

Host Community Attitude Towards Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development in Manipur, India

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Abstract: Cultural tourism is becoming a trending form of tourism where tourists of all age groups seek meaningful and authentic experiences that are rooted in heritage, traditions and local lifestyles. It has become important to include sustainability practices in cultural tourism to safeguard the rich cultural resources that are already available in a destination. It is essential to not exploit the resources and help in conserving for future generation. To foster a tourism that respects and safeguard the cultural and natural resources, mutual understanding between the host community, stakeholders and tourist is a must. Manipur, which is in the north-eastern part of India where different communities are living together, is a region with rich cultural resources and traditions. The study aims to understand the current status of sustainable cultural tourism in Manipur. Also aims to evaluate the positive and negative attitudes of the host community towards the development of sustainable cultural tourism in the state. The data for the research is collected through various secondary sources. Recommendations are provided to ensure the improvement of the industry and livelihood of the host community that will help in enhancing the authenticity of tourism experiences and preserve cultural resources for the future generations.

Keywords: Sustainable, Cultural, Attitudes, Community, Environment, Development.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism, in today's generation is one of the industries that are flourishing very fast. The industry has been gaining lot of fame all over the globe. In this time and age where people are also busy with the industrialization and globalization, a moment of relaxation is what everyone adores. Various types of tourism has been introduced to fulfill the need and desired of the increasing numbers of tourists. Culinary/gastronomy tourism, community based tourism, medical tourism, adventure tourism, business tourism, rural tourism, alternative tourism, cultural and heritage tourism are some of the examples of the types of tourism that are now trending. It is an industry that adds values and nourishes the truth, beauty and virtue of a place.

Among the many types of tourism, sustainable cultural tourism has become very trending. It aims in prioritizing responsible travel, i.e. to respect the culture, tradition, lifestyles of the host community in the destination. It also focuses on minimizing the negative impacts of the tourism activities on the

natural environment and over exploitation of the available resources. It has become very important to initiate sustainable initiatives in tourism activities. This is not help only in economic benefits but it will also help in protecting the environment, cultural values and aligns with the needs and requirements of the local community as well (UNEP & WTO, 2005). To execute sustainable cultural tourism activities in a particular destination, the participation and involvement of host communities is very vital. Mutual understanding among the stakeholders of the industry is also one of the very important tasks and proper understanding of the values of the available resources is required. Understanding the attitudes of the host community towards the development of sustainable cultural tourism will help in providing an insight as to whether they consider it as cultural exchange and for generating income or as a hazard in their way of life.

➤ *Objective*

- To understand the current status of sustainable cultural tourism of the state, Manipur.
- To evaluate the positive and negative attitudes of the host community towards the development of sustainable cultural tourism in the state.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology of the paper is truly based on secondary data and is descriptive in nature. Data were collected from various sources like journals, websites, research papers, articles, government reports which were available in public domain.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The success of sustainable cultural tourism relies a lot in the attitude of the host communities. Social Exchange Theory (SET) related research suggests that the residents are more likely to support tourism if the benefit is more than the cost (Ap, 1992; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). Factors like the economic gains, preservation of culture and impacts on the environment significantly influence the perceptions of the host community. According to Tosun (2020) there is also variation on the residents' perception according to the involvement and distribution of the benefits. Moreover, Zhang, Inbakaran, and Jackson (2006) discovered that in the urban-rural context, their attitudes are being shaped by the host-guest interactions yet, Huh and Vogt (2008) concludes that the attitudes of the community evolve over time and it may also turn negative if the residents feels that they are excluded from the process of decision making.

Sustainable cultural tourism can be both an opportunity as well as a challenge. It was argued by Timothy any Boyd (2006) that while introducing cultural change, heritage tourism also conserves tradition. Stressing on the importance of various community-driven approaches, Li (2003) pointed out the contradictions that arises between conservation and commercialization. In this regard, Richard (2018) added that inclusive planning is becoming more comprehensive as cultural tourism now encompasses festivals, creative industries and also intangible heritage.

The local community considers the benefit of economy an industry provides before supporting it. According to Andereck and Vogt (2000), the residents show more support of tourism when they realize that the industry generate fair economic opportunities. It shows that cultural tourism is capable of enhancing the livelihoods of the local community by promoting local enterprise (Alisa & Ridho, 2020), meanwhile Wallace (2002) argued that the unequal benefit might help in fostering resentment among the locals.

