

CHAPTER 3.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

3.1 The concept of sustainable development.

Sustainable development has gained ground as a suitable form of development. It is also applicable to tourism in a unique way. The most quoted definition of sustainable development is that of the 1987 Brundland Commission's report which explains it as, "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (WCED, 1987: 7). This definition also emphasises the need to incorporate environmental protection and conservation aspects into the developmental programmes (Hall and Lew, 1998). Sustainable development has also been defined by Parikh (1995) to mean development that can be continued "forever". In addition, equity or growth-with-distribution issues have been perceived to be part and parcel of sustainable development. This has been the case especially among the "environmentalists" and activists. Their fear is that poverty may force people into unsustainable behaviour and subsequently cause environmental degradation (Parikh, 1995: 129).

However, the pursuance of the environmental issues has also caused some fear among "developmentalists". This fear is due to the possibility of using environmental protection and conservation to arrest developmental programmes which are badly needed to reduce poverty and human deprivation in the world (Ibid: 141). Despite being controversial, the concept of sustainable development has largely been upheld as an appropriate recipe for

charting out a holistic and long-term approach towards development. This spirit was more visible at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil (Hall and Lew, 1998).

3.1.2. Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is understood as a component of sustainable development which was defined before as, “development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987).

Although tourism has helped to provide jobs, foreign exchange and economic transformation to the host countries, the sector has been associated with some negative environmental impacts. These negative impacts have prompted some international organisations and movements to pursue holistic approaches like sustainable tourism as a means of protecting and conserving the environment.

3.1.3. Approaches for sustainable tourism

One of the approaches regularly advocated for realising sustainable tourism is determining the carrying capacity. Carrying capacity is a term borrowed from wildlife ecology which means “ the maximal population size of a given species that an area can support without reducing its ability to support the same species in the future” (Daily and Ehrlich, 1992).

The concept of carrying capacity has been applied to the land use planning growth management, and other aspects of human activity. Its major problem, however, is that impact and evaluation often become confused. An example is the concept of “resource damage”. All human interaction with the environment have impacts, but can we call all these impact damage? Whether it is damage depends on personal judgement and broader public values. But “because of the subjectivity of these values, it is important managers carry on active dialogue with a variety of publics” (Hall and Lew, 1998:77).

In addition, carrying capacity planning “focuses attention on the ability of the natural environment to support growth. It suggests that development should respect the functioning of the natural process of the environment. It shows that natural process and man-made systems can have positive or negative effects, or both” (Schneider et. Al., 1978: 10).

The second approach is by carrying out an environmental impact assessment (EIA). The EIA is intended to improve projects environmentally and compensate for adverse impacts. It is also “a major operational tool to approach sustainability at the project level” (Goodland et. Al., 1992). The EIA should be a part and parcel of the planning process, and should begin when project planning begins, not after key decisions have been taken or when an opportunity appears for the modification of the project (Hall and Lew, 1998). Recently, the EIA has become scientifically more rigorous and its scope has gradually been expanded to include social, economic, cultural and other biophysical environmental concerns (Ibid: 80). The third approach is Visitor Impact Management (VIM). This

approach is used to assess the impacts of visitors on a resource and recreation experience. It involves the systematic collection of data to predict the impacts of differing management strategies, and the collection of management information on the desirability of identified alternatives. According to Hall and Lew (1998: 84), VIM helps to address three issues that are central in impact management. They are as follows: -

- (a) Identification of problem conditions of unacceptable visitor impacts e.g. conflicts between recreationists using a resource.
- (b) Determination of potential causal factor affecting occurrence and severity of unacceptable resources; and
- (c) Selection of potential management strategies to address the unacceptable conditions.

Additionally, the VIM may be direct (regulate or restrict visitor activities) or indirect (influence visitor behaviour). (see figure 1.)

Figure: 1. Visitor Management Strategies

Direct	Indirect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enforcement -Zoning -Rationing use intensity -Restricting activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Physical alteration -Information dispersal -Economic constraints

Source: Hall and Lew (1998: 85)

The fourth approach is visitor experience and resource protection. This approach is characterized by public involvement through the planning phase of a tourist resort project. It also addresses aspects of visitors' carrying capacity.

3.1.4. Key Requirements for Sustainability in Planning and Management of Tourism

Sustainable tourism planning and management can only be achieved by fulfilling certain important factors. These factors include:

(i) Ecologically sustainable development

Understanding ecological implications of a particular project is very vital for sustainable development. However, "unlike other factors, ecological integrity is absolutely necessary from the outset" (Hall and Lew, 1998: 85). Ecological considerations should also touch socio-economic equity and link between social and environmental indicators.

(ii) Public Involvement.

According to Hall and Lew (1998), "for community-based environmental management to succeed, environmental, social and economic objectives must be integrated and pursued with the full participation of the affected groups and individuals". This spirit may also be applied in tourism where tourism developers and professionals should take account for local community⁴³ attitudes and feelings, including the way that a local unaltered environment

contributes to a community's senses of place. Participation of residents in tourism planning is fundamental. It prevents narrow special-interest groups from dictating the development process and avoids future disagreements.

