

Sustainable Tourism (A Case Study of Uttar Pradesh)

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Abstract: -

The study focuses on the issues and potential prospects of sustainable tourism in Uttar Pradesh with special emphasis on *eco tourism*. Tourism in U.P is important as it has various tourist sites (historical and religious) such as Varanasi, Agra, Allahabad, Lucknow, etc. The paper is based on secondary data from various reliable sources. The study is explorative as well as problem-solving in nature. A sustainable tourism allows exploitation of tourist resources for a much longer period of time and also helps in creation of ample of job opportunities.ⁱ

The purpose of this study is to keep the tourist friendly activities alive in Uttar Pradesh, as it is considered as the life and blood of sustainable tourism. The most pressing problem for a sustainable tourism in the state is the poor quality of infrastructure (road network, sanitation, electricity supply, etc.), pollution in and around U.P, low hospitality services and low quality of environment. Although the government has taken many initiatives in this direction like establishment and development of Tourism Department with all modern facilities and started a tourism programme with the name of Incredible India/ Colours of India Campaign, yet they have not been able to reach the tourists (Indian and Foreign) directly. Prolonging the conservation of environment by avoiding anything which is considered harmful to it, will always help in encouraging people to derive their living from tourist occupations.ⁱⁱ

Introduction: -

Uttar Pradesh, being situated in the Northern part of India, bordering the capital of the country, New Delhi, is one of the most popular and prominent tourist destinations in the country. U.P. has a very large number of historical and religious tourist centres. Geographically, Uttar Pradesh, is very diverse, with Himalayan foothills in the extreme north and Gangetic Plains in the centre. It is also the home of India's most visited sites, The TajMahal, and Hinduism's holiest city, Varanasi. Kathak, one of the eight forms of Indian classical dances, originated from Uttar Pradesh.ⁱⁱⁱ Uttar Pradesh is at the heart of

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India; hence it has been given the name of Heartland of India. The cuisines of U.P. such as Awadhi, Mughlai cuisines etc. are also very famous in India as well as abroad.^{iv}

The practice of promotion of tourism demands a practice on a sustainable basis. A sustainable tourism allows exploitation of tourist resources for a much longer period of time and also helps in creation of ample of job opportunities.

*The Rio+20 Outcome Document “The Future We Want” highlights the role of sustainable tourism so as to come out of the adverse effects of tourism. The United Nations defines sustainable tourism as “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”. The most important aspects of sustainable tourism are that it ensures long-term economic operations, provision of fairly distributed socio-economic benefits to all, through income earning opportunities and social services to host communities. Thus, it serves a dual purpose of conservation of natural resources and poverty alleviation.

Ecotourism originated as a type of sustainable tourism and the first formal definition of ecotourism is credited to Hector Ceballos – Lascurain in the early 1980's. His definition asserts that “ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate nature that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact and, provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of the local population”.

Today, ecotourism is one of the fastest growing markets, and is considered as one of the world's biggest industries.^{vi}

The increase in the number of tourists in the past few years had put a heavy pressure on the tourist resources of the state of U.P. The over usage of tourist attractions had let to its damage beyond repair. This led to the reduction in the popularity of the tourist centres and also affected employment generation capacity of the tourist centres of the state. Thus, the over promotion and misuse of the tourist centres of the state has led to the decline in its popularity, employment and income-generation capacity.

In order to realize the full potential of UP tourism industry, the government of UP has planned to celebrate State Tourism Day of UP annually on 14th February on Valentine's Day commencing from the year 2016. The first tourism day was celebrated in the state

under the chief minister ship of Mr. AkhileshYadav. On the CM's visit to Agra on the 14th of February last year, he urged the youth to celebrate Valentine's Day as Taj Day.^{vii}

The first tourism day was celebrated in Lucknow, but the venue will keep on changing to other places of UP in the coming years.

The government of UP has planned to develop a Nature Arc including Chambal, Etawah Lion Safari, Pilibhit and Katarniaghat and others for promoting eco-tourism activities. It will be on lines of the heritage arc of Agra-Lucknow-Varanasi.

The government of UP has also planned to felicitate every year various hotel owners, travel agents and various others who do impressive work on promoting tourism.

UP ranks second in terms of visit of domestic tourists with 29.09 lakh foreign tourists visiting the state in 2014.^{viii}

ResearchObjectives: -

- To focus on the problems faced by the tourism industry in U.P.
- To study about the initiatives taken by the Government of the state to improve tourism.
- To suggest various measures to help develop the tourism industry in U.P in a sustainable manner.

ResearchMethodology: -

The study is explorative as well as problem solving in nature. It is based on the secondary data sources such as books, newspapers, journals, websites, surveys, etc.

Limitations Of the Research Study: -

- This research is mainly based on the secondary data sources.
- Data collection and organization was a time-consuming process.

