European Journal of Business & Social Sciences
Available at https://ejbss.org/
ISSN: 2235-767X
Volume 07 Issue 01
January 2019

Adventure Tourism in India: Significance, Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT: In the present century, the world has become a global village as a result, tourism has gained significant boost. India holds a large number of natural and cultural resources which can be harnessed to make it a hub of tourism. Slowly adventure tourism is gaining its foothold in India and in the years to come it can be one of the highest sources of earning foreign exchange. Many states of the country hold immense potential for adventure tourism. For instance, the Himalayas attract mountaineers; the Thar dessert in Rajasthan can be used for dirt bike and motor racing activities; the water bodies in the country can be used for jet-ski rides. The work in this regard is under process as many states have identified potential hotspots for adventure tourism development. Although India has been hub for cultural tourism for decades but the scope for adventure tourism has not been fully exploited yet. Annual adventure sports tournaments like the skiing championship in Apharwat Peak in Gulmarg, the India Surf Festival at the beaches of Orrisa etc. are key tourist attractions. The present research paper highlights significance, opportunities and challenges of adventure tourism in Indian scenario.

KEYWORDS: Natural Resources, Cultural Tourists, Adventure Tourism, Tourism Destinations.

INTRODUCTION: It is a well-known fact that the natural wealth of India has promoted different forms of adventure tourism in the country. This has also helped the locals to become financial stable with the advent of more tourists. Moreover, in the recent years, individuals have become more and more interested in adventure sports. Some people use adventure sports as a get away from the busy city life which has led to its growth. Thus an availability of natural spots and eagerness on the part of individuals has led to the growth of adventure tourism in India. However, for further development, there is a dire need of quality training in this field. The operators

ISSN: 2235-767X
Volume 07 Issue 01
January 2019

engaged in organizing adventure tourism activities should be trained on safety procedures and should have the latest safety equipment. Therefore, one of the biggest challenge for adventure tourism is a proper framework for training of individuals to avoid any mishaps. Moreover, a comprehensive risk assessment of each adventure activity needs to be done throughout the country.

ADVENTURE TOURISM ACTIVITIES: These activities include Mountain biking, camping, canoeing, kayaking, paragliding, rock climbing, yak safari, horse riding, hiking, wildlife, Jeep safari, skiing, angling, House, hot Air ballooning, Camel safaris, Bungee jumping, trekking, Snorkeling, Parasailing, Rafting, Artificial Rock climbing, Surfing, Mountain biking, Scuba diving, Mountaineering, Jet-ski ride, kayaks, Paddle boats, Hang Gliding, Micro light flying, Water Rafting, Water zorbing, cycling, Rappelling, Wind surfing, Artificial wall climbing, Elephant safari etc.

NEED OF ADVENTURE TOURISM: Adventure tourism is known to provide a constant source of capital to the economy. In particular, the rural economies in remote areas can be the biggest beneficiaries. Post-independence, there was a lack of connectivity to the rural areas. But now times have changed, most of the remote villages are well connected and can thus be used for adventure tourism activities like paragliding, bungee jumping etc. Not only will this open the roads for development of the region but, the people of this regions will be exposed to global tourists. The economic growth of the country has ensured that youth who opt for such activities in large number can afford these activities. Adventure tourism infrastructure also has a major role to play in religious tourism, as a considerable number of the popular religious sites like the Char Dhams in Uttarakhand are located in remote locations, and require a high level of technical expertise to deal with the large amount of pilgrims in ecologically sensitive environments. Not only this, inbound as well as adventure travelers have a strong tendency to make an addition of socio-cultural or historical extensions to their core adventure itinerary, and thereby, complementing other niches as well.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ADVENTURE TOURISM: According to some reports, in the year 2012, global tourism arrivals passed the one billion mark this was because as tourism in country as increasing,

