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**Prospect of Ecotourism in Dadra and Nagar Haveli:
Opportunities and Challenges**

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Abstract:

Ecotourism is one of the recent forms of tourism industry. Its major purposes are to educate the travellers, to foster respect for different cultures, to provide funds for ecological conservation and the most important it helps the economic development and political empowerment of local communities. Ecotourism involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna and cultural heritage are the primary attractions.

The Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli (DNH) is a nature gifted, picturesque and pristine landscape. The Union Territory has been attracting the tourist from every nook and corner of the country. DNH is liberally strewn with Rolling Meadows, terraced gardens, meandering rivers, large waterfronts, cascading waterfalls, gurgling streams and a kaleidoscope of flora and fauna. The present paper is going to analysis the potentiality of ecotourism in the financial and empowerment of local communities of the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and the challenges to accomplish these goals.

Key Words: Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Ecotourism, Agro - tourism

Introduction

DNH is located along the west coast and situated on the foot hills of Sahyadries (Western Ghats). It is one of the Union Territories of the Union of India. The Union Territory (UT) is not only rich in natural beauty but it has also an interesting history. The Marathas gave the rights of collection of revenues of 72 villages to Portuguese as per the treaty of friendship in 1779. These 72 villages collectively later came to know as Dadra and Nagar Haveli. The UT was ruled by Portuguese for 175 years. After the liberation, the administration was carried on by local body known as Free Dadra and Nagar Haveli Administration. DNH merged with the Indian union on 1961.

DNH has an area of 491 sq km. As per the data of population census – 2011, the total population was 3,43,709. DNH contains 51.95 % scheduled tribe populations. It is largely inhabited by the various adivasis tribes like Varli, Kokna, Dubla, Dhodia, Koli Dhor, Nayaka etc. The UT is sandwiched between Maharashtra and Gujarat state. About 53% of geographical area in territory is under forest. (40 % designated as reserved forest). So it is full of natural beauty, indigenous flora and fauna and has a distinct tribal culture.

Objectives

1. To study the concept of ecotourism
2. To study the prospects of ecotourism in Dadra and Nagar Haveli
3. To find out the opportunities for ecotourism to flourish in Dadra and Nagar Haveli
4. To find out the challenges in the development of ecotourism in Dadra and Nagar Haveli

What Is Ecotourism?

Ecotourism has become one of the fastest – growing sectors of the tourism industry, growing annually by 10 – 15 % worldwide (Singh, 2010). The first definition of ecotourism was made in 1983 by Mexican architect Hector Ceballos – Lascurain, who defined it as “ that form of environmentally responsible tourism that involves travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the object of enjoying, admiring, and studying the nature (the scenery, wild plants and animals), as well as any cultural aspect (both past and present) found in these areas, through a process which promotes conservation, has a low impact on the environment and on culture and favours the active and socio – economically beneficial involvement of local communities.”

The International Ecotourism Society is prime institution in this field. It has defined ecotourism as “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well – being of local people.” Fennel (2004) stated ecotourism is the practice of low – impact, educational, ecologically and culturally sensitive travel that benefits local communities and host countries. Thus ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities and sustainable travel. Many times it is also called as Nature tourism, Low impact tourism, Green tourism, Bio – tourism, ecologically responsible tourism also. Ecotourism is a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine and relatively undisturbed natural areas to experience virginity of the region and to foster respect for different cultures. Ecotourism consists the following principals

1. It puts the minimum impact on environmental and local indigenous communities as the aim of the ecotourism is studying and experiencing the natural and cultural aspects in their original form.
2. Ecotourism helps in building environmental and cultural awareness among the tourist and boosts the respect for them as the visitors and tourist belong to the different cultures.
3. It provides positive experiences for both tourists and hosts.
4. Ecotourism generates financial benefits for both local people and private industries of the region.
5. Ecotourism delivers memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help to raise sensitivity to host countries’ political, environmental and social climates.

Prospects of Ecotourism In Dadra And Nagar Haveli

Dadra and Nagar Haveli (DNH) might be excellent ecotourism spot of India with its natural, geographical location and characteristics along with the historical aspects. It can be a hot spot of visit among the visitors. Dense forests, magnificent mountain ranges, serene valleys, stunning ranges of flora and fauna, breath taking rivers all are parts of DNH. Major tourist attractive places of DNH are categorized under the following heads. Let’s briefly introduced with them

A) Recreational parks and gardens

DNH is known as land of wood since long period. In fact, the UT’s capital city – Silvassa got the name from Portuguese word ‘Silva’ means forest. To provide the refreshing recreational facilities in eco-friendly manner to the tourists, the Department of Tourism took great efforts to keep the UT evergreen by creating and maintaining the various parks and gardens based on various them. There are numbers of gardens in DNH. Among them some of the worth mentioning are Vanganga Lake garden, Hirwa Van garden, Nakshtra garden, Vandhara garden, Butterfly park, Prakuti Parichay Kentra, Van Vihar garden, Sachdev Children park etc. Mesmerizing waterfalls, beautiful cascades, small springs, lush greenery, colourful flowers are the integrated parts of these gardens. The gardens also have facilities of play equipment to amuse the small visitors. In the real sense DNH is also might be known as ‘Garden territory of the Western India’.