Problems And Challenges Before Tourism Industry In Uttar Pradesh: -

In the current decade, the total number of tourist visits in the Northern states of India witnessed a growth of approximately 10% as compared to the previous decade. The growth of domestic tourism in the northern states of India is higher as compared to the growth of

international tourism. In the years 2008-2012, U.P.had witnessed a largest market share decline of 5.8% followed by Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Haryana, but in the year 2012-13,it has witnessed an increase in the influx of domestic and international tourists,but at a marginal rate. The following are the reasons as well as the challenges which can be attributed to the stagnation of tourism in U.P.

- Non availability of adequate infrastructure including adequate air seat capacity, accessibility to tourist destinations, accommodation and trained manpower in sufficient number.
- Poor hygienic conditions and incidents of touting and harassment of tourists in some places are factors that contribute to poor visitor experiences.
- Lack of capital, lack of community participation and awareness, lack of involvement from the rural sector.
- Lack of concern for sustainability, complex visa procedures and lack of good language translators are the other reasons which are serving as the constraints in the way of tourism.
- Hotels of India are lacking behind in providing the hygienic hospitality facilities and room services including hygienic food to the tourists,as a result Indian hotels and other eating outlets are losing trust of foreign tourists.
- Other major constraint in the development of the tourism in U.P. is the partial attitude of the government towards corporate and public hoteliers and other travel organizers.
- Further, the state is facing the problem of shortage of skilled and educated professionals, guides and drivers. They lack behind in understanding the language of foreign tourists.
- Lack of appropriate accommodation facilities and lack of security measures is another challenge before tourism industry.^{ix}
- Pollution in the major rivers of U.P. as has been observed in the case of Yamuna River, is affecting the tourism of the city of Agra.

Government Initiatives for Promotion of Tourism: -

The state government of Uttar Pradesh has taken several initiatives to promote tourism by formulating several tourism or civic infrastructure development plans such as:

- Outlay of INR 34.6 billion planned during 2002 – 2022 for creation of connectivity and tourism infrastructure.
- Creation of special funds to finance infrastructural facilities in identified circuits.
- Priority to develop basic infrastructural facilities viz. roads, aviation services, rail, surface and water transport, assured electrical supply, telecom facilities, drinking water, sewage facilities and accommodation through PPP.

The policy support has been provided by the state government of U.P. in the following manner:

- Single window clearance
- Simplified approval procedures
- Rationalised luxury tax assessment
- Paryatan Mitra Committee solving entrepreneurial issues

Besides the policy support provided by the state government, several fiscal incentives have also been given by the government in this direction:

- Five-year exemption / deferred payment for luxury, entertainment tax for new ropeways, trade tax for restaurants.
- Entertainment tax exemption for paying guest scheme units.
- 100% exemption from stamp duty.
- Interest free loan for pioneer units.
- Heritage hotels and capital investment subsidy with a subsidy of 10%.
- Facilitation of institutional finance and financial assistance to units in hill areas.^x

The government of the state of U.P. has launched a Tourism programme named Incredible India/Colours of India Campaign with the coordinated efforts of the Central Government. This partially successful campaign was launched in the year 2002. Its aim was to promote and showcase the natural scenic beauty of the country, particularly the state of U.P., which is highly populous as well as geographically varied in terms of its topography, culture and environment. Prior to this initiative, the government had not done much concerted efforts to promote tourism in the state. Several awareness initiatives were also made by the state government to improve the ecological scenario of the state.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has widely been acknowledged to be one of the best marketing minds to have led the country. Besides this, in September 2014, in an effort to boost the entire economy, PM Modi launched the Make in India Campaign. Make In India Campaign intends to attract investors from across the globe and develop India into a manufacturing and services hub. Tourism will be the key sector which will receive special support under this campaign.^{xi}

The efforts made by the government of the state, in coordination with the Central Government have led to the increase in the number of domestic and international tourists especially during the years 2002 – 2009, but after that, the tourism sector in U.P. has witnessed a stagnation.

Over the last year, PM Modi has also approved the liberalizing of tourism sector. Currently 100% FDI is allowed under the automatic route in tourism and hospitality and in the construction of hotels and other recreational facilities across the country. The government has also promised financial support worth over INR 11 billion to the development of tourism and promotion of this sector. PM Modi's effort to promote Incredible India and thereby generate interest in tourism in the country is another attempt of the administration to bolster the sector and protect the interests of those employed by it.

All the above efforts made by the Central and the State government are to make the tourism in the state sustainable. Ecotourism or environment- friendly tourist activity forms a core segment of sustainable tourism. It requires to preserve the ecology and local cultures of an area. A good quality of air and water, well – maintained biodiversity and organised human efforts are the major components of eco-tourism. Keeping up harmonious relationship among them is the growing need because a chain of interactions locks them together.

The development of various industries and the NCR (National Capital Region) which began in the previous decade, encompassing some regions of U.P., disturbed the ecological balance of the state and the activities conducted were also less eco-friendly.

