



Modern Tourism Development through Sustainable Tourism Approach: A Case study of Pilgrimage Tourism in Varanasi.

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the biggest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the global economy and has significant environmental, cultural, social, and economic effects, both positive and negative. Pilgrimage tourism is one of the pre-requisites of achieving sustainable development which can be taken as a remedy to manage tourism effects. This paper focuses on the sustainable development of pilgrimage tourism in Varanasi situated in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Varanasi has been a tourist spot due to its magnificently diverse religious tourist potential and rich cultural heritage. The main objectives of the study are the formation of tourist areas, to highlight the factors creating hindrances in sustainable tourism development and suggest suitable measures for sustainable development of pilgrimage tourism in Varanasi. A field based systematic survey was carried out at selected tourism spots in the study area. The result of the study brings feasible suggestions and recommendations for further development of tourism in this region.

Keywords: *Economic, global, sustainable, emerging, heritage, development*

Introduction

In recent decades, the tourism industry has shown sustained growth in revenues and number of tourist arrivals, mainly through foreign exchange earnings, contributions to national income, generation of employment, business opportunities and has left extensive economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts almost every part of the world (Dabour, 2003). As a result, countries are focusing on the need to promote sustainable tourism development to minimize its environmental impact and to maximize socio-economic overall benefits at tourist destinations (Ahmed, 2013). Hence, sustainable development is achieved if the economical, social and ecological development of a country is done in a sound and fair manner (Filho, 2000). This means that in order to achieve sustainable tourism, sustainable practices must be achieved in every sector related with tourism industry and of view, pilgrimage involves sightseeing, travelling, visiting different places Given the importance and magnitude of pilgrimage tourism, the infrastructure and services at the pilgrimages sites needs to be developed in such a way that it can be positively sustained for the coming years. Sustainability is a positive approach to reduce the tension and friction created by the interactions between the tourism industry, visitors, the environment and the communities which are host of holiday makers. Sustainable tourism development work for the long-term

viability and quality of both natural and human resources (Gupta, 1998). Pilgrimage tourism is rooted within a composition of heritage tourism and mass tourism activities. Sustainability in pilgrimage tourism includes ecological, socio-cultural, economic and experiential dimensions with an aim to diminish the harmful impacts of tourism. By understanding this Kaul & Gupta (2009) stated that the balance between sustainable development and pilgrimage tourism not only improve economic development but must also be synonyms with environmental, socio-cultural preservation and protection in order to ensure a successful pilgrimage tourism industry.

Sustainable tourism as one that, “Meets the need of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunities for future.” Similarly, the basic needs for sustainability are similar to pilgrimage/ religious tourism generally, ranging from trying to make large-scale pilgrimage tourism with low environmental, socio-cultural damage to destination and its communities (Venkatachalam & Patwardhan, 2011). Varanasi is known as one of the oldest living city of the world and one of the Jyoytirlingas in India. It has acquired its importance from ancient past. The scriptures depicted that all Gods come here on the occasion of solar eclipse. Diana Eck writes (1982) *There are few cities in India as traditionally Hindu and as symbolic of the whole of Hindu culture as the city of Banaras. And there are few cities in India, or in the world for that matter, as challenging and bewildering to western visitors as Banaras. It is a city as rich as all India. But it is not easy city to comprehend for those of us who stand outside the hindu tradition.* A large number of pilgrims from different places visited here to take a dip in this sacred river Ganga but stakeholders in Varanasi fail to sustain its growing continuance. The reason behind this is the lack of sustainable management of pilgrimage places of Varanasi. To achieve a sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of tourism impacts, introduction of necessary preventive or corrective measure whenever required (Bansal and Singhal, 2007). The maintenance of environmental, social and cultural heritage at pilgrimage site is only means to guarantee the proper growth of this sector. As there have been only a few studies that focused on the sustainable development through pilgrimage tourism in Varanasi.

Objectives

The present study has certain research objectives. They are as follows:

- To identify the major pilgrimage spots of Varanasi which have enough potentiality for development.
- To identify the factors which create hindrance in the sustainable development of tourism in the study area.
- To suggest recommendations which develop the tourism in Varanasi in a more sustainable way.

Research Methodology

The study is generally exploratory in nature and used both primary and secondary data source to meet the objectives of the study. Most significantly the study used secondary data sources such as previous studies i.e. books, journals, reports, magazines and online data sources. During the field, investigation, observation method as well as informal personal communications with some persons has made for the purpose of verification of data.