(iii) Sectoral and intersectional conflict resolution.

As noted by Hall and Lew (1998: 880, "conflict is an essential part of the group process and not something to be avoided. Without conflict, major value issues are not raised and examined". Through dialogue and consultation with the concerned communities, consensus is often reached on ecological, economic, cultural and social aspects associated with a resource or its usage. Furthermore, there is always a need to integrate the effects of sectoral management activities within government, effects of management and spheres of government and between governments, community and industrial groups (Ibid: 87)

(iv) Integrated resource management

Integrated resource management is one of the key aspects of sustainable development. It requires recognition of the regional dimension of use and the spectrum of opportunity that a region can supply, as well as a flexible approach in implementing projects.

(v) Social values and ethics

When carrying out tourism-related projects, decision-makers and implementers need to establish an explicit procedure upon which to base their judgements and resolving conflicts. For example, economic compensation may not be a remedy for a dispute related to cultural and social values of the affected community. In addition, since social norms and values are not static, public expectations for resource management will definitely change over time (Hall and Lew, 1998).

(vi) Monitoring

Monitoring is important to deal with unexpected changes in resource utilisation and management. The monitoring system should be related to an environmental impact assessment audit and a post-development environmental audit programme should be introduced as part of the environmental impact assessment.

3.2 Ecotourism

3.2.1. Definition

Ecotourism has been defined by Hall and Lew (1998) as tourism, which is characterised by any of the following:

- (a) A strong concern by the tour operator for the environment and local cultures where the tours are operated.
- (b) A company policy of contributing to local, environmental and social causes⁴⁵ where the tours are operated; and

- (c) The education of both guides and tourists/clients to be more sensitive in the destination environment.

Other authors have defined the same concept as:

- (a) "...travel to natural area and participation in natural-related activities without degrading the environment and preferably promoting natural resources conservation" (Ti, 1994).
- (b) "...tourism which promotes the conservation of natural resources and habitats" (Boo, 1992)

3.2.2. Significance of ecotourism.

Most countries promote tourism in order to earn foreign exchange but that does not becloud their interest in preserving their environment for the future generations. Of recent, ecotourism has become part and parcel of the development agendas of many countries. This is because the growing global concern for the environment and the quality of life of communities (Hall and Lew, 1998: 92).

Besides, ecotourism has been associated with following benefits:

- (a) It generates local employment, both directly in the tourism sector and in the various support and resource management sectors such as land management and wildlife management.
- (b) It stimulates profitable domestic industries including hotels, restaurants,⁴⁶ transport systems and souvenir, handcraft sales and guide services;

- (c) It diversifies the local economy, particularly in rural areas where agriculture, fisheries and other forms of employment may be sporadic or insufficient;
- (d) It promotes the maintenance of parks and reserves, which can become showcases for the country and which can therefore entice investment;
- (e) It encourages the economically productive use of land, which may be marginal for agriculture, enabling larger tracts of land to remain covered in natural vegetation, and safeguarding water supplies and other environmental services.

3.3 Rural Tourism

3.3.1. Definition.

Rural tourism has been defined as “a visit by a person: to any place other than his or her casual work or home environment and that is outside a standard Metropolitan Statistical Area when exercising an activity other than one remunerated in the place visited. The purpose of such a visit may be pleasure, business, study, health or religion”. (United State Congress, 1989). However, some authors like Bramwell and Lane (1994) have refused any attempt to provide a uniform definition of rural tourism saying that rural areas differ from one country to another. Instead, various characteristics have been adopted to describe the concept of rurality. Some of these characteristics are:

- (a) Low population densities and open space
 - (b) Small-scale settlements, generally of less than 10,000 inhabitants;
 - (c) Land use is dominated by farming, forestry and natural areas;
 - (d) Societies tend towards traditionalism: the influence of the past is often strong;
- and

- (e) Government policies lean towards conservation rather than radical or rapid change (Bramwell and Lane, 1994: 14)

Figure 2: A list of contrasting between urban/resort tourism and rural tourism.

Urban/Resort tourism	Rural tourism
Little open space	Much open space
Settlement over 10,000 inhabitants	Settlement under 10,000 inhabitants
Built environment	Natural environment
Many indoor activities	Many outdoor activities
Intensive infrastructure	Weak infrastructure
Professional management	Amateur management
Cosmopolitan in atmosphere	Local in atmosphere
Many modern buildings	Many older buildings
No farm/forestry involvement	Some farm/forestry involvement
Nationally/internationally owned firms	Locally owned business
Large establishments	Small establishments.