The impact of cultural tourism on the environment is also very critical. It was argued by Harris, Williams and Griffin (2012) that sustainable tourism must balance growth along with the preservation of the ecology. However Anup (2018) showed that if managed responsibly, cultural tourism can promote conservation of the environment.

Mansperger (1995), in terms of cultural impacts, have warned that if the tourism industry is not properly managed, it will risk the corrosion of culture. Meanwhile, properly planned initiatives will help in the strengthening of the community pride. The heritage conservation principles were emphasized by Szczepanowska (2013) while the Wang, Yamada and Brothers (2011) brings out the challenges of safeguarding the intangible cultural resources in urban tourism.

The studies of cultural tourism remain limited in Manipur in the Indian context. The state's cultural richness was well documented by the early ethnographic works of Hodson (1901) and Shakespear (1913) also the recent reports of Manipur Tourism Department and E-Pao, 2021 shows the growing potential of cultural tourism in the state. Nevertheless, the empirical research shows a significant research gap on host community attitudes towards sustainable cultural tourism in Manipur.

Hence, the literature review suggests that through the support and positive attitude of the host communities, sustainable tourism can foster the development of the economy, preservation of culture and also the conservation of the environment.

➤ *Importance of Sustainable Cultural Tourism*

Sustainable cultural tourism is the need for the hour. With the increase in the inflow of tourist in a destination, over exploitation arises and this lead to depletion and decrease in the values of the available resources. Cultural tourism being one of the most trending forms of tourism, it is very important to implement the sustainability practices in executing its activities and services. Here are some of the importances of sustainable cultural tourism.

➤ *Cultural Heritage Preservation*

Cultural tourism is a form of tourism that deals with the cultural and heritage resources that are available in the designated destination. It is the type of tourism where the tourist are eager to learn, explore, experience and discover the culture, tradition, lifestyle, of the host community (G. Richards, 2018). Sustainable cultural tourism helps in safeguarding the existing cultural heritage resources like the traditions, arts, handloom and handicrafts, language, etc. This enables the local community to understand the value of their available resources and utilize the benefits wisely. It provides a platform where the resources can be shared with the tourist in such a way that it is conserve for the future generation.

➤ *Generating Economy for the Local Community*

Utilizing the available resources in such a way that it is conserve for the future generation is a sustainable practice. Cultural tourism provides job opportunities to the local community that help in boosting the economy of the community as a whole. Also, as this form of tourism deals with the cultural resources of the destination, local people are more aware of the tradition and values of the values which is of great advantage for the locals. These helps in generating various job opportunities and also involve them in decision making. Sustainable cultural tourism helps in generating income of the locals as it does not foster the need of the present for future generations (F. Alisa et al, 2020). It also ensures that the benefits are long lasting and are share equally by the locals that includes the homestay owners, tour guides, artisans, business owners etc.

➤ *Conservation of the Environment*

Sustainable cultural tourism activities involve practices that promote responsible travel and conservation of the natural and cultural resources. Tourism industry being a very versatile industry has impact on both the environment and the lifestyle of the local community and destination. Encouraging sustainability in the practices helps in the conservation of the environment without compromising the needs of the present activities. Proper management and planning has to be frame out in such a way that the activities promoted and indulging the tourist with do not have a negative impact on the environment. This help in promoting many destinations that has a huge resource for cultural tourism.

➤ *Community Participation*

The local communities are the one who are fully aware and have knowledge of the cultural resources in an area. Involvement of the local people in planning, decision making and executing the services is a must for show-casting the true and proper knowledge sharing of the culture, tradition, arts, crafts etc. Participation of the local communities helps in fostering a sense of ownership and entrepreneurship that enables them to understand the true value of their own resources. This will also help them in preserving the age old tradition, custom, arts, crafts, handloom and handicrafts, and many more cultural resources. The authentic experiences of the sustainable cultural tourism will also be showcased with the participation of the local communities in various tourism activities.

➤ *Cultural Exchange*

Cultural tourism is a form of tourism where the local community brings out their cultural resources for the tourist to experience. It is a visit to a place, where the visitor/tourist experiences the cultural practices, values, and traditions of the host community where mutual sharing of the culture takes place. It provides an opportunity where the guest and the host have mutual understanding of need and wants and provides a platform meaningful cultural exchange. Sustainable cultural tourism enables an interaction and sharing of the culture with

respect and high regard for each other and also helps in reducing the stereotypes among the different cultures.