Study Region Profile

Varanasi, is a North Indian city on the banks of the Ganges in Uttar Pradesh, India 320 kilometres south-east of the state capital, Lucknow and 121 Kms east of Allahabad. Varanasi is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. The spiritual capital of India, it is the holiest of the seven sacred cities (*Sapta Puri*) in Hinduism and Jainism, and played an important role in the development of Buddhism. Varanasi lies along National Highway 2, which connects it to Kolkata, Kanpur, Agra, and Delhi, and is served by Varanasi Junction and Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport. In addition to that a large number of accommodation facilities both private and government are there in Varanasi for pilgrims/tourists. Varanasi is well connected by Road, Train and Air. Varanasi is one of those holy towns that have borne the imprint of Lord Shiva. It is said in the Puranas that those who visit this area or reside here even for a while, go straight to heaven after life. Varanasi is home of a number of tourist sites.

Pilgrimage Tourism Spots Of Varanasi

Ghats of Varanasi (Ganga & Ghats)

Varanasi, Kashi or Banaras, is older than traditions. The divine grace of this city lies in its unique combination of physical, metaphysical and supernatural elements. Ghats of Varanasi are a natural supplement to the concept of divinity. It is a city which liberates the soul from the human body to the ultimate. The much-quoted Sanskrit Skloka proclaims 'Kasyam maranamukti' (death in Kashi is Liberation).

- 84 Ghats of Varanasi
- Assi Ghat
- Dasaswamedh Ghat
- Harish Chandra Ghat
- Manikarnika Ghat
- Tulsi Ghat

Temple of Varanasi

Varanasi is said to be as the city of temples and the temples are there in every house of Varanasi. Varanasi has the religious milieu and is known as the Land of 'Shiva'. In other words, among innumerable (about 23,000) temples in Varanasi, the important temples are as follows:

The Kashi Vishwanath Temple: Also known as the Golden Temple, it is dedicated to Lord Shiva, the presiding deity of the city. Varanasi is said to be the point at which the first jyotirlinga, the fiery pillar of light by which Shiva manifested his supremacy over other gods, broke through the Earth's crust and flared towards the heavens. Among the estimated 23,000 temples in Varanasi, the temples most popular for worship are: the Kashi Vishwanath Temple of Shiva; The Kashi Vishwanath Temple, on the Ganges, is one of the 12 jyotirlinga Shiva temples in Varanasi. The temple has been destroyed and rebuilt several times throughout its existence. The temple, which is also known as the Golden Temple, was built in 1780 by Queen Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore. The two pinnacles of the temple are covered in gold and were donated in 1839 by Rajnit Singh, the ruler of Punjab. (Singh, Rana and Pravin, 2002)

Annappurna Temple: Near the Kashi Vishwanath temple, there is a temple of Devi Annapurna, believed as the "Goddess of Feeding", who fills the stomach of everyone who lives in Varanasi and the temple kitchen is always full of food materials.

Sankatha Temple: Near the Sindhia Ghat , there is a important temple of "Godess of Remedy" Devi Sankatha. Inside its premises there is a huge statue of a Lion. Also there is nine temples of nine planets nearby to this temple.

Kalbhairav Temple: It is the ancient temple of Varanasi near the Head Post Office, VishesharGanj. God KalBhairav is believed as "Kotwal Of Varanasi" , without his permission no one can stay in Kashi.

Mritunjay Mahadev Temple: On the route of Daranagar to Kalbhairav temple this temple of Lord Shiva is situated . Just besides this temple there is a Well of much religious importance , whose water is said to be mixture of several underground streams and good for eliminating several diseases.

New Vishwanath Temple: This temple issituated in the premises of the Banaras Hindu University campus. The present temple structure was built in early 1900s by the educationist and freedom fighter, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, the founder of Banaras Hindu University. It is believed the temple was built on the very spot where the medieval Hindu saint Tulsidas had a vision of Hanuman. Open to all, irrespective of caste or creed.

Tulsi Manas Temple: Constructed by family of Varanasi, this modern temple is dedicated to Lord Rama. It is situated at the place Where Tulsidas, the great medieval seer, lived and wrote the epic "Shri Ramcharitmanas", which narrates the life of Lord Rama, the hero of the Ramayana. Verses from Tulsidas's epic are inscribed on the walls. It is just nearby to Durga Temple.

