

# The sustainability of tourist destinations which have strong sense of place

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**Abstract**— This paper aims at investigating the sustainability of those tourist destinations which have strong sense of place. It also describes differences between the places which have a strong sense of place than those which do not have it. I have described the importance of sense of place with reference to the literature. Some tourist destination places of United States have been discussed to describe why these places have more visitors annually than others. This research also provides several recommendations and solutions to build up sense of place of certain tourist destination. The importance of tourism industry and some components for the development of the industry have also been discussed.

**Index Terms**— The sustainability, tourist destinations, strong sense of place.

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## Identification of Issue

### 1 The need:

People want to visit different places. Same Daily routines, tough schedules, tired of the same environment and neighborhoods compel people to pack their stuff, leave the door step and explore those places they want to visit. Mostly tourists prefer the places they find comfortable. Access of everything like food, transportation, accommodation, parks and other amusement activities play a very important role in making a destination worth seeing and visiting.

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These types of places always have great number of people who visit them more often that is why they last longer than those places with which they are not comfortable. Hence development of emotional association with places creates a

harmony and feeling of care for these places. It provides everyone in the community to work for the betterment and promotion of these places among visitors. The places where people neglect their tourist destination, they lose their worth.

### 1.2 Problem Statement:

This paper will investigate how tourist destinations having strong sense of place are more popular and sustainable than those which lack this sense of place?

### 1.3 Who will benefit?

This research report will be beneficial for the tourists, travelling companies, tourist organizations, stake holders, and local governments of that area.

### 1.4 Method for Investigation and Analysis

This research will focus on differentiating the sustainability of two types of tourist destinations:

1. The places which have a good sense of

place.

2. Places which do not have sense of place.

This will include the examples from few tourist destinations having or lacking sense of place. Relationship between sustainability and sense of place will be described briefly.

It will also be compared to similar research studies and findings to support the case. The research will be conducted on both online sources and literature such as professional papers, journals, and academic books.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Research Study Literature Related to the Problem:

Tourism is the only industry which involves both human and physical environment as its product. This has become a major concern these days as people are more interested in the continuity, value and integrity of this combination of human and physical environment. Research has been conducted to investigate the impacts of physical environment on humans and effects of humans on this physical environment. Global code of ethics for tourism in the charter of The World Tourism Organization and nature and eco accreditation program of eco-tourism Australia are the good examples.

Tourism is a development tool with double edge; it is the potential to affect the people and places both in positive and negative way. Awareness regarding effects of tourism generates a feeling of responsibility towards tourism development in a way that it brings minimum harm to people or places (Butler, 1991).

Sustainability of a place refers to its care and maintenance and includes preservation, protection, restoration and development of a place. Tourist destinations need more care when it comes to their sustainability. The visitors, local people and sometimes environmental conditions may also bring harm to the natural or artificial settings of this place. Tourism and sustainability has a strong connection because tourism industry sometimes brings harm to the sustainability.

The relationship between tourism and sustainability is a major concern for the people, government and organizations who want to preserve their resources and tourist destinations along with economic growth (Environmental Canada's Sustainable Development Strategy 2001-2003). Literature suggests that natural based tourism involves wide interaction between environment, social and economic conditions of place, its capacity to bear and follow up these conditions, experiences of tourist and more opportunities for tourism in that place over time (murphy, 1985; Whelan , 1991 ;Lindberg and Hawkins, 1993).

Hence sustainable tourism leads toward the responsible development of tourism which have grown from the communities' sustainable development and awareness regarding depletion of natural resources (WCED, 1987). Sustainable development is now of major concern due to the allotment, depletion and utilization of natural resources and its places (Slocombe and Van Bers, 1991; Potts and Harrill, 1997).

Sustainable eco-tourism is very popular these days. People are well aware of the importance and value of places and their environment. This sensitivity regarding environment leads towards the sustainable development. Sustainable Eco tourism does not destroy the resources, natural habitat, social fabric and physical environment of any place (Swarbrooke, 1999). The changes in the local culture create a negative impact on the sustainable environmental preservation as it limits the beauty and color of the nature which attracts the tourist to experience it.

Local community of any tourism destination behaves as the host for tourists. They should be involved directly in the protection and sustainability of the area (Gartner, 1007. P. 190). This local community and workers of tourist destination are responsible for the identification of product elements' nature which involves sense of place and designing and production of tourism

experience in a different way each time. Sense of place is responsible for the development and improvement of the destination image. It focuses on the need and requirement of people and affects the interest of local community in long term perspective during, before and after the development, planning and marketing of any destination place (Go, 1989, p. 169).

As sustainability refers to the long term use of any resource or place so Ryel and Grasse (1991) gives four components for the sustainability of tourist destinations. These components include:

- Enhanced awareness regarding nature
- Generation of more business for local people
- Maximization of the cultural sensitivity
- Control of any damage or harm on environment

The destinations which lack this cultural sensitivity often results into less tourist capital. It attracts less income and people interest for the protection and preservation of the tourist destinations which makes the destination unsustainable.

