Issues and concerns to be addressed by
Ministry of Environment and Forests
For enhancement of the National Tourism Economy

WORLD
TRAVEL &
TOURISM
COUNCIL
INDIA INITIATIVE

Green Revolution
White Revolution..
IT Revolution..

now it is time for a

Tourism Revolution

Current Status

o **Employment Created – 50 Million jobs**

o **GDP Contribution – 6%**

o **Foreign exchange earnings 12 billion USD**

2015 Potential

o **Employment created 75 million**

o **GDP Contribution 8%**

o **Foreign exchange earnings 25 billion USD**

Ownership of the 2015 potential rests with the Ministry of Environment and Forests whose partnership with the Tourism industry is sincerely requested to realize this potential, which is of national importance and contributes significantly to inclusive growth

Environment and Tourism:

The preservation of the natural environment, the prudent use of natural resources, disposal of solid waste and sewage, and the depletion and deterioration of ground water- attributable to tourist Inflows- are, among others, issues which both the Government and Stakeholders face. The growth of rapid and uncontrolled tourism can resulted in, the loss of biodiversity, accretion and siltation and depletion of groundwater. In recent years, the trends in tourism in India have shown variation in terms of both economic and socio-cultural values. With changing lifestyles, economy and paid vacations, there has been a change in the attitude and perception of people toward travel and tourism. There has been an increase in environmental awareness and pressure of urbanization. Now, urban masses look for new get away locations, where they can get involved in active outdoor recreation. Thus, national parks and sanctuaries have emerged as the favorite destinations.

The ecological pressures are threatening land, water and wild life resources through direct and indirect environmental impacts together with generation of solid and liquid wastes, so green tourism is emerging as an important task in order to develop new relationship between communities, government agencies and private sectors. The development of a strategy that focuses on ecological understanding, environmental protection and ecodevelopment is of utmost importance. The major attributes of the green tourism include environmental conservation and education and distribution of income to local people based on strong partnership. These various knowledge systems go a long way for achieving the goals of the green tourism, which creates awareness about the value of environmental resources.

Ministry of Environment and Forests must lend support to the sector through its various policies and initiatives for Tourism in India to be a crucial contributor to the Economy of the country.

Macro Issues:

- Ministry of Environment & Forests needs to issue their Ecotourism policy. This will help articulate a lot of matters relating to the conduct of wildlife tourism, community participation and sustainable operations.
- Conflicts over resource use and institutional responses to them is another area -legislating and enforcing environmental quality controls for tourism appears to create fewer conflicts among residents because of the small number of facilities and the limited number of stakeholders involved in tourism.
- Environmental legislation and regulatory mechanisms are in place - a systematic study of the environmental impacts of tourism and the implementation of a monitoring and management system would also aid.
- Food and beverages comprise the largest component of the expenditure of domestic tourists (and second largest component of the expenditures (accommodations being the largest), of the international tourist. Increasing the amount of local food used in the tourism industry is a way of increasing backward linkages from tourism, involving the local community and therefore, moving toward more diversified and sustainable development. Need to focus on strengthening the economic linkages between tourism and the food sector. A careful balance must be struck between producing for tourists requirements and ensuring food supply at reasonable prices to the locals.
- Tourism has also given a boost to local art and handicrafts; however, the commercialization of such arts and crafts has resulted in a certain deterioration in their quality as they are being manufactured for bulk sale.
- Too much of tourist-oriented activity has caused shift from traditional occupations.
- Carrying Capacity **– It is suggested that carrying capacity studies be undertaken for all national parks, so that a low environmental impact is maintained and Sustainable practices are in place by the Industry. 'Honey pot areas ' need to have pressure relieved by opening closed areas as well as publicising lesser-known regions so that traffic is dissipated from popular zones.**

- Better set of norms for lodges so that customer satisfaction levels can be enhanced– For all forests and national parks, suggested building guidelines need to be drawn up which are in harmony with their immediate environment, use local materials and reflect the local culture. This will prevent pollution. Landscape architects should be involved at Government and Private level and these notes should be put in the "Call for investment brochures" published by State Governments.
- Adventure tours operate in wilderness areas where communication/ medical facilities are not accessible. In this scenario, allowing the **use of satellite phones** and **global positioning system (GPS)** are mandatory ensuring that **safety standards in India are as par with international standards**. Need support from the Ministry of Environment and Forests to avail this facility.
- **The CRZ norm needs to be revisited. A separate note on the same with Industry recommendations can be made but the 200 mts restriction must be reduced to 100 mts immediately.**
- Spreading the Responsible Tourism culture: where Governments and industry bodies are involved in spreading and enacting the principles of Responsible Tourism allowing Communities to be stakeholders and beneficiaries of Tourism like the Rural Tourism strategy. However marketing it as Rural Ecotourism will help with the uptake and understanding of the product. Also the product needs strengthening, as the dwelling options in most cases are far too basic for most of the Tourists.
- Architectural norms /guidelines for the country - haphazard and insensitive and unaesthetic construction in the hill regions , forest areas , deserts , urban & rural areas are creating eyesores and a lot of our traditional and vernacular styles are disappearing or getting suppressed with the development that is happening .
- Need to have building guidelines for different eco systems and areas so as to have harmonized architecture development .
- Wild life Tourism pressure on Tigers & Wildlife - As there are no guidelines governing the kind of and number of wildlife lodges/resorts being built around National Parks & sanctuaries, animal corridors have been blocked, often by a ' string of resorts ' compromising Tiger and animal movement which also leads to their getting trapped /killed /poached .
- Need to have a Land use policy that will allow for eco sensitive zones to be created around NP's & Sanctuaries which will limit number of resorts to be built in harmony with the carrying capacity of the National Parks/Sanctuaries.