Sankatmochan Temple: The Sankat Mochan Hanuman Temple is one of the sacred temples of the Hindu god Hanuman situated by the Assi River, on the way of Durga Temple to Banaras Hindu Temple this well known temple of Lord Hanuman is situated. Lord Hanuman is also known as "Sankatmochan" the god who protects from the troubles. This temple is founded by Goswami Tulsidas. This temple is also known as "Monkey" temple, as lot of monkeys are there inside the premises.

Durga Temple: 18th century Durga Kund Temple, overlooking the kund.. There are two temples named "Durga" in Varanasi, Durga Mandir (built about 500 years ago), and Durga Kund (built in the 18th century). Thousands of Hindu devotees visit Durga Kund during Navratri to worship the goddess Durga. The temple, built in Nagara architectural style, has multi-tiered spires and is stained red with ochre, representing the red colour of Durga. The building has a rectangular tank of water called the Durga Kund ("Kund" meaning a pond or pool). Every year on the occasion of Nag Panchami, the act of depicting the god Vishnu reclining on the serpent Shesha is recreated in the Kund.

Bharat Mata Temple: This Temple was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1936 and houses one perfect relief maps of India carved out of marble.The Temple was gifted by the nationalists Babu Shiv Prasad Gupta (Barat Ratana) and shri Durga Prasad Khatri, leading numismatists and antiquarians.

Mosques:

In the order of their importance the mosques in Varanasi are the Gyanvapi Mosque, the Alamgiri Mosque, the Ganj-e-Shaheedan Mosque and the Chaukhamba Mosque which cater to the prayer needs of 25% of the Muslim population out of total population of about a 1 million. Muslims have been residing in Varanasi since several generations starting from the rule of the Delhi Sultanate.

Data Collection and Interpretation:1. Distribution of sample unit of international tourist. Generating areas to Varanasi

International Tourist Areas	Number of Sample Units
U.K	35
Americas	25
Europe	12
Far East	18
Others	10
Total	100

2. Distribution of sample unit of domestic tourist. Generating areas to Varanasi

International Tourist Areas	Number of Sample Units
South Indian states (TN, Karnataka, Kerala, etc)	42
West Bengal	23
Rest of Indian States	35
Total	100

3. Distribution of Sample Unit by Age International/ National tourist

Age In Years	Number of Sample Units
Below 25	05
25 – 34	20
35 – 44	30
More than 45	45
Total	100

4. Distribution of Sample Unit by Nature of Tour International tourist

Nature of Tour	Number of Sample Units
Organized	80
Unorganized	20
Total	100

5. Distribution of Sample Unit by Nature of Tour Domestic tourist

Nature of Tour	Number of Sample Units
Organized	15
Unorganized	85
Total	100

6. Distribution of Sample Unit by Sex (both International and Domestic)

Sex	Number of Sample Units
Male	55
Female	45
Total	100

7. Distribution of Sample Unit by Occupation (both International and Domestic)

Occupation	Number of Sample Units
Self – Employed	18
Government Employee	10
Retired	40
Private Sector Employee	32
Total	100

8. Distribution of Sample Unit by Purpose of Visit to Varanasi

Purpose	Number of Sample Units
Pilgrimage	48
Spiritual	42
Leisure	06
Others	04
Total	100

9. Distribution of Sample Unit by Visits/ Repeat Visits for Pilgrimage Purpose

Number of Visits/ Repeat Visits	Number of Sample Units
First	90
One	05
Two	03
Three or More	02
Total	100

10. Distribution of Sample Unit by Infrastructural Facilities provided at Various sites of Varanasi

- Facilities like clean drinking Water, Refreshments, Toilets etc

Parameters	Number of Sample Units
Good	04
Satisfactory	06
Poor	80
Can't Say	10
Total	100

- Maintenance of Pilgrimage sites/ Monuments/ Historical Places in Varanasi

Parameters	Number of Sample Units
Good	12
Satisfactory	70
Poor	13
Can't Say	05
Total	100

- Sign Boards for Direction, Maintenance and Knowledge of Pilgrimage sites, Monuments, Building etc

Parameters	Number of Sample Units
Good	60
Satisfactory	33
Poor	03
Can't Say	04
Total	100

11. Distribution of Sample Unit by Attitude of the Host Population

Parameters	Number of Sample Units
Friendly	63
Unfriendly/ Hostile	26
Can't Say	11
Total	100

