally sustainable practises in the tourism industry and the measures undertaken to manage it in a sustainable manner in India and its emerging regions. Sustainable practises that may be adopted on a global basis in the tourist sector are compiled using reports, articles, and current research and studies.This article covers topics such as sustainable management practises and initiatives in the tourism sector in India as a whole.

Key Words : Ecotourism, National Tourism Policy, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism, Tourism Management, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

One of the global businesses with the quickest growth rates is tourism. Additionally, it is a significant source of foreign currency. In 2019, India got more than 10 million Foreign Tourist Arrivals. According to data from the Ministry of Tourism, the number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in January 2023 amounted to 868,160, exhibiting a significant increase rate of 330.75% in comparison to the figure of 201,546 recorded in January 2022. It is projected that the export revenue generated by India's "tourism and hospitality" industry would increase to $59 billion by the year 2028, representing a significant growth from the $28.9 billion recorded in 2018. Furthermore, it is anticipated that by the year 2028, the number of international visitors visiting the country would reach a total of around 30.5 million (Tourism and Hospitality Industry Report, 2023). The majority of foreign hotels are growing their presence in India since post-pandemic growth is anticipated for both domestic and foreign travel.

The COVID-19 epidemic cost the Indian hotel sector US$17.8 billion in lost income, according to the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) (Sezerel and Christiansen, 2022). It should come as no surprise that the epidemic has sparked significant thought about sustainability and safety. The Indian government has designated 2023 as "Visit India Year" in anticipation of the country's "G20 Presidency and the India@75 Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav" celebrations.

The Prime Minister has formulated a mission-oriented strategy accompanied by a strategic roadmap spanning a quarter-century, aimed at enhancing tourism throughout the Amrit Kaal (Prakash, 2022). By the year 2047, when India celebrates its centenary anniversary, the objective is to position India as the foremost global tourism destination, captivating visitors from diverse geographical origins via an unparalleled charm. In conjunction with the "Central Ministries" and State/Union Territory Governments, the "Ministry of Tourism" plans to organise a "Global Tourism Investors Summit" with the aim of showcasing opportunities for "trade and investment" (MOT, 2023). The event will provide global

investors with an opportunity to enhance their understanding of the products and services offered by the Indian tourist industry. The "Union Budget 2023" would choose 50 tourist hotspots via a competitive procedure, with the aim of developing these destinations holistically to cater to both domestic and international tourists (Rawat, 2023). To accomplish the goals of the "DEKHO APNA BHARAT" project, sector-specific skill development and entrepreneurial growth must be coordinated (MOF, PIB, 2023).

India is a captivating amalgamation of multiple cultures, making it one of the most ancient civilizations globally. This fascinating country has a lot to offer tourists, including a long history and many different kinds of sights to see. India has long drawn travelers due to its vast geographic variety and rich cultural heritage. India is a genuinely amazing place to visit because to the huge Himalayas, wide desert, lush green woods, and stunning beaches that are laced with historic temples and imposing forts in Rajasthan. The tourist industry is the most efficient way to increase a nation's financial and economic stability. This industry supports the improvement of the degree of pleasure of its citizens in emerging nations like India. Every stakeholder in sustainable tourism has an equal chance to contribute to the growth of society and the destination. High levels of consumer satisfaction, increased understanding of environmental issues, and the adoption of environmentally friendly activities are all requirements for sustainable tourism.

One of the businesses with the fastest recent growth rates in India and worldwide is the hotel and tourism industry. The tourism sector is regarded as the lifeblood of the majority of rich and developing nations alike since it significantly boosts economies by creating employment, building beautiful infrastructures, and empowering local people to reduce poverty (Tourism and Hospitality Industry Report, 2023).

Numerous economies are using reckless business tactics to augment their revenue, sometimes without implementing strategies to mitigate the adverse implications on "society, economy" and ecosystem in naturally affluent regions. Therefore, the notion of sustainable tourism is put forward. The use of sustainable development practices in the creation of tourist attractions becomes a top priority to lessen the negative effects.

Sustainable Tourism:

According to the World tourism Organisation, it is essential to keep an appropriate equilibrium among the three elements in order to ensure the enduring viability of the tourist industry. The principles of environmentally conscious tourism include several dimensions, including ecological, financial, and social considerations, which are integral to the growth of tourist activities. Sustainable tourism encompasses the evaluation of several factors such as visitor needs, the tourism industry, "environmental conditions, and host communities" in order to ensure the enduring viability of a destination.