Sense of place is topographical, social, emotional and psychological concept. It is an attachment of people with places. The places which have a high sense of place have a strong identification by local inhabitants and tourists which helps in the preservation and maintenance of that place. This

sense of place associated with the specific settings is evolved from the experience of individuals or group's from local community (Stedman, 2003). It is usually determined on the basis of gender, race and class of that society. A place is the core of field which is associated with the people's experience, thoughts, emotions, social relationships and interactions (Yi-Fu Tuan, 1977). The sense of place can be determined or gauged by the following factors:

- Place attachment
- Place dependence
- Place identity
- Overall sense of place

## 2.2 Case Study Literature Related to the Issue/Problem:

I have compared many tourist destinations in USA to figure out the sense of place of different places. Walt Disney World Resort from Orlando, Florida has 45 million visitors per year. There are theme parks, water parks, Golf and recreation and Disney resorts. People have a very deep association with these things. Children have great attraction for all the Disney characters so they enjoy this place a lot.

Times Square having 35 million visitors annually is again a great place to visit. Visitors find flashing lights, megastores, sheer spectacles and famous Broadway shows there. They can enjoy

their hang out at café tables placed in pedestrian only area. Tourists can find hotels, restaurants, coffee shops and stores with affordable price and public transport as well. This increases the sense of place, which generates the revenue for maintenance and worker interest in maintaining the place.

On the other hand Mogadishu and Bakaara in Somalia gets only 500 tourist per year. Although one can find beaches and some clubs but still it has very less number of tourist per year. Local community is not concerned with its beauty that is why the place is losing its attraction.

Central park New York City is one of the most beautiful parks of New York with larger green space and covers 850 acre of space. Old people, adults, teenagers and children, they all come and visit this park. The management has arranged many attractions in the park for amusement of people like:

- Horse drawn carriages
- Small zoo
- Belvedere castle of 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Skyscrapers
- Great lawns

That is why nearly 38 million people visit it every year.

Niagara Falls in New York has 22 million visitors per year. It has waterfall spill of 6 million cubic feet of water which falls every single minute from

different heights between 70 to 188 feet. Niagara Falls is famous among other waterfalls because of its sheer power. Another advantage for tourists is that it is easily accessible.

Faneuil Hall Marketplace Boston is a great attraction for tourists to shop around the entire area. Almost 18 million people visit this place which is a downtown market place having more than 100 shops that have their specialized stuff.

### **2.3 Conceptual and Theoretical Literature Related to the Problem**

- The tourist destinations are popular on the basis of their sense of place
- Sense of place is in fact a kind of social and emotional attachment of people with that specific place
- People value places on the basis of believes, love, convenience and security.
- Historic places are also a treasure for the local community and people love them. Many people are interested in knowing the history of those places.
- The places which are popular among people are usually more sustainable.
- Sustainability depends upon the following four factors:
  - Place attachment: Some people who work in that place or visit these places everyday (locals) make a

special attachment with its environment (Nanzer, 2004).

- Place dependence: Some places provide specific goals or activities by providing certain environment and conditions.
- Place identity: It helps in creating a sense of belonging in that community and urge people to care for it more and make association with that place (Stokols and Shumaker, 1981)
- Overall sense of place: It describes the association of people with the place. It is overall view of that community about the place.
- Sustainability of tourist destinations earns more business for the tourism in country and helps in the growth of tourism industry.
- People visiting the country bring business and finance to the country, hence increasing the per capita income of the locals.

### **2.4 Options Identified in the Literature for Approaching the Problem**

- Educating people regarding the importance of the places they have and making them to be responsible towards their protection and preservation.
- Involve all the stake holders in playing their

role in the development of tourism in area so the destination places must sustain for a long period of time.

- To urge tourist for taking care of the emotions of local people for their place and try not to bring harm to any of the belonging.

### 2.5 Summary of the Literature Review

- Tourism industry is one of very important industries of any country. It generates revenue, bring people close together and preserve important places of the country. The places which build a feeling of trust and convenience become more popular among tourist than the places who fail to do so. The sense of place makes people more concerned regarding their culture and places. Some places in US are very popular among tourist and around 40 million people visit these places in holidays for hangouts which is due to the people who are living and working in that area.

### 3 Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 3.1 Conclusion:

The long and short of it all is that if one wants to develop tourism industry in country then a

strong sense of responsibility, belonging and love with the tourist places must be created. This will not only result in the enhancement of those places but also result in the growth of tourism in the country. So the government, local people, NGOs and tourists all should gather to make the places worth seeing. Tourism department should hire locals as promoters which may guide the tourists and provide them with all sufficient information regarding the area. People living near the tourist destinations should use the goods and services which reflect their culture and show their love and association towards these places. This will help in earning a place of dignity and respect for their community, place and country among the international community.

#### 3.2 Recommendations:

- Government should educate people about the tourism industry.
- Local community must get enough authority to take care of their places.
- Everyone in the local community must take part in the promotion of tourism destination of their area.
- People must promote their association, history, conditions and specialties of the place to attract visitors.

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