12. Distribution of Sample Unit on the Feasibility of as Tourism product.

Awareness	Number of Sample Units
Yes	60
No	02
Can't Say	38
Total	100

Findings

- I. The distribution of sample units by International tourist generating areas shows that the U.K. (35%) followed by Americas (25%) and Far East (18%) is major tourist generating area to Varanasi (see table 1).
- II. The distribution of sample units by domestic tourist generating areas shows that the South Indian tourist (42%) followed by West Bengal (23%) and Rest of Indian States (35%) is major tourist generating area to Varanasi (see table 2).
- III. The distribution of sample unit by Age shows that a majority of the sample tourist (45%) is from age group more than 45 years of Age (see table 3)
- IV. The International tourist coming to Varanasi & staying at star category in Varanasi is predominately organized tour (80%). (see table 4)
- V. The Domestic tourist coming to Varanasi is predominately unorganized tour (85%). (see table 5)
- VI. The Sex wise distribution of sample units reveals that the male tourist exceeds the female tourist by 10% (see table 6)
- VII. The occupation of sample unit is largely distributed between retired (40%) & private sector employee (32%). (see table 7)
- VIII. The distribution of sample units by Purpose of Visit to Varanasi is mainly divided into Spiritual (42%) & Pilgrimage (48%). (see table 8)
- IX. The distribution of sample units defines that only once International tourist wishes to visit Varanasi (95%) for the pilgrimage purpose & there is only (5%) repeat visit.(see table 9)
- X. The distribution sample unit by the likeness of infrastructural facilities like clean drinking water, refreshments, and toilets is primarily is poor (80%) who consider Varanasi as not a good Tourist destination in terms of basic infrastructure. But 70% of them consider the maintenance of monuments/ historical places in Varanasi are satisfactory. In terms of guide facility 75% of the sample tourist finds it good while 20% consider it satisfactory which is also an encouraging proposition. The sign board for direction, maintenance, knowledge of monuments, buildings etc is good (60%) whereas 33% of them consider it satisfactory. Thus one can easily deduced that the International Tourist is dissatisfied by basic infrastructure facilities but touristic infrastructure is to some extent is consider good by them which acts succor. (see table 10)
- XI. The sample unit finds 63% of the attitude of the host population as friendly whereas 26% consider it hostile. The basic reason behind the high friendly percentage is that 80% of the sample unit comes through organized tour format and they have least interaction with host population. (see table 11)
- XII. This seems to be an interesting proposition when international tourist being asked if they wish to visit those places which are in close proximately to their planned itinerary and do not feature in it, then 88% answered in positive. (see table 12.)

Factors Creating Hindrances in Sustainable Development of Tourism in Varanasi

There are numerous challenges that are posed through diversified factors towards sustainable development of pilgrimage tourism in the study area:

Globalization: Globalization has eminently affected the local culture & ethnicity, customs, traditions, handcrafts and folklores in adverse result. The rate of dynamism in cultures has accelerated over the years. This trend continues at a higher rate than it used to be. This effect deeply and greatly affects the thinking and altitudes of the locals, towards the conservation of the very tangible and intangible heritage that contacts and sustain cultural tourism. Hence, the challenge is how to sustain the pilgrimage tourism in this globalized world.

Tourism negative Impacts: Excess of tourist arrivals can bring exploitation and degradation to an area's social cultural, economic and environmental arenas if mechanisms to control and manage its negative impacts are not in place. Good examples can be taken from crowds of visitors in festivals and fairs which imposes negative impacts of pilgrimage sites in the area.

Local communities' participation and involvement: The challenge on this particular area is how effectively, the communities are participating and involved in the planning processes. Local communities are subject to large influxes from tourism traffic, noise and possible prize increase in goods and services. It is, therefore, necessary that their well being needs be addressed in the planning, development, implementation and management processes.

The Quality of tourism services: The quality of the tourism services available in the study area are not up to the mark. There is lack of good transportation services; lack of certified guides & escorts, poor dissemination of information near major tourist spots is a hindrance in the development of sustainable pilgrimage tourism in city of Varanasi.

Lack of Government Initiative: There are shortages in various fields such as qualified experts, funding, marketing, facilities and amenities, poor policies, economic and physical planning mechanism, lack of funds for expansion of tourism are seen as issues pilgrimage tourism development.

Lack of Cooperation among stakeholders: Sustainable development of pilgrimage tourism in the area requires that all those concerned learn to deal with conflicts and to explore the creative use of partnerships as a way of sharing knowledge, as well as risks, in tourism development. But it came to see poor cooperation and understanding among different stakeholders involved in touristic activity in Varanasi.