Micro Issues:

- The growth of coastal tourism has been rapid and uncontrolled.
- The seasonal nature of tourism has led to swings in employment and income most markedly in the small sector and to the unskilled worker.
- There has been no clear nor firm policy relating to tourism; most decisions have been on a purely ad hoc basis, except for a marked predisposition to upmarket tourism. The policy initiatives that have been introduced are not attentive to local concerns. This has led to some disaffection among locals toward tourists
- that needs to be studied.
- There has been a marked spatial concentration of tourism development along the coast and other tourism destinations, which is leading to heavy demand for resources in these places.
- Cumulatively, this results in concentration and congestion of population, enormous increase in the density of construction, and related infrastructure and facilities. Consequently, there has been an overall decline in the agricultural sector in certain states.
- It poses major changes in land use, shortages of resources, such as land and water, and damage natural ecosystems.

- The principles of sustainability and the norms related to the conservation of the environment and ecology are generally ignored; the coastal environment is becoming irreversibly degraded as evidenced by the concretization of beaches in costal destinations.
- Hotel classification guidelines towards more carbon neutral - Revisit hotel classification /approval norms so that stricter norms are followed vis a vis garbage disposal & recycling of waste, energy and water consumption, etc. and allow for each establishment to measure their own Carbon output and suggest methodology of implementing carbon offsetting .
- Mountaineering and Trekking - Government needs to simplify procedures urgently to give a boost to this important segment of adventure tourism. **The nodal agency should be kept as the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) and local state governments should not have their own rules and regulations and instead should make a harmonious procedure in conjunction with the IMF.**
- Incentivise ecofriendly operations - For the industry to be encouraged to use Solar equipment , it should be offered some financial incentives for resorts / hotels /tour operators / airlines .

Quick Wins:

- Focus on modern treatment and disposal systems for both sewage and garbage must for all lodges/hotels and restaurants.
- The wildlife experience has to be more ecologically friendly, educative and sustainable. Having interpretation centres in the parks with basic and clean amenities, informative films at park entrances on the Dos and Don'ts in wild life parks will help sensitise visitors to our natural heritage.
- Plastics and solid waste disposals are among the very serious problems in tourist destinations and an action plan is urgently needed to mitigate the problem. Both the last mentioned problems could be solved through improved enforcement of regulations and infrastructural improvements. Synthetic and plastic packaging should be discouraged by imposing a "recycling cess" and ploughing back this money towards Waste Management in tourism destinations.
- A careful study on the type of tourism that best suits Tourist Destinations: up-scale, low budget or a combination of the two.
- Recognition that tourism is a vulnerable industry, subject to the fads of the trade; hence, tourism cannot be allowed to permanently change the face of the destination in the long run.
- A systematic study of the environmental impacts of tourism, through perhaps, a life cycle analysis, and the valuation of the environment to enable its integration into decision-making.
- A monitoring and management system to ensure the effectiveness of coastal and environmental regulations. The development of sustainability markers would be a way to ensure this. Such markers will enable both the industry and government to identify the emerging issues and to facilitate mitigation before problems becomes unmanageable. They can also serve as the basis for monitoring changes in the ecosystem, social and economic spheres.
- The integration of the principles of coastal environment and ecology into the planning stage of any coastal activity, as preventative rather than remedial measures in costal tourist destinations.
- Policies that recognize the type of interconnections among tourism, local communities and the environment, to ensure that tourism contributes to a sustainable development agenda.
- The Fee structure for Climbing Expedition is very steep. The different fee structure in the state makes the climbing expeditions very expensive. A revisit needed on this policy.
- Non-availability of Contour maps of adventure areas / national parks. This help in better operations and selling in the global market. They are also definitely help in safe planning of an adventure trip. Urgent need of Contour Maps.

Conclusion:

The success of any Tourism depends upon increasing awareness, knowledge and mindfulness among tourists regarding the environment. It is necessary and essential, in order to achieve environmentally responsible behavior. In order to achieve this, providing information alone might not be sufficient. Tourists need to have knowledge about both the impacts of various behavior and appropriate alternatives. Also, they need to care about the visited place. Tourist behavior must be linked with the persuasive communication principles with a view to creation or reinforcement of tourist environmental sensibility, and decision-making for co-operative behavioral choices conducive to sustainable development.