But since the launch of various awareness campaigns by the state government, the state has been able to restore some of its ecological balance, but needs a much more concerted effort in this direction.

Suggestive Measures To Develop And Promote Sustainable Tourism In U.P.: -^{xii}

The state of U.P is a highly diversified state in terms of its area, geographical scenario, population, culture, tradition, social customs, art and architecture, historical and religious sites, ecology and environment, biodiversity, etc. Its beauty and culture need to be sustained for reaping long term benefits.^{xiii}

For making the scenario of tourism sustainable in U.P., the following measures can be suggested:

- Preservation of its biodiversity, with the concerted and coordinated efforts of the forest department, state government and most importantly, the local people participation.
- Encouraging local people participation in developing the infrastructure of the state, i.e., improvement of road network, sanitation, sewage and drainage facilities, electricity supply, provision of adequate, safe and pollution free drinking water, averting the spread of any kind of infectious and non-infectious diseases in the state. All these efforts need an active participation of the local community, provided the state government is taking proper initiatives for the involvement of the local people of the state in its development by providing ample job opportunities; as well as involving the local people in the entire process of development at every stage from its inception to its implementation, as local people have a better know-how of the development of a particular area.
- Encouraging Public – Private Partnership (PPP) in the development of the infrastructure as well as sustainable tourism in the state, as the government is better equipped with the plans, programmes and policies, as well as the funds required for its implementation; and the private investors have an advantage of using

technology efficiently and effectively for the same. This can also be accomplished with the help of BOT (Built, operate and transfer).

- Maintaining the ecological balance in the state by promoting greenery, by making the development sustainable (the development which does not affect the environment of the area), and encouraging green practices research and implementation.
- Undertaking promotion and marketing activities for tourist destinations in collaboration with the government.
- Providing adequate training and skill development opportunities for employment creation as well as provision of quality services to tourists.
- Actively participating in preservation and protection of tourist attractions.
- Taking steps to encourage local community involvement in planning, development and maintenance of tourism projects.
- Encouragement of private sector participation in the form of financial incentives such as lower taxes, subsidies, easy finance options or availability of land banks.
- Development of multiple tourist circuits in the state, based on varied themes of pilgrimage, adventure, natural flora and fauna, cultural heritage, rivers, topographic diversity, etc.
- Developing the neglected tourist centres in the state.
- Development of innovative tourism in the state in the forms of rural tourism, weekend tourism, farmhouse tourism, health tourism, festival tourism, museum tourism, medical tourism, hant tourism, wildlife (tiger or elephant) tourism, canal tourism, etc.
- Provision of adequate funds for repair of outdated or dilapidated tourist spots.
- Proper and effective implementation of plans and policies formulated by the Tourism Ministry and Department of the state.
- Promotion of local culture and handicrafts in the state, which will help in the income and employment generation capacity of the tourist centres of the state.
- Promoting FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in the state, in such a manner that helps in enhancing the scenic beauty, local culture and traditions, health, infrastructure and environment in the state. FDI should be allowed keeping in mind the local community needs in the state.

- Cooperative arrangement approach to be followed between the various stake holders of tourism in the state.
- Launching an integrated campaign for promoting the various Buddhist sites in the state.
- Increasing the investment by the state government, central government and private investors and also promoting FDI and FII in the tourism sector in the state.
- Increasing awareness in the state.
- Launching Cleanliness Campaign with local people and NGO's participation in the state to make the state pollution free, and promote sustainable and eco-tourism in the state.
- Development of vast human resources available in the state by providing them skill development training.
- Organising various festivals, cultural fairs, cultural shows, seminars, etc. for attracting a large number of domestic and international tourists in the state.
- Improving the accuracy and coverage of pollution monitoring, both in ambient air and at source. In other words, cleaner air should go hand in hand with the basic tenet of sustainable tourism.
- Establishment of more heritage sites in the state.
- Establishment of more theme/amusement parks in the state.
- Establishment of some more Nature Arcs in the state linking certain wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and some sacred forests for making tourism more sustainable and environment-friendly.

Findings of the Research: -

- There has been a commendable increase in the influx of domestic and international tourists in the years 2002 – 2009, since the launch of the Incredible India/ Colours of India Campaign.
- There has been a marginal increase in the influx of tourists (international) since the year 2009, due to the laxity of the state government and negligible local people participation.

- The major problem faced by the tourism sector is the effective implementation of the plans, programmes and policies.
- Local community participation was very less in the state in the development of the tourism sector.
- The problem of proper infrastructure, harassment by the local people, language translation as well as local people cooperation, etc. are the major constraints in the development of tourism sector in U.P.

Conclusion: -

U.P. is the state with the vast tourist opportunities and unexplored potential, which if dealt properly will lead to very high income and employment generation in the tourist centres of the state. U.P is the only state in the country with such a huge potential, but faced with certain infrastructural and implementation problems, which needs to be corrected at the very outset, for making the tourism sustainable and eco-friendly.

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