ISSN: 2235-767X
Volume 07 Issue 01
January 2019

so did the adventure tourism. According to a study done by the George Washington University (GWU) and Xola consulting in the year 2010, the net value of adventure tourism was at USD 89 million. In the year 2013, it was found that there was an increase of 195 percent in two years, making the sector worth USD 263 million. The UNWTO forecasts, by 2013, arrivals in emerging economies will surpass those in the emerging economies, which will in addition increase to 57 percent arrivals in the emerging economies by 2030. This makes provision of numerous opportunities for India, which has incomparable destinations for exploration and experience. There are soft and hard adventure activities within the country that can be carried out by any traveler. Adventure tourists also pursue cultural and environmental aspects of the destinations they visit. These can significantly facilitate economic opportunities for the local people, residing in rural and remote areas within the country. The states include, Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, North East India, etc. Apart from sustainable development of the local communities, adventure tourism promotes socio-economic and cultural development of the region. Adventure tourism is an energetic, vibrant, active and a sector that is undergoing transformations and changes on a rapid scale. Adventure activities around the world are numerous and differently adapted to the available local and natural resources and entrepreneurship. Throughout the world, the visit destinations of the tourists are implemented, and based upon number of purposes. Tourists could be adventure enthusiasts for a particular sport or activity. Therefore, seeking adventure trip one after the other or maybe, seeking a new activity in every trip, while exploring newer places and destinations is an integral part of adventure tourism. Adventurers could be the individuals, who may not take interest in commercial support to carry out a task or an activity, and may look for challenging and unapproachable locations.

OPPORTUNITIES OF ADVENTURE TOURISM IN INDIA: Most of the scholars agree to the fact that India has a huge potential for adventure tourism, especially the Himalayas in India can be a huge attraction for adventure sport lovers around the globe. They have continuously held a demand for the travelers from throughout the world. In addition to the geographical diversity of other parts of the country, the other areas are the Western Ghats, the Thar Desert, the Rann of Kutch, the Eastern Ghats, the Konkan coast, hills, mountains, natural environmental conditions and the

ISSN: 2235-767X
Volume 07 Issue 01
January 2019

central Indian plateau region, wildlife, coast and islands, rivers. The country has a surplus of adventure activities to provide for across a wide range of sections within the adventure space. Adventure in the Indian subcontinent was assisted by the early mountaineers and explorers from Europe to the Himalayan regions during the colonial rule. A majority of them assumed under the patronage of the country's rulers as a means of discovering new avenues in their imperialistic ambitions, as well as instituting political supremacy by tapping the ethos of national pride through such expeditions.

According to multiple studies it is estimated that by 2030, tourist arrivals in emerging economies will increase. This provides an ocean of opportunities for adventure sports in India. India offers soft and hard adventure activities that can be carried out by any tourist. Adventure tourists also follow cultural and environmental aspects of destinations they visit. These can greatly aide economic opportunities of local people in rural and remote communities in India. The best examples of which can be found in Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, North East India, etc. Apart from sustainable development of local communities adventure tourism also brings in socio-economic and cultural development in the region. Most of the scholars agree with the fact that India has so much potential to develop adventure tourism as under:

- **Widespread Connectivity**: Adventure tourism or any other tourism requires travelling to far off regions within the country. Most of the tourists generally have a time constraint and travelling by road and rail to the tourist destinations is regarded as a time consuming affair. There is a need to initiate rapid air connectivity options, especially in the mountainous regions of north and north-east India. Faster travelling would be encouraged through the development of small airports and air strips. Another aspect here is the permits and the permissions required to make a visit to the border areas of the country, attaining which often becomes a burdensome process for the tourist as well as the tour operators. The connectivity projects in such areas need to be given rapid clearance.
- **Standard Safety Equipment**: Adventure tourism as an industry, is not well developed in India and there is an immense potential for it which can be fulfilled through proper

ISSN: 2235-767X
Volume 07 Issue 01
January 2019

policies. Most of the specific and specialized tools and equipment that is required for conducting activities in a safe manner still needs to be imported. Importing goods require, where the rigmarole of substantial import duties and custom clearances often becomes a constraining factor. As proposed by the industry in the past, waiving off the import duties and facilitating custom clearances would be beneficial for growing adventure tourism in the country.

- **Developing Infrastructure**: Adventure tourism is a niche activity involving a major extent of technical proficiency and knowledge as compared to the other aspects like culture, religion, business, recreation, or leisure. Since the protection of the tourist is a vital aspect here, it is imperative that the tour operators and the ground handlers possess the necessary skills and abilities to carry out the adventure activities in a safe manner. Although with the establishment of training institutes by the government, are focused upon very few adventure activities, such as, mountaineering and rock climbing, the infrastructure needs to be broadened to cater to the requirement of human resources within the industry. This will help other emerging adventure sports within the country to progress.
- **Strong Communication Channels**: As adventure tourists are unfamiliar with the terrain, their security is of utmost importance. The use of GPS and satellite phones are regarded as the only means of permitting communication on a timely basis in these regions, as per the norms of the Government. It is vital to formulate measures and procedures in order to initiate solutions to permit these communication channels to be tapped by the tour operators. When these measures would get formulated, they would make provision of efforts in improving the safety and protection of the tourists and hence. This in turn would improve the tourist destination makes it lucrative for other tourists.
- **Eco Friendly Tourism**: In remote places, the locals rely on the natural resources to earn their livelihood. When use of natural resources is done on a large scale, then it also encourages depletion of resources. Therefore, the individuals, who are employed in the adventure tourism sector needs to ensure that the exploitation of natural resources is not