The field of environmentally conscious tourism studies has emerged as a result of the examination of "tourism, economics, and environmental" management. (Buckley, 2012). The United Nations has identified 12 main objectives for sustainable tourism, which would prevent tourism from degrading in all countries and promote economic growth. Numerous initiatives are being launched by both commercial and governmental entities in India and throughout the world. Initiatives centered on environmental protection, waste management, transportation management, green marketing, and the best use of internet resources for promotion. Various hotels and tourism-related enterprises have created sustainable approaches including eco labeling, rewards for adopting green initiatives, and educational campaigns on responsible tourism. The tension between environmental protection and economic interests noted in the tourism literature about nature-based tourism entrepreneurs was compared by some providers Some have discussed this "urge" publicly and highlighted how worries about environmental impact have caused them to alter certain habits at work or at home (Bertella, 2023).

Many organisations were severely impacted by the pandemic's negative effects and many natural disasters, thus governments and public policy makers like India are attempting to tackle the difficulties. Organisations, states, and nations that provide rules for sustainable tourism have made some creative and environmentally favourable moves.

Different forms of Sustainable Tourism:

Various kinds of sustainable tourism exist, including "ecotourism, responsible tourism, slow tourism" and voluntourism, among others.

Although they vary differently from one another and have the same attitude towards environmental discussion, ecotourism and sustainable tourism. Ecotourism is a specialised kind of outdoor travel. According to Fennell,

ecotourism is a resource-based kind of tourism that is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally focused. It mainly focuses on enjoying and learning about nature. It is often seen in ecological settings and is expected to provide a positive contribution towards the safeguarding of these regions (Bien, 2018).

In India, ecotourism is projected to expand at a rate of 15.7% from 2019 to 2027 and reach $4.55 billion. India provides exotic locations, opportunities to see animals, and untouched natural landscapes. Eco-tourism is a deliberate visit to a natural area inside a nation to learn about its natural and cultural heritage. It is the management of ecology with a focus on conservation requirements in order to maximise enjoyment. Kenya, Costa Rice, Canada, and the United States are just a few of the nations that have made serious attempts to encourage ecotourism. Participation of the local people in nature tourism initiatives is another aspect of eco-tourism. Ecosystems must develop into important ecotourism hotspots. These include caverns, lakes, rivers, mountains, forests, and biosphere reserves. They also include mangroves, coral reefs, deserts, mountains, and forests (Logu, 2017).

GSTC Standards in The Realm of Sustainable Tourism:

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) is widely recognised as an international standard for measuring environmental sustainability in the "travel and tourism" industry. The standards are used to disseminate information and enhance consciousness. Certification relies on them as fundamental elements that are used in the appraisal, review, and development of policies.

There are two lists of requirements:
1. The Sustainable Management of the Hotel and Tour Operator Sectors in the Private Travel Industry, as Addressed by the GSTC Industry Guidelines.
2. The GSTC Destinations Guidelines is concerned with the responsible administration of tourist hotspots.

Governance of Sustainable Tourism in India:

The golden and silver deserts of Rajasthan and Kutch, the snow-capped Himalayas, the mangroves and wetlands of Bengal, the pristine rainforests of Madhya Pradesh, and India's amazing, long coastline with corals are all part of India's natural marvels. India is home to about 1200 different kinds of birds as well as the Bengal tiger, leopard, elephant, rhinoceros, wild buffalo, and Indian bison (Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, 2014). Given that 70% of the Himalayas are located there, India has a significant geographic advantage. It also has 70,000 kilometres of coastline, is ranked sixth in terms of the number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites it has, is ranked 10th in terms of its forest cover, and is one of only three nations to have both hot and cold deserts (Joglekar and Singh, 2022). India is an emerging nation that may greatly benefit from tourism. Damage to the environment and depletion of biodiversity as a result of tourism needs careful monitoring. However, we must also find methods to put poverty reduction at the forefront of tourist management, planning, and development. Plans for sustainable tourism in India must continue to place a high priority on protecting the local environment. Ecotourism ideas have become standards so that future generations may enjoy the lovely environment we already have. Tourism policymaking institutions, public-private partnerships, regulatory agencies, supranational organisations, local, regional, and national governments, as well as communities and private businesses, are just a few of the specific actors that make up the multiscale system of arrangements that underpin tourism governance (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2020). The tourism and hotel industries in India have grown significantly in recent years. But according to the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality, the epidemic cost the country a loss of almost 133.33 billion US dollars (Dash and Sharma, 2021). India is a developing country with a population and economy that are very varied, therefore it has to improve its disaster readiness, put more of a focus on cleanliness, and expand its workforce's skills. For those involved in the tourism business such as travellers, residents, tour operators, hotels, the transportation industry, and legislators, any change may have substantial repercussions. How stakeholders are impacted by the crisis and how they respond to it will determine how effectively crisis management is implemented. Therefore, it is important to include all relevant stakeholders' perspectives while debating the coping and revival processes in the tourist industry (Dash and Sharma, 2021).

