Youth Engagement in Sustainable Tourism: A Stakeholder Approach to Haryana's Future Development

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of youth as catalysts for sustainable tourism in Haryana, India, through a multi-stakeholder framework. By analyzing the interplay between ecological preservation, cultural heritage, and economic growth, the study highlights strategies to empower young people as active contributors to tourism sustainability. It emphasizes collaborative governance models involving government agencies, NGOs, local communities, and educational institutions. Mixed-method research, including surveys, interviews, and case studies, reveals opportunities and challenges in youth-led tourism initiatives. The paper concludes with policy recommendations to institutionalize youth participation in Haryana's tourism ecosystem.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, Mixed-method research

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Haryana, a state rich in cultural heritage (e.g., Kurukshetra, Sultanpur National Park) and agrarian landscapes, faces challenges in balancing tourism growth with ecological and cultural preservation. With 54% of its population under 25 years, youth engagement presents a strategic opportunity to drive sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism has emerged as a crucial aspect of economic growth while ensuring environmental conservation and cultural preservation. Haryana, a state with a rich historical and cultural heritage, is increasingly focusing on balancing tourism development with sustainability. Iconic destinations like Kurukshetra, Sultanpur National Park, and Morni Hills attract thousands of visitors annually, contributing significantly to the state's tourism economy. However, unchecked tourism growth poses threats such as ecological degradation, loss of cultural authenticity, and socio-economic disparities. With nearly 54% of Haryana's population under the age of 25, the youth hold immense potential to drive sustainable tourism initiatives. Their active participation can enhance eco-friendly travel practices, promote heritage conservation, and create innovative tourism solutions that align with environmental and cultural harmony. The stakeholder approach in sustainable tourism emphasizes collaboration between government agencies, local communities, educational institutions, and private sectors to foster responsible tourism practices. Youth engagement in this framework not only promotes employment opportunities but also empowers them as key contributors to Haryana's sustainable future. Several successful models globally have demonstrated how youth-led eco-tourism, digital outreach, and community-driven initiatives have significantly enhanced responsible tourism. Leveraging digital tools, particularly the Internet of Things (IoT) and smart tourism applications, can further amplify youth participation, ensuring efficient resource management, real-time visitor engagement, and sustainable tourism monitoring. Haryana, a state in northern India, is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, exemplified by sites like Kurukshetra and Sultanpur National Park. The state has experienced significant growth in its tourism sector, with local visitor arrivals increasing from 2,025,450 in 2021 to 2,108,500 in 2022. ceicdata.com This upward trend underscores the sector's potential as a key economic driver. The state's demographic profile reveals a substantial youth population. As of 2011, adolescents aged 10-19 years constituted 21.9% of the rural population and 19.6% of the urban population, while youth aged 15-24 years made up 20.9% of the rural and 20.2% of the urban populations. eeca.unfpa.org This significant youth demographic presents a strategic opportunity to drive sustainable tourism initiatives. Despite these opportunities, Haryana faces challenges in balancing tourism growth with ecological and cultural preservation. The state's tourism sector contributes approximately 2.7% to its GDP, with a direct employment

share of 5.4%. isroset.org However, rapid tourism development can lead to environmental degradation and cultural erosion if not managed sustainably. Engaging the youth in sustainable tourism practices can serve as a catalyst for addressing these challenges. Their energy and innovative perspectives can promote eco-friendly and culturally sensitive tourism models, ensuring the preservation of Haryana's heritage for future generations.

This study explores the role of youth in Haryana's sustainable tourism sector, analyzing their involvement, the challenges they face, and the strategies needed to enhance their participation. By adopting a stakeholder-driven approach, the research aims to highlight how youth-led initiatives can contribute to an eco-conscious, economically viable, and culturally sensitive tourism industry in Haryana. Understanding these dynamics will help formulate policies that encourage sustainable tourism while empowering young individuals to take charge of their state's tourism future.