➤ *Prevention of Cultural Erosion*

Tourism activities if not properly planned and designed can be a threat to the locals, culture and to the environment. This will erode the available resources and living style of the local community without leaving anything for the future to experience and learn. It is where the importance of sustainable cultural tourism arises. Sustainable cultural tourism enables the locals and the tourism to experience proper cultural tourism activities without degrading the available resources. It helps in mitigating the erosion of cultural resources while catering to the needs of the tourists and visitors. As sustainable cultural tourism promotes transfer of knowledge through education and awareness programs, it ensures that the locals are well aware of the benefit of implying sustainable practices in various cultural tourism actives which will help in protecting and prevention of the cultural erosion. This will not only help in preventing the cultural erosion but will also help in improving the living standard of the local community.

➤ *Cultural Tourism in Manipur*

Manipur, also known as the 'Jewel of India' is a small state in the north eastern part of the country. With different communities living together, state is filled with vibrant culture and tradition. Surrounded by many hills and mountains, it has a huge natural resource of flora and fauna. Sangai, Nongin, Shirui lily, being the state animal, state bird and state flower respectively are rare plants and animals that are found only in the state. The state celebrates festivals and fairs of different communities all throughout the year. Visitors are attracted in the state because of its unique diversity of culture, tradition, ethnic, customs, etc.

The state is home to various ethnic groups, Meitei being the major community. It enables the visitors to explore and experience the different ethnicity, way of life, tradition, dance forms, festivals, cuisines and even cultural rituals. Different festivals are also celebrated all throughout the year in the state. Festivals like Yaoshang, kang chingba, lai haraoba, lu-ngai-ni, Sangai festivals, Shirui lily festivals helps in showcasting the different traditions and customs to the whole world. Dance forms of Manipur are also famous all around the globe. Ras Lila, Thang Ta, Pung cholom, Thabal chongba, etc are some of the dance forms that help in providing a glimpse of the cultural tradition of the state.

Loktak lake, Kangla for, Bishnu Temple, Govindajee Temple, Andro Village, Tharon Cave, Shirui Kashong Peak, etc are some of the examples of historical and religious site in Manipur. These places are unique in its own way as it represents different communities. With different communities living together in the state, the cuisines are also very delightful. Ngari is one of the basic most essential parts of the rich cuisine for the people of Manipur. It provides a big platform for the gastronomy tourism in the state.

Manipur, being a state with various diversity in culture, tradition, food, lifestyle, offers a unique blend of various tourism activities. Due to its diverse landscape, and other available resources almost all the types of tourism is possible in the state and it thus attracts lots of tourist all throughout the year. Cultural tourism being a blend of both natural and cultural resources is of huge potential in the state. It provides an enriching and soothing experience for the tourist and also this particular form of tourism helps in preserving the cultural resources. The state has a huge potential of developing sustainable cultural tourism that will benefit both the tourist and the local community which will also helps in promoting the state internationally.

IV. IMPACTS OF HOST COMMUNITY'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL TOURISM

Host community plays a very crucial role in promoting and preserving the sustainable cultural tourism in any destination. Attitude of the host community is very essential in the development of sustainable cultural tourism the positive and negative impact of the host community is very crucial in determining the success and decline of the tourism industry in the area. Some of the important impacts of host community attitudes towards development of sustainable cultural tourism through positive attitude and negative attitude are:

A. Positive Attitude:

➤ *Preservation of Cultural Heritage*

Cultural tourism is truly dependable on the host community. When the host communities helps and actively participate in sustainable cultural tourism practices, it enables a long term conservation of the resources available. As the involvement of the host community is essential in executing any cultural tourism related activities, the positive attitudes helps in preserving the cultural heritage for long term. It is important for the community to value and support cultural tourism so that they will actively participate in preserving the cultural heritage that fosters their pride.

➤ *Economic Growth*

When locals come together to promote sustainability practices for cultural tourism, it contributes to the growth of economy for the whole community. Engaging the locals in planning, decision making, hosting, guide and other cultural tourism related activities encompasses positive attitude of the host community towards the development of sustainable cultural tourism. It also ensures that the economic growth is distributed equally to all the local community so that it does not create any inequality among them and grow together as a whole.