National Tourism Sustainability Strategy:

• Together with the United Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Responsible Tourism

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Society of India (RTSOI), the Ministry of Tourism in India hosted the National Summit on Developing Sustainable and Responsible Tourist Destinations.

• "The National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism and the Responsible Traveller Campaign was unveiled at this summit by the Ministry of Tourism".

Environmentally responsible tourist development based on these Six pillars of strategy:

1. Encouraging Long-Term Environmental Stability,
2. Fostering Long-Term Financial Stability,
3. Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme,
4. Fostering Long-Term Social and Cultural Stability,
5. Conserving Natural Resources,
6. IEC (Information, Education and Communication) and Capacity Building and Governance (MOT, GOI., 2022).

Various Programmes Under the Ministry of Tourism for India's Sustainable Tourism:

• **Dharamshala Declaration:** After COVID-19, it is difficult for India's tourist industry to resume operations while upholding safety and hygienic standards (Dash, & Sharma, 2021). The crisis is a chance to think about the crisis' long-term effects, reinvent the future of tourism, and take concerted action across all levels of government and the commercial sector. A noteworthy beginning in this regard is the Dharamshala Declaration, which strives to recognise India's potential in supporting international tourism and encourage domestic tourism.

• **Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** was initiated by the Indian government with the intention of developing themed tourist itineraries all throughout the country. These circuits would be created using integrated concepts of high visitor value, competitiveness, and sustainability.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme features include:

1. The strategy provides complete central funding for all publicly funded project components.
2. The goal is to increase the amount of money donated to "Corporate Social Responsibility" (CSR) initiatives run by corporations and central public sector entities.
3. Funding for individual projects will be determined on a "state-by-state" basis based on "Programme Management Consultant" (PMC)-created project reports.
4. A "National Steering Committee" (NSC) would

be formed, with the Minister responsible for M/O Tourism acting as Chairman, to steer the program's mission objectives and purpose.

5. Project identification will be aided by a Mission Directorate under the direction of the Member Secretary, NSC, who will serve as a nodal person and interact with the governments of the States/UTs and other stakeholders.
6. The Mission Directorate will appoint PMC as a national level consultant (MOT, 2021).

• **Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD):** The PRASAD project was launched in 2015 as a government endeavour to identify and develop pilgrim sites around the country to improve the quality of religious tourism. By coordinating the growth of pilgrimage sites in a manner that is strategic, prioritised, and environmentally friendly, it hopes to provide a full and satisfying experience for religious tourists. For the sake of the project's long-term viability, it also incorporates CSR and PPP, or "public-private partnerships". By creating world-class infrastructure in holy places, you may increase visitor appeal in a sustainable way.

In accordance with its terms, the "Ministry of Tourism" provides "Central Financial Assistance" (CFA) to State Governments in order to promote tourism in designated areas. If a part of this initiative qualifies for funding from the public purse, the federal government will foot the whole bill (MOT, 2021).

• **The Ministry of Tourism's Adopt-a-Heritage Programme**: debuted on September 27, 2017, World Tourism Day. This project is a major initiative of the Ministry of Tourism, which is working closely with the Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to develop heritage sites and monuments and make them tourist-friendly in order to increase both their potential as tourist attractions and their cultural significance in a planned and phased manner. The initiative intends to entrust private sector businesses, public sector businesses, and people with the responsibility of developing tourism facilities for historical sites/monuments and other tourist attractions. The Oversight and Vision Committee's successful bidders who are chosen to adopt historical sites or monuments are referred to as Monument Mitras (MOT, GOI, 2018).
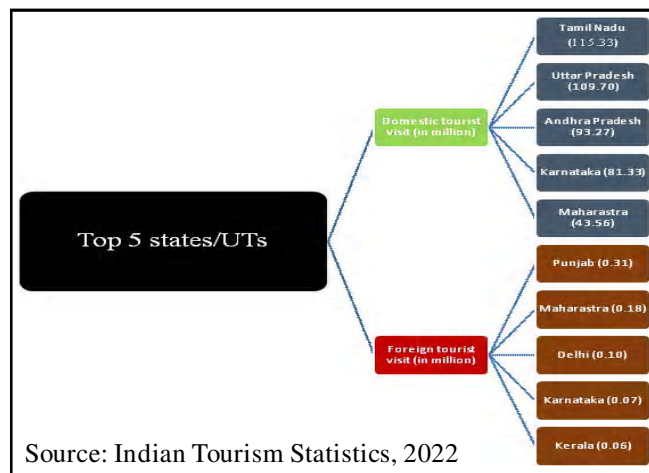
• **The Dekho Apna Desh Campaign:** was introduced in 2020 by the Ministry of Tourism. In order to promote domestic tourism and the development of

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tourist infrastructure in popular tourist destinations around the nation, the programme encourages individuals to travel extensively inside India and see its charms.