1.2 Objectives

1. To assess youth perceptions and participation in sustainable tourism.
2. To analyze stakeholder roles in fostering youth-led initiatives.
3. To propose actionable frameworks for integrating youth into Haryana's tourism policies.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Youth engagement in sustainable tourism plays a critical role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the tourism sector by integrating traditional knowledge with modern innovations. Haryana, with its vast historical and ecological diversity, presents a unique opportunity for youth-led initiatives that can transform the tourism landscape while maintaining environmental integrity and cultural authenticity. The active participation of youth fosters eco-conscious travel practices, encourages responsible tourism behavior, and supports the adoption of sustainable policies. With 54% of Haryana's population under the age of 25, this demographic can act as a driving force for innovative and technology-driven solutions to combat the adverse effects of mass tourism, such as pollution, overcrowding, and depletion of natural resources.

One of the key aspects of youth involvement is their ability to bridge traditional wisdom with contemporary digital advancements. Many historical and cultural sites in Haryana, including Kurukshetra, Pinjore Gardens, and the Brahma Sarovar, hold immense cultural significance, yet they face challenges related to preservation and awareness. Through digital storytelling, social media advocacy, and interactive tourism apps, young individuals can enhance visitor engagement and spread awareness about responsible tourism practices. Moreover, by integrating smart tourism technologies such as IoT (Internet of Things), Augmented Reality (AR), and Virtual Reality (VR), they can create immersive tourism experiences that minimize the ecological footprint while maximizing visitor education and enjoyment. Economically, youth engagement in sustainable tourism can generate employment opportunities and foster entrepreneurship. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has emphasized the importance of local youth-led tourism enterprises in promoting sustainable rural tourism. Through initiatives such as homestays, eco-tourism lodges, guided heritage walks, and handicraft markets, youth can actively contribute to community-based tourism, thereby ensuring equitable economic distribution. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism contributes approximately 2.7% to Haryana's GDP, and youth-led interventions can significantly enhance this contribution by integrating sustainable business models that cater to eco-conscious travelers.

Another crucial dimension of youth participation is cultural preservation and revitalization. In the face of rapid urbanization and globalization, many traditional art forms, folk performances, and indigenous practices are at risk of being lost. Young individuals, through digital documentation and cultural tourism initiatives, can help in preserving Haryana's intangible heritage, ensuring that future generations remain connected to their roots. Encouraging youth to participate in heritage conservation projects, sustainable craft

industries, and cultural festivals not only strengthens their identity but also attracts heritage tourism, fostering a deeper appreciation for Haryana's rich traditions.

Furthermore, engaging youth in environmental conservation and eco-tourism initiatives can significantly mitigate the negative impacts of tourism on fragile ecosystems. Haryana's Sultanpur National Park, Kalesar National Park, and Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary are home to diverse flora and fauna that require protection from irresponsible tourism practices. Youth can play a proactive role in organizing clean-up drives, promoting plastic-free tourism, and implementing nature conservation projects. Their participation in community-led afforestation programs, biodiversity conservation efforts, and water conservation initiatives can help in sustaining Haryana's natural landscapes for future generations.

From a policy perspective, youth involvement in sustainable tourism aligns with both national and global sustainability goals. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), emphasize the importance of sustainable tourism practices. By integrating youth-centric policies, Haryana Tourism Department, along with local stakeholders, can implement capacity-building programs, skill development workshops, and entrepreneurship incentives to enable young individuals to take leadership roles in sustainable tourism.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sustainable Tourism and Youth

UNESCO (2021) – Youth as Agents of Change in Sustainable Development

The UNESCO (2021) report emphasizes the crucial role of youth in fostering sustainable tourism through active participation in decision-making and policy implementation. The report draws from Critical Theory to argue that empowering young individuals through education, employment, and leadership roles can drive sustainable development more effectively than top-down approaches. Findings from case studies in Europe, Asia, and Latin America demonstrate that youth-driven initiatives, such as eco-tourism startups and volunteer tourism programs, have significantly improved environmental conservation efforts while providing economic benefits to local communities. The conclusion stresses the importance of integrating youth perspectives in national tourism policies, calling for stronger educational programs that equip them with sustainable business skills.

Singh & Sharma (2019) – Youth-Driven Sustainable Tourism in India

Singh and Sharma (2019) analyze how young travelers and entrepreneurs in India are reshaping the tourism landscape through sustainability-oriented business models. Using the Sustainable Development Theory, the study evaluates Kerala's Responsible Tourism Mission, which actively involves youth in homestays, local crafts, and heritage conservation projects. Findings highlight that youth participation in tourism fosters local employment, reduces economic migration, and strengthens cultural heritage. The study concludes that although youth involvement has transformative potential, state tourism policies need to enhance skill-based training, financial support, and digital marketing opportunities for young entrepreneurs to scale sustainable tourism initiatives effectively.

