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Global Perspective**

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Abstract

In the global economy, tourism sector is a significant form of economic activity contributing 10% to global GDP, 30% of global service exports and over 236 million job opportunities. However, sustainability of tourism in terms of diversification, community empowerment and environmental conservation remains limited. There are various components of tourism and include ecotourism, cultural tourism, geotourism, industrial tourism, agritourism and many others. Moreover, ecotourism is most common and more developed. Ecotourism aims at creating sustainable economy while conserving the environment. Ecotourism presents excellent opportunities of enjoying tourism activities while at the same time learning about the need to protect the environment. From the literature review, it was identified that sustainability of the tourism sector industry takes a multidimensional approach that include economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and social sustainability. The sustainability of the tourism sector has to take into consideration the economic aspect, environmental aspect and social aspect. Ecotourism helps in create a sustainable tourism industry by being conscious on in the protection of the environment, expanding tourism related economic opportunities and recognising social aspects of the humanity. Ecotourism aims at empowering the community, protecting cultures and heritages of the human society and recognizing the role of community in protecting environment. There is need to develop sustainable ecotourism by involving all stakeholders that include local communities, local authorities, government and international bodies like World Tourism Organization. This can be done through community training and awareness on the importance of conserving the environment.

Key words: *Ecotourism, sustainability, tourism sector*

1. Introduction

Tourism sector is a significant form of economic activity contributing 55 to global GDP, 30% of global service exports and over 236 million job opportunities. In 2019, USD1.5 trillion international tourist arrivals were globally. According to the report, the tourism industry was valued at approximately USD 1.7 trillion in 2019 and is expected to generate around USD 5.54 trillion by 2026, at compounded yearly growth rate of about 4.6% between 2019 and 2026 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019). Tourist sector encompasses travel leisure; tourism activities accompanied hospitality across the globe. Many human populations, territories are heavily reliant tourism because they are not endowed with natural minerals or arable agricultural lands. People thus depend on tourism as income generating activities. Likewise, countries rely on tourism sector as means of foreign currency exchange for more than 38% of world countries and territories (WTO Public Forum, 2018).

However, sustainability of tourism in terms of diversification, community empowerment and environmental conservation remains limited (Irianto, 2017). There are various components of tourism and include ecotourism, cultural tourism, geotourism, industrial tourism, agritourism and many others (Kleszczynski, 2016). Moreover, ecotourism is most common and more developed. Ecotourism aims at developing sustainable tourism by linking environmental conservation measures, to tourism economic endeavours particularly in the rural settings (Yazdi, 2012). In addition, ecotourism presents opportunity of leaning about the environment, creating awareness on the importance of protecting the environment.

Sustainable tourism refers to all forms of tourism activities, management of tourism and promotion of tourism while taking consideration of the social, natural and economic sustenance of the environment for the benefit of future generations (Sofronov, 2017). Sustainability in tourism has to take into consideration all the tourism related activities in the hospitality sector including cultural tourism, conventional and event activities, agritourism, urban tourism, religious related tourism, sports and business related tourism (Jaini, Anuar & Daim, 2012). Tourism sustenance is a responsibility of all stakeholders in the tourism sector including, governments, local authorities, bodies and agencies in charge of tourism, hospitality, hotel; community and consumers.

Dimensions of sustainable tourism include social cultural, environmental protection and economic sustenance (Hirotsune, 2011). Sustainability in tourism implies exploiting tourism related opportunities optimally, prudent use of resources, maximizing economic gains without eroding the environment ecosystem and cultural heritage of the people (Toncheva, 2014). Sustainable tourism allows people to reap the economic gains of tourism related activities, fighting poverty among the locals, protecting cultural heritage of the community while conserving the environment and the biodiversity.

Ecotourism is a sub construct of sustainable tourism activities. Ecotourism allows the reaping of economic benefits from activities while protecting the wildlife and environment (Hanrahan, 2010). Ecotourism impacts the social aspect of the people and wellbeing (clean environment and economic gains) (Marika, 2013). Ecotourism has been termed as one of way of developing sustainable tourism activities that entails protecting the environment, wildlife, ecosystem while empowering people economically (Anup, 2016).

2. Theoretical Framework

Dependency theory anchored this paper. Dependency theory states that growth in tourism in peripheral communities is impacted by the actions of the individual countries. The movement of tourists from these peripheral communities, the management of tourism resorts and hotels are subject to ecotourism management methods of the individual countries (Ferraro, 2008). Forests, rural tours, landscaping and wildlife form the bulk sort of the ecotourism. Forests and landscaping, and virgin rural landscaping adds to the richness of ecotourism (Ho, Liao, & Rosenthal, 2015).

According to the resource dependency theory, tourism activities are largely practised by economically endowed countries and economically small and developing countries depend on as alternate or even main form of economic activities. Tourism strengthens the territorial structures of host countries along traditional fabric (Arts, & Buizer, 2009). Diversifying tourism products by incorporating ecotourism aims at generating income to the local people and local government, protecting cultural heritage of the people while protecting the environment.

Dependency theory is relevant to the study by outlining the dependency that exist between people and environment. Ecotourism is dependent by government for economic growth and local community for income generation and sustainability of livelihood. However, the sustainability of the tourism sector also depends on environmental conservation.

3. Empirical review

Ana (2017) studied agro-tourism, rural tourism and ecotourism focusing at European countries. Tourism is an economic activity generating income to the local people and countries. According to the study, it is hard to achieve sustainable rural tourism without engaging tourism activity guiding principles. Agrotourism supports tourism activities in the rural setting. Agritourism forms the sort of sustenance tourism fostering ecotourism.