• **Draft National Tourism Policy:** The Ministry of Tourism has created roadmaps for the growth of Rural Tourism, Medical and Wellness Tourism, and the MICE Industry in India. In the next ten years, major attention will be paid to five main areas: green tourism, digital tourism, destination management, enhancing the skills of the hospitality industry, and assisting Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) that are involved in the tourist industry.

Emerging Indian States in Domestic Tourism Sector:

The Ministry of Tourism has collated latest statistics on domestic and international tourist visits to various States and Union Territories (UTs) for the year 2022. The top 5 States/UTs are shown below. The monthly reports gathered from hotels and other lodging facilities serve as the foundation for these data.

Top 5 states/UTs

Domestic tourist visit (in million)
- Tamil Nadu (115.33)
- Uttar Pradesh (109.70)
- Andhra Pradesh (93.27)
- Karnataka (81.33)
- Maharastra (43.56)

Foreign tourist visit (in million)
- Punjab (0.31)
- Maharastra (0.18)
- Delhi (0.10)
- Karnataka (0.07)
- Kerala (0.06)

Source: Indian Tourism Statistics, 2022

The importance of the Indian tourism industry:

Economic Benefits: Tourism provides income by charging visitors for services and commodities such as lodging, transportation, and historical sights. This may spur economic expansion and provide job opportunities in the travel and tourist industry and associated fields.

Cultural interaction: Travellers from across the globe may learn about and experience India's numerous cultures and customs, which opens up opportunities for cultural interaction.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage: By providing the money required for upkeep and repair, tourism may also aid in the preservation of cultural heritage sites like temples, forts, and palaces.

Environmental Benefits: Tourism may sometimes have positive effects on the environment, such as when ecotourism programmes are developed to encourage the preservation of natural areas.

Social Advantages: Tourism may also assist local communities on a social level by generating job opportunities and funding social infrastructure like hospitals and schools.

Challenges facing India's tourism industry:

Inefficient tourism: inappropriate use of resources, especially in the Himalayan regions where supplies are already low, is a common cause of stress for India's natural environment. Land degradation, pollution, and the extinction of native species are all consequences of tourism that doesn't prioritise conservation.

Insufficient human resources: Practical training is crucial since tourism is a labor-intensive sector. The availability of skilled workers, nevertheless, has not kept pace with the growth of India's tourism sector. The sector's expansion is constrained by a dearth of multilingually qualified tour guides and a lack of local awareness of the advantages and obligations of tourism.

Climate Change and Pollution: Pollution has an impact on many of our top tourist destinations (historical sites). India continues to strive to keep its treasure, the Taj Mahal, clean. Due to climate change, there have been floods in India in recent years, especially in areas with historical monuments.

Safety and security: India has had difficulties with relation to visitor safety and security, especially in certain regions of the nation. This may discourage travellers from visiting certain locations and may affect how India is seen generally as a tourism destination.

Lack of Connectivity: Due to poor surveys, infrastructure, and connection, many areas of India remain undiscovered, which has a negative impact on people's views about domestic tourism. For instance, despite the Northeast's stunning natural beauty, neither domestic nor foreign visitors often include it in their travel plans due to the region's poor connection to the rest of the nation as well as a lack of infrastructure and required services.

The next step and the conclusion:

Rural regions of India provide a significant

abundance of traditional arts, crafts, and cultural heritage that may be disseminated globally. There is a possibility that rural regions in India might emerge as prominent destinations for rural tourism. The expansion of rural tourism should primarily serve to help rural areas improve their economic and social conditions. As a possible solution to the issue of overpopulation and its consequences for the environment, the tourism industry may prioritise the promotion of sustainable tourism practises. This may include endeavours such as promoting visitors at non-peak periods, providing support to local small enterprises, and safeguarding assets of natural and cultural significance. The introduction of cultural sensitivity training programmes for both visitors and tourism industry personnel has the potential to lessen the likelihood of misunderstandings and increase an environment of respect for indigenous cultures and practises. Creating educational resources and integrating cultural sensitivity training into tourism sector training programmes is a sensible way to lessen this worry. To determine the most popular tourist locations throughout the country, in-depth market research and assessment may be carried out. Then, these spots might be mapped and promoted on "social media" using a digitally unified system that upholds the ideals of "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat". Tourism based on India's unparalleled variety of food has the potential to increase the country's "soft power" and bring in foreign currency thanks to the country's illustrious history and culture. "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", India's national ideology, instills a firm faith in multilateralism.

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