ISSN: 2235-767X
Volume 07 Issue 01
January 2019

carried out to a major extent. One of the aspects that is of utmost significance is, one needs to put into practice the measures that would lead to decline in various forms of pollution. These include, land, water and air. Thus in the present era when climate change is the global threat, planting of trees and stopping deforestation etc. needs to be done to keep the tourism ecofriendly.

- **Cutting down Taxes**: The tourism industry in India at present pays a major share of income as taxes. These taxes, take a heavy toll upon the operating expenses, and often end up in discouraging the growth of the industry in high potential areas of the country. This aspect in some cases is a disadvantage in leading to growth and development of the adventure industry. Relinquishment of some of these components would prove to be beneficial in the long term period in promoting local entrepreneurship. This would make the tour operators more interested in promoting the adventure tourism activities.

CHALLENGES OF ADVENTURE TOURISM IN INDIA: There are some challenges before adventure tourism industry in India as under:

- **Making Tourism Economical**: Most tourists find even the basic adventure trips costly and as a result refrain from venturing out. This can be attributed to the technical aspects of the service delivery involved. In addition, factors such as, fluctuation in the currency, rising airfares and increase in the unemployment rate, indicate that the tourism industry, would be required to undergo challenges. Hence, it is necessary to introduce packages that would ease the travel and tourism of individuals, belonging to different categories and backgrounds. Unemployment of well educated, experienced and qualified individuals is also an unfavorable aspect. Therefore, gainful employments must be provided to individuals who are trained and experienced.
- **Lack of Adventure**: The biggest example of adventures turning into misadventure was the overcrowding seen at Mt. Everest. The over-commercialization of many adventure destinations has become a serious issue for the industry. In contrast to other forms of tourism, safety and protection of the individuals is regarded as a profound constituent of adventure travel which makes the present situation more serious. Increase in the number

ISSN: 2235-767X
Volume 07 Issue 01
January 2019

of tourists, involved in various types of tourist activities, not only affects the ecology of the region itself, but also imposes detrimental effects upon the health and safety of the individuals. Therefore to tackle such situations, the individuals must be certified and well trained.

- **Socio-Political Instability**: The social and political stability in a region plays a crucial role in increasing tourism. For instance, the instability in Middle Eastern countries has led to a downfall of tourists over there. Therefore, the socio-political environment of a region is a matter of growing concern. Some of the adventure tourists often venture into the remote and interior regions of a country which can pose serious challenges for their safety and security. There have been numerous detrimental effects experienced by adventure travelers. Therefore, it is important that tourists' access to such regions must be restrained and adventure travelers must exercise utmost precautions.

CONCLUSION: Adventure tourism has its fair share of problems and challenges that every traveler must be prepared to tackle. With the spread of internet and improvement of financial conditions of the people, adventure tourism is on a rise. Tourists often blog and post videos regarding the new places they discover. At times this can lead to a rush in those spots which the local authorities and incapable of managing. Therefore, proper mechanisms of issuing permits etc. should be devised to avoid any unforeseen rush. India has a plethora of adventure activities to choose from. For instance, Rishikesh is famous for rafting and bungee jumping, the Himalayas are famous for trekking etc. However, these spots are still facing a shortage of trained personnel and proper infrastructure. Therefore, the opportunities before the country to promote adventure tourism are developing infrastructure, connectivity, taxation laws, standard equipment and protecting the environment. Whereas the challenges ahead of us are making the tourism economical, increasing adventure and socio-political stability of the local regions. These opportunities and challenges can be tackled only with a close co-ordination of the local players and state governments. Last but not least, effective leadership and vision is needed to fully harness the potential of adventure tourism in India.

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ISSN: 2235-767X
Volume 07 Issue 01
January 2019

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