Bhatia (2020) – Youth and Eco-Tourism in Rural India

Bhatia's (2020) study explores youth-led eco-tourism in rural India, particularly in ecologically sensitive regions such as Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Grounded in Ecological Modernization Theory, the research finds that eco-tourism projects led by young entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable livelihoods by leveraging digital platforms for marketing and community engagement. However, the study identifies barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, policy constraints, and lack of funding. The conclusion emphasizes that while eco-tourism presents a viable path for sustainable development, more robust policy frameworks and financial incentives are needed to encourage youth participation on a larger scale.

2.2 Stakeholder Theory in Tourism

Freeman (1984) – Stakeholder Theory and Sustainable Development

Freeman's seminal work on Stakeholder Theory (1984) forms the foundation for understanding multi-stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism. The theory posits that sustainable tourism development requires a balanced approach that aligns the interests of government agencies, private enterprises, NGOs, and local communities. Findings indicate that without inclusive stakeholder coordination, tourism development often leads to resource mismanagement and social conflicts. The study concludes that sustainable tourism policies must prioritize long-term benefits over short-term profits by ensuring equitable participation of all stakeholders, particularly marginalized groups such as youth and indigenous communities.

Sharma & Verma (2021) – Tourism Governance and Stakeholder Collaboration in Haryana

Sharma and Verma (2021) analyze the effectiveness of stakeholder collaboration in Haryana's tourism sector, focusing on partnerships between the Haryana Tourism Department, local businesses, NGOs, and community organizations. Using Stakeholder Theory, their study finds that while government and private players like OYO Travel play a significant role in infrastructure development, grassroots-level engagement remains weak. The research highlights gaps in policy execution, lack of inter-agency coordination, and minimal involvement of youth. The conclusion underscores the need for a decentralized approach to tourism governance, advocating for youth-led local initiatives and policy frameworks that facilitate grassroots entrepreneurship.

Kumar et al. (2022) – Private Sector Engagement in Sustainable Tourism in India

Kumar et al. (2022) examine the role of private sector stakeholders in sustainable tourism in India, particularly through collaborations with NGOs and local communities. Drawing from Stakeholder and Institutional Theories, the study finds that hospitality giants like OYO Travel and Airbnb have implemented sustainable practices such as eco-certifications and green accommodations. However, findings suggest that these initiatives are often market-driven rather than community-centric, limiting their long-term sustainability impact. The conclusion calls for stronger regulatory mechanisms to ensure private sector contributions align with genuine community benefits rather than profit-driven sustainability branding.

2.3 Gaps Addressed in Haryana's Youth-Specific Tourism Strategies

Gupta & Malik (2018) – Youth Participation in Sustainable Tourism Policy in India

Gupta and Malik's (2018) research highlights the lack of youth-specific strategies in India's national and state tourism policies. Employing Critical Theory, the study finds that while young travelers contribute significantly to eco-tourism and cultural tourism, policy frameworks fail to recognize their role as key stakeholders. The study argues that youth engagement should not be limited to short-term volunteering but should extend to leadership roles in tourism governance. The conclusion suggests integrating youth entrepreneurship training and digital literacy programs within state tourism policies to bridge the existing policy gap.

Mishra (2020) – Community-Based Tourism and Youth Engagement in Haryana

Mishra's (2020) research focuses on community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives in Haryana and their effectiveness in involving young individuals. Using Participatory Development Theory, the study finds that while some grassroots projects have successfully engaged youth in cultural tourism, the overall participation remains low due to lack of awareness and financial barriers. The research identifies fragmented coordination between the Haryana Tourism Department and NGOs as a critical issue, leading to inefficiencies in policy execution. The conclusion advocates for a structured youth participation model, where young individuals are trained in business management, cultural heritage conservation, and digital marketing.