B) Forest expedition

53 % area of DNH is under forest cover and this has led to a rich bio – diversity ideal for a wide variety of birds and animals. Vasona Lion Safari gives a thrilling experience of watching the king of

Jungle in its home. Special vehicles are designed for the tour. It takes the tourists inside to have a glimpse of the life of lions. Satmaliya Deer Park on the way to Khanvel is also based on the same theme. Satmaliya has wild life sanctuary with many species of antelopes including *sambhar*, black bucks and wide variety of birds like woodpecker and peacock. DNH is full of rare herbs and Aurvedic medical plants. Thus, DNH give the tourists an opportunity to live with the nature in natural ways.

C) Spiritual travelling

DNH is a land of all religions. Here the people of all the religions live in harmony and follow their rituals according to their traditions. In DNH, there are some wonderful religious places. Among them Swaminarayan Temple is worth mentioning. It is a perfect example of architectural splendor, located on River Damanganga bank. The spacious garden and magnificent construction mesmerize visitors. Bindrabin Temple (also called as Tadkeshwara Temple) which is dedicated to god Shiva located on Sakaltod River's bank is surrounded by tall trees. It is very serene and calm place to relax and engross in this spiritual place. DNH was ruled by Portuguese and till it has a huge influence of Portuguese culture. Therefore, Christianity is one of the major religions. The stone made church of our Lady of Piety was built during 18th century. It has amazing arches and well-constructed interiors. Though, the tourists in the heart of the Silvassa till he / she would have some peaceful moments inside of the church. As earlier mentioned, DNH is largely inhabited by Advasis who are nature worshiper. So the tourists may also know the various nature gods worshipped by these communities and also joined them in their various rituals observed during the special events.

D) Water sports

Damanganga is the major river of DNH. Multipurpose dam is constructed on this river near Madhuban, which is the star attraction of DNH. It offers excellent facilities to indulge in water sports. Rides in speedboats, passenger boats, water scooters, canoes, aqua bikes attract tourist in great numbers. Apart from the water sports, the view of the dense forests around is stunning. Another attraction of tourist is Dudhani Lake, which is vast expanse of water surrounded by small hills. It is famously known as the 'Kashmir of the west'. The water of Madhuban reservoir forms the lake. The water sports available here include rowing boats, speedboats, kayaks, jet skis and shikara rides. The lake view is magnificence. It would be a paradise for the photographers too.

E) Tribal way of life

DNH is a land of tribal communities. These communities constitute about 52 % of the total population of this territory. These communities have their own special way of life. In the real sense, they are children of Mother Nature. Therefore, they worship their mother in their natural ways. DNH offers chances to mingle with them regardless of faith and religion. Tribal cultural museum at Silvassa gives an insight into the rich cultural heritage of the tribal of the land. The museum has a collection of hunting tools, traditional jewelry and musical instruments used by the tribal. Handicrafts made by the tribal are also available for sale at this place. Beside it the Art Gallery is also a place where the handicrafts and drawings of tribal artists are present. Kauncha, on the banks of Madhuban Dam is the perfect destination for nature lovers. Dense forests, spectacular mountain ranges and scenic valleys of Kauncha enchant the visitors. The place also offers the visitors experience of tribal life. The tourist could be a part of the world that does not have technology but the simple and contented life.

F) Historical monuments

A trip to any destination is never complete without visiting the places that highlight the history of the place. DNH is not just famous for its beauty and wild life but also rich in monuments and museums. The head administrative building of the Portuguese employer now it is functioning as the head quarter of Police of DNH is even in good condition today. It is a good example of Portuguese architectural style. The next attraction is Zenda Chowk, a historical place which has witnessed many rallies, political agitation. The Secretariat Building is also good place to visit in Silvassa.

G) Adventurous sports

Magnificent mountain ranges, valleys, dense forests, breathtaking rivers of DNH make it the perfect place for the various adventures sports for those who love tracking. Here is an opportunity to track, camps. Gambhir Gad(fort) at the boundary of DNH and Maharashtra is a paradise for the trackers. Steep slopes, dense forests, chirping of various birds, easily accessibility with the roads also attract them.

H) Agro - Tourism

Farming practiced in natural way, is the prime occupation of the trials of DNH. There is another scope for tourism in DNH i. e. Agro - Tourism. The visitors can have chances to live like the tribal communities in country sides in their huts which are made by using local materials for walls, manglore - style terracotta tiles for roofing, open yard to the gaze the stars while sleeping, having simple food of the tribes, working like them in fields - planting, plucking and harvesting activities that occur in paddy fields and orchards. The visitors can also take away a bag of the locally made raagi flour or a bottle of fresh honey along with them a memory of their visit.