➤ *Environmental Conservation*

Participation of the local community in the development of sustainable cultural tourism enables them to understand the impact and values of their environmental natural resources. This helps in safeguarding and conserving the available resources by implementing various strategies and practices. A thorough knowledge and awareness is required for this.

➤ *Strengthening Social Cohesion*

Promoting sustainable cultural tourism in an area requires the participation of the local community. Understanding the value and benefits of practicing the sustainability practices allows the locals to respect and put efforts to conserve the available resources and showcase their rich culture and tradition. This requires the effort of the whole community and it helps in strengthening the social bond among the locals.

➤ *Enhanced Tourist Experience*

Tourism being a service sector, it is very important to consider the attitude of the host. Positive attitude truly enhanced the experience of the tourist. Cultural tourism as an activity that requires the involvement and participation of the local, it is essential for the locals to have a proper understanding of the service they are providing and welcome the tourist or visitors with great enthusiasm. This will enable the tourist to enjoy an authentic cultural experience and have an immersive cultural exchange.

➤ *Long Term Sustainability*

Sustainability practices are initiated in tourism so that the resources are not depleted and can be conserved for the future generation. Active participation and positive attitude of the host community towards the sustainable cultural tourism will initiate a long term sustainability of the available resources of both the cultural and natural resources. This help in balancing the preservation of culture, growth in the economy and also in protecting the environment from depletion.

B. Negative Attitude:

➤ *Degradation of Cultural Heritage*

Cultural heritage degradation arises from the negative attitude of the host. When one feels excluded from the responsibility of their activities, their interest for participating in the common goal decreases that leads to the negligence and depletion of the cultural assets.

➤ *Inequity of Economic Growth*

Money plays a huge role in any sector. In-equal growth of the economy rises from the dissatisfaction of the tourism activities or their participation and involvement. It is a factor that reduces the potential for economic growth in the community and rise in inequity among the locals through development of sustainable cultural tourism.

➤ *Depletion of the Environment*

Negative attitude of the host community towards the development of sustainability leads to the lack of community engagement in the tourism sector. Overuse of the resources leads to the depletion of the environment and if kept unchecked, the resources will be gone for good.

➤ *Weakening of Social Cohesion*

Cultural tourism is a type of activity that requires the tourist to experience the culture and tradition of the host community. If the traditions and customs that are exhibited are not kept in check it will create a social tension and create conflict among the local communities.

➤ *Diminished Tourist Experience*

As this particular form of tourism requires in hand experience, the attitude of the host can be of huge negative impact to the tourist. Unfriendly and reluctant host's attitudes towards the tourist can diminish the experience of the tourist and lead to the downfall of the industry in the area.

The attitude of the host is very vital in determining the development of sustainable cultural tourism. Proper planning, knowledge, understanding of the whole process is required to uphold the tourism practices in the area. Positive attitude is very much essential for the development and long run of the sustainable cultural tourism that will benefit both the environment and the local communities.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

To successfully develop and understand the attitude of the host community that affects the development, some measures need to be taken up. Manipur being a small state with diversity in culture and natural resources has a huge potential for developing sustainable cultural tourism. It is important to enhance the involvement and ownership of the local community. Conservation and promotion of cultural and heritage can be initiated to enhance the development. In developing sustainable tourism it is essential to strengthen the infrastructure, create strong marketing and branding strategies that influence the tourist to visit the destination. It is also very important to monitor and evaluate the impacts of the activities so that the resources remain intact and is not depleted for future generation.

VI. CONCLUSION

Cultural tourism contributes in the preservation of the past of a destination (E Agisilaos, 2012). Sustainable cultural tourism provides a great opportunity for various destinations. It acts as a platform for cultural exchange among different communities while safeguarding the resources. Manipur, a state with rich cultural and natural resources has a huge potential for developing sustainable cultural tourism. With proper planning and strategies it can be brought to the global platform.

The positive and negative attitude of the host community needs to be addressed for the successful growth of sustainable cultural tourism. It can be a bridge or a barrier for the development of sustainability. So, a proper understanding of the values and benefits of the development is required for the host community. Education, awareness programs, collaborations among various stakeholders, etc are very important for both the industry and the host community alike.

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