Source: Bramwell and Lane (1994: 19)

3.3.1 The Growth of Rural Tourism

Rural tourism is not totally new. Its growth increased in the 19th century to cater for the inhabitation of the expanding cities in Europe and America. For example, the Alps and the American and Canadian Rockies were early rural tourism venues assisted by rail-led marketing and capital investment (Bramwell and Lane, 1994)

The rural tourism of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s is, however, different in several ways. Most important of all, is that “tourism has developed away from spectacularly scenic areas into country side of all types. It has also broken force of large and specialised resorts into small towns and villages to become truly rural (Ibid : 8)

Growth in rural tourism is difficult to quantify, because few countries collect statistics in a way that separates purely rural from other forms of tourism. In the developed countries where serious attempts have been made to develop rural tourism, data collection has been a key element of the entire process. In the United States, it is estimated that over 70 percent of the Americans now participate in rural recreation. In the American states of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, ranch and farm hospitality enterprises have increased from five in 1985 to ninety in 1992 (Bramwell and Lane, 1994).

Similar trends have been observed in the United Kingdom where three-quarters of the population are reported to have visited the countryside at least once in 1990 (Shaw and Williams, 1994: 223).

3.3.2 Sustainable Rural Tourism.

Of late, the issue of sustainable development has infiltrated into national and international development programmes. This is because of the negative environmental impacts that accompany man's developmental activities. Being one of these activities, tourism at both national and local levels has been attacked by especially environmental campaigners and green movements for causing environmental degradation. For example, "the physical impact of feet, litter and vehicles, the economic impact of tourism's multi-nationals, the social impact of mass visitation on cultures, heritage areas and objects-all-and-more are now seen as problems" for future development process (Bramwell and Lane, 1994: 19). The economic stability of the rural world can be at risk from new, perhaps large-scale tourism business seeking short-term gains.

According to Bramwell and Lane (1994), there are three reasons why rural tourism must be pursued on a sustainable basis. One of such reasons is that the advancement in technology, that is, transport and communication, has increased massive movement of people to all rural regions, no matter how remote, in a way undreamed of even twenty-five years ago. The long-haul flight, the car hire, the 4-wheel drive vehicle, combined with the power of television's travel programmes which daily seeks new undiscovered areas have all presented a challenge to the continued existence of traditional rurality. Thus, sustainable management systems, defining carrying capacities and regulating access, may be a solution to this type of issue.

The second justification for sustainable rural tourism is the existence of powerful tensions between the forces of rural development seeking to reverse rural decline and the forces for conservation, which may seek to fossilise the countryside. Again here sustainable rural tourism is needed to reconcile the tensions involved through the dialogue, consultation and building consensus with the concerned communities and stakeholders.

The third reason is about sustaining the rural economy. Since the existence of rural areas have often meant regional inequality and unbalanced economic development, much of the attention should be focused on improving the living standards of the people in rural areas, but in order to realise such objective on sustainable basis, there is need to pursue environmental aspects as an integral part of the entire programme.

3.4 Urban Tourism.

After a long period of continuous growth, most of the larger cities in the industrilised countries were confronted in the 1970s and the early 1980s with the symptoms of what has frequently been called "urban crisis" (Berg et. Al., 1995).

In addition to harsh economic conditions such as high employment and declining economic activities, urban cores were increasingly troubled by congestion, air and soil pollution, crime and physical downgrading (Ibid: 5). Such discouraging conditions often forced people to leave the central cities for new locations in ring municipalities or smaller towns. In the second half of the 1980s, on the wave of worldwide economic recovery, some of the principalities in Western Europe and United States regained something of⁵¹

their former leading position. But the process of urban revival has so far been selective and mostly experienced where local authorities have adopted an innovative and active urban revitalisation policy (Berg et. Al., 1995)

An important role in the recently “formulated renewal plans of many cities has been reserved for activities typical of post-industrial society: tourism and recreation” (Ibid : 6). This has been the case in cities like Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest, Dublin, Florence, Istanbul, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris, Prague, Rome, Stockholm, Vienna, Venice, and St. Petersburg.

The initial perception about cities or urban environments was that they should be fully built and unbuilt areas, have often been wrongly viewed as unused space (Hall and Lew, 1998). Of recent, however, this perception has been broadening to incorporate environmental aspects and to pursue development in a holistic and sustainable manner.

According to Berg et al (1995), the basic conditions for successful urban tourist development are as follows:

(a) The city must have an appealing image.

There are cities where people are convinced that they will have a pleasant time, and other which people think they had better avoid. The role of the image seems banal, but its importance has been frequently confirmed. How far the image interferes with the choice of destination and how the images correspond to the quality of the tourist product that is actually offered, is hard to access. The studies will show how important the image is, and how difficult to change.

- (b) A city must be sure of its ability to supply a range of easily accessibly and highly competitive tourist products.**

The competition on the world market of city trips is becoming so fierce that the possession of natural and man-made resources alone is pertinently insufficient for a new comer to join the rank of established tourist destinations like the western capitals.

Originality is a major strength, since curiosity is what drives tourists; hence, copying the success of other cities is doomed to fail. Furthermore, the overall product offered needs to fit the image the city possesses or aspires to.

- (c) Sustainable urban tourism**

Sustainable policies and programmes towards tourism development must be vigorously pursued to avoid the negative externalities. This calls for the incorporation of environmental social and ecological aspects into the tourism activities.