I) Festival celebration

India is called as land of festivals and so as DNH. Being the industrial hub, people from every corners of India are living in DNH. All religious festivals are being celebrated; however tribal festivals and celebrations are traditional and distinct. Here the festivals have origin in religious; they mark the change of seasons and are a mix of social and cultural panorama. Marriages, festivals, harvest are all occasion for dances and the tribal folk have a long tradition of preserving their dance forms. The foot tapping dances of Tarpa, Dhol, Bhavada, Gheria, Tur and Thall dance create a magical effect and reflect the distinct identity of these simple folks. Tourists may join and enjoy these folk dances and cherish them forever.

The Tourism Department also organises special events like Tarpa Festival, Monsoon Magic to enhance the popularity of the DNH and ultimately bring the tourists to this nature gifted land.

Opportunities

DNH is blessed with nature's magnificence. It is a land of spell - binding beauty. It has good scope to be a Tourist hot sport. Its riches are summarised as follows.

1. About 40 % of the area of DNH is under forest. Variety of flora and fauna can be seen here. It can attract the tourist from faraway places.
2. People of modern era of technology till take great part and interest in the life style of the tribal communities and their simple way of life. About 52 % population of DNH is tribal and till persist on their traditional way of life.
3. DNH is land locked between Gujarat and Maharashtra. It is well connected with the rest part of the country. The network of road within the UT as well as outside is good. DNH is nearer to western rail line and National Highway No. 8. Mega cities Mumbai, Surat, Nasik are good connected with DNH. So the tourists of these cities may visit the UT in seek of relaxation.
4. The famous port city Daman is also in proximate of the UT. It is about 40 km away from the UT. The tourist also may visit Daman and adjoining region during their trip in DNH.
5. As agriculture is a major occupation of the tribes of the UT, there are also chances to development of Agro - tourism along with eco - tourism.
6. As earlier mentioned, due to the dense forest variety of wild animals and birds are present in good quantity in this UT. Good management can enhance the chances of tourism by providing Jungle safaris and site seeing.
7. Though this part is known as industrial hub, till there is good control on the pollution by the authorities. By establishing green zones, clean and pure atmosphere may provide the good support for the tourism.

8. One of the objectives of Ecotourism is to provide the direct financial benefits for conservations as Ecotourism involves visiting fragile and undisturbed natural areas. This objective may also accomplish by it.
9. The prime objective of the Ecotourism is to provide financial benefits and employment for local people may also fulfill by the developing the DNH as a Ecotourism spot.

Challenges

While achieving the goal of establishing DNH as major Ecotourism spot of India the following challenges will arise. It will be necessary to tackle them.

1.Displacement of people

The local communities may force to move another place to create a park, gardens and other infrastructural work. Thus they might lose their homes, farms and socio - economic livelihood.

2.Employment favours better educational workers

Tourism industry need sophisticated well mannered, learned work force to communicate with the tourist. Thus, the benefits from the tourism will only concentrated in few hands. Most of the folk will deprived from these benefits. It leads to the social disputes.

3.Outsider investors

It is commonly observed that an overwhelming majority of profits are put into the pockets of outsider investors instead of reinvestment into the local economy or environmental protection. The limited numbers of local people who are employed in the tourism economy enter at its lowest level and will unable to live in tourist area because of meagre wages.

4.Threats of indigenous cultures

Ecotourism often claims that is preserves and enhances local cultures. However, evidence shows that with the establishment of protected areas local people have illegally lost their homes, and most often with no compensation. Pushing people on to marginal lands with harsh climate, poor soils, lack of water, and infested with livestock and disease does little to enhance livelihoods even while a proportion of ecotourism profits are directed back in to the community. The establishment of parks can create harsh survival realities and deprive the people of their traditional use of land and natural resources. The local people struggle for cultural survival. Many times local indigenous people also have strong resentment towards the change.

5.Mismanagement

Ecotourism is sometimes overlooked that ecotourism is a highly **consumer - oriented activity**. Although ecotourism is intended for small groups, even a modest increase in population, however temporary, puts extra pressure on the local environment and necessitates the development of additional infrastructure and amenities. The construction of water treatment plants, sanitation facilities, and lodges come with exploitation of non - renewable energy sources and the utilization of already limited local resources. The conversion of natural land to such tourist infrastructure is implicated in deforestation and habitat deterioration of wild animals and birds.

6. Environmental degradation

The industrialization, urbanization, and unsustainable agriculture practices of human society are considered to be having a serious effect on the environment. Ecotourism is now also considered to be playing a role in this depletion. While the term Ecotourism may sound relatively benign but it's one of the most serious impacts is its consumption of virgin territories. These invasions often include deforestation, disruption of ecological life systems and various forms of pollution, all of which contribute to environmental degradation.

Conclusion

Dadra and Nagar Haveli has excellent opportunities in the field of econ - tourism as it is nature gifted territory. Due to its location, rich heritage, forest cover, highly tribal dominated parts and pollution free atmosphere, DNH has chances to be a major tourist destination of India. However, along these opportunities, certain challenges, as discussed above, on this way also have to be overcome to maintain natural and cultural aspects of the UT.

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