Impact Assessment: The sustainable development of tourism requires a continue review of impacts of pilgrimage tourism activity on the area concerned but their lies a shortage of such type of assessment of programmes or policies from both government as well as private stakeholders. In Varanasi from concerned authorities are negligible on their working patterns.

Availability of beggars around pilgrimage centre: There exist a crowd of beggars at pilgrimage centers which creates irritation among pilgrimage tourist visited. It indicates the poor management of pilgrimage centers in Varanasi.

Increasing pollutions and litter at religious tourist spots: It has been noticed in the study area that during peak season heavy influx of pilgrims visited Varanasi such as during the festival of Ganga dussera, Dussera, Deepawali and so on spread the huge amount of solid waste and sanitation problems which cause pollution in Varanasi.

Poor road Side amenities: The amenities in Varanasi is of poor standard such as poor conditions of cleaning up of road, railway stations, bus stands, poor quality of roads, road stdharamshalas, drinking water problems, lack of proper information & communication, problems with local autodrivers and rickshawalas and so on causes interruption in sustainable development of pilgrimage tourism in the area.

Lack of safety & security of tourists: Although Varanasi is famous destination for pilgrimage visits but there is lack of safety & security of tourism themselves and their luggage/baggage. There is no provision of tourist police in the area which build the negative image of place in present and potential visitors.

Recommendations

As tourism development usually involves the financial, socio-cultural and natural resources of an area, it must be designed and managed in a way to achieve economic, social and cultural sustainability. Some of the suggestions that would improve the tourism industry and make it more sustainable include:

Diversifying the areas of tourism: The tourism industry in Varanasi has mainly concentrated on pilgrimage tourism and neglected other forms of tourism to a large extent. It should diversify into other areas, like farm and rural, tourism which have the potential for future growth and development.

Improving the infrastructure facilities: Tourism development causes increased use of infrastructure like, road lines, railway stations, accommodation facilities, drainage and sanitation facilities etc. need to be enhanced immediately for faster tourism development.

Improving the safety of tourists: Today many tourist specially women are facing many problems from the local people, especially as they do not maintain the hours and come back to the hotel or guest houses late at night. Many of the foreign women have faced molestation and other problems

Use of appropriate promotional technique: Proper marketing and promotion should be implemented in achieving sustainable tourism development. The promotional activity must be acquainted in accurate advertisement of unique characteristics of the area in order to create knowledge of the same to the existing as well as potential tourists.

Focus on the use of eco-friendly products: By taking into account need of sustainability, the focus should be given on the use of eco-friendly products by the various stakeholders. For that purpose, strict laws should be applied in the locality for sustainable tourism development.

Conservation of natural and cultural heritage: Tourism Stakeholders should give proper concentration on the conservation of natural and cultural heritage that is essential for economic sustainability of the region. connectivity through rail, road and airlines etc. It should be provided at various prime tourist locations for proper dissemination of information to tourists.

Proper regulations and legalization: The government should develop strict standards and regulations for environmental and cultural impact assessment, monitoring and review of existing and proposed tourism development in accordance with local community.

Research and statistics: For the sustainable development of the tourism in the study region, local government and/or other concern authorities maintain the records of the tourists visited to that place, it is beneficial for the planning and policy formulation as well as emphasis should be given on the research and different projects related to sustainable development of tourism.

Facilitates manpower training and development: There should be constant mechanism for training and developing manpower of international quality. The local people should be trained and aware about implications of tourism development so that they improve the quality standard of hospitality services in the area to ensure the sustainability of tourism at Varanasi.

Use ICT for enhanced productivity and service quality: ICT implementation can provide reliable and speedy information regarding prominent tourism locations, connectivity through rail, road and airlines etc. It should be provided at various prime tourist locations for proper dissemination of information to tourists.

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Conclusion

The pilgrimage destination of Varanasi has enough potential to benchmark it as famous tourist spots. It is evident from the study, that the sustainability aspect of tourism has not often been given adequate consideration in designing tourism policies. Varanasi tourism needs to focus more on sustainability issues to cope up with the present competition among the destinations. It is also necessary to adopt necessary effective measures in order to attract a significant number of tourists and persuade the potential tourists to select Varanasi as a pilgrimage tourist destination. So, the concern authority needs to give priority and to visit the destination. If we consider the recommendations given above, definitely it will become paradise for overall development of the region. Conducting similar studies on some other destinations or on some other forms of tourism can also give new heights to the pilgrimage tourism

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