Marika (2013) investigated ecotourism and sustainability by studying rural societies in San Luis Potosí in Mexico. It was found that ecotourism provides means of generating economic gains for the local communities and government, protecting the environment while diversifying tourism products for the tourists. Tourism has to be properly managed so that it does not again destroy the ecological system.

In Nepal, Anup (2016) studied ecotourism and sustainable growth. Already economically developed nations and developing nations like Nepal are in the verge of promoting ecotourism with aim of diversifying tourism activities for economic sustenance. It was noted that ecotourism has both positive and negative effects on environment, economic and social wellbeing of the societies. The sustainability of the ecotourism is a responsibility of many stakeholders including governments, local community and tourism operators.

Stukalo, Krasnikova, Krupskyi and Redko (2018) conducted a study on how to foster sustainable global tourism. The approach involved scientific and mathematical inquiry of secondary data models. The study found that creating sustainable tourism is one of sustainable means of developing sustainable global economy in terms of social, economic wellbeing of the people and also environmental protection.

Yazdi (2012) studied sustainable tourism in Iran. According to Yazdi (2012), though tourism has enhanced economic wellbeing of the society, unregulated forms of tourism has destroyed the environment and social fabric of the people. Natural occurring resources are being depleted also coupled with environment destruction. It was concluded that sustainable tourism has to weave environment, social and economic perspectives together.

In Costa Rica, Kleszczynski (2016) investigated the effects brought by ecotourism as a form of promoting sustainable tourism. The key respondents were local communities, environmentalists, government officers, workers at national parks and reserves and tour companies' operators. It was established that ecotourism provides an excellent method of educating people on the need to derive economic benefits from the environment via tourism economic activities while protecting the environmental ecosystem. It also allows the protection of people's cultural heritage.

Jaini, Anuar and Daim (2012) investigated how ecotourism has been adopted to promote sustainable tourism in Malaysia. Questionnaire was used to source data from ecotourism operators. It was established that in Malaysia, government in conjunction supports ecotourism through planning, marketing and management of ecotourism places. However, more is still required to develop ecotourism in Malaysia. It was noted that development of sustainable ecotourism calls for the integration of sustainable tourism activities.

Hirotsune (2011) studied tourism, sustainable tourism and ecotourism in developing countries. Sustainable tourism is being preached by many countries, tour operators. It was established that ecotourism is one of alternative of building sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism has been advocated as one form of economic activity that supports sustainable economic growth. Some forms ecotourism include urban heritage tourism, health tourism, rural tourism, cultural, industrial and nature tourism.

do Paço, et al. (2012) investigated ecotourism in hotels. Respondents indicated that eco-tourists were paying attention issues related to environment when in the hotel and visiting the surroundings. Ecotourism was familiar among the visitors in the hotels. However, ecotourism is not well communicated to the visitors.

4. Summary of Empirical Findings

Ecotourism requires the achievement of the sustainable tourism principles including decreasing the environmental, cultural and social impacts. Ecotourism is one kind of sustainable tourism, based on nature, and usually following a distinct set of principles and good practices. Under the present world trend of sustainable development, ecotourism is the most noticed sector in tourism. In ecotourism, three elements are well connected. These are the preservation of nature and culture, benefit to local people and the development opportunity by tourism. Ecotourism has had a relevant role in generating employment, foreign exchange and regional growth. Since ecotourism generates less money and revenue, for some countries where tourism is the main source of income, ecotourism might be a barrier to achieve a viable economic development. According to Kleszczynski, (2016) ecotourism focuses on empowering locals, conserving traditions and heritage, educating both locals and tourists, involving locals in projects, and encouraging locally owned ecotourism. When a foreign or local business decides to construct an ecotourism project, the locals are welcomed to participate, learning skills that they could use in

creating their own business. Economically, ecotourism focuses on supporting local communities by hiring locals, supporting small local businesses, and providing education and programs for local communities. Ecotourism's main goal is to preserve nature, protect sensitive places, and reduce impact on sensitive environments. This conservation can be achieved by managing and planning for groups instead of having random unplanned tourism. This higher quality of management can produce a more sustainable form of tourism.

5. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Ecotourism has environmental, social and economic impacts to the community, nation and the whole world. Ecotourism has helped in sustainable development across the globe by conserving environment, increasing employment, enhancing livelihood and promoting the culture and traditions. There is need of cooperation among different stakeholders, training of ecotourism to tourism entrepreneurs and appropriate management policy for sustainable implementation of ecotourism projects.

Ecotourism typically looks for experiences that provide a sense of closeness to the natural attractions and local communities that first brought them to a destination. Any destination that seeks to attract these tourists must protect its resources while facilitating a sense of integration with the local community. The sustainability and competitiveness of the tourism industry go hand-in-hand as the quality of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural environment, and their integration into the local community. Sustainability in tourism on long-term requires a balance between economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability. The need to reconcile economic growth and sustainable development also has an ethical dimension.

Ecotourism can be significant methods for advancing the socio-economic development of host communities while creating assets for the safeguarding of normal and social resources. Along these lines, environmentally delicate regions can be ensured with the monetary returns of ecotourism exercises made by both the general population and private areas. In many agricultural nations, ecotourism has been especially effective in pulling in private speculations for the foundation of exclusive characteristic parks and nature reserves. The travel industry can assist with securing and even restore regular resources, and subsequently add to the protection of biological diversity and ecological balance. Unsustainable ecotourism exercises may compromise the exceptionally common habitat whereupon they depend. Practical the travel industry should be viewed as an objective in the travel industry advancement. Accomplishing such an objective is a troublesome undertaking to achieve; notwithstanding, creating the travel industry in a maintainable way should be a significant target in the creating interaction.

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