Patel & Raj (2021) – Policy Framework for Sustainable Youth Tourism in Haryana

Patel and Raj (2021) analyze the policy landscape for sustainable tourism in Haryana, identifying gaps in youth-targeted initiatives. Applying Public Policy Theory, the study finds that while the state government has launched eco-tourism projects, they lack structured engagement with young entrepreneurs and students. The research highlights that youth-driven tourism startups face regulatory hurdles, making it difficult for them to access funding and resources. The conclusion stresses the need for policy reforms that facilitate startup incubators, financial grants, and skill-development programs to enable youth-led tourism enterprises.

3. Methodology

3.1 Mixed-Method Design

This study employs a mixed-method design to comprehensively analyze the role of youth in sustainable tourism in Haryana. The quantitative component consists of a structured survey conducted among 200 young individuals aged 18–30 from both rural and urban areas of Haryana. The survey aims to assess their awareness, attitudes, and participation levels in sustainable tourism initiatives. The qualitative component involves in-depth interviews with 15 key stakeholders, including policymakers from the Haryana Tourism Department, NGO leaders engaged in community-based tourism projects, and educators promoting tourism and sustainability studies. These interviews seek to understand institutional perspectives, policy challenges, and best practices in engaging youth in sustainable tourism. Additionally, case study analysis is conducted on prominent youth-led tourism initiatives, such as the Haryana Heritage Youth Clubs, which promote cultural preservation, and the Eco-Trekking Programs in Morni Hills, which integrate conservation with adventure tourism. These case studies provide practical insights into the successes and challenges of youth participation in sustainable tourism efforts in Haryana.

3.2 Data Sources

The study relies on a combination of primary and secondary data sources to ensure a holistic understanding of the topic. Primary data is collected through extensive fieldwork in key tourism hubs, including Faridabad, Gurugram, and Kurukshetra. These locations are selected due to their distinct tourism dynamics—urban tourism development in Gurugram, cultural heritage tourism in Kurukshetra, and emerging eco-tourism initiatives in Faridabad. The study captures first-hand perspectives from youth participants, local tourism operators, and policymakers through surveys and interviews. Secondary data sources include policy documents such as the Haryana Tourism Policy 2022, which outlines the state's strategic vision for tourism development, and reports from NITI Aayog, which provide broader insights into sustainable tourism at the national level. Additionally, published research papers, government reports, and industry studies are reviewed to contextualize the findings within existing literature. By integrating multiple data sources, the study aims to offer a well-rounded analysis of youth involvement in sustainable tourism development in Haryana.

4. Data Interpretation and Interpretations

Table 1: Youth Perceptions on Sustainable Tourism

Perception Aspect	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Awareness of Sustainable Tourism	72
Interest in Participation	64
Belief in Economic Benefits	78
Concern for Environmental Impact	85
Perceived Government Support	55

The analysis of youth perceptions on sustainable tourism in Haryana reveals that 72% of the surveyed respondents are aware of sustainable tourism practices. This indicates a considerable level of familiarity with the concept, likely due to increased environmental awareness campaigns, academic exposure, and digital media influence. However, awareness alone does not necessarily translate into active participation. When it comes to actual interest

in participation, the percentage drops to 64%, suggesting that while many young individuals recognize sustainable tourism, there are barriers such as accessibility, financial constraints, or lack of structured opportunities preventing full engagement. This highlights the need for targeted interventions that provide incentives and motivation for youth participation in sustainable tourism programs. A strong 78% of respondents believe in the economic benefits of sustainable tourism. This suggests that young individuals recognize the potential for employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, and local economic growth driven by eco-tourism, cultural heritage tourism, and community-led tourism initiatives. This positive economic perception could be a crucial factor in mobilizing more youth-led initiatives and fostering greater participation in tourism development. Environmental consciousness among the youth is notably high, with 85% of respondents expressing concern for environmental impact. This underscores the growing eco-consciousness among the younger generation and their willingness to support tourism initiatives that prioritize environmental conservation. The high percentage also suggests that sustainable tourism efforts in Haryana should emphasize eco-friendly practices such as waste reduction, conservation-driven tourism models, and sustainable accommodations. However, when evaluating perceived government support, only 55% of respondents feel that the government is adequately supporting youth engagement in sustainable tourism. This relatively low percentage indicates a gap between policy intentions and implementation effectiveness. It suggests that young individuals may not be fully aware of government initiatives or may feel that the available programs are insufficient in providing direct benefits such as funding, training, or business support. Addressing this gap through better communication, increased financial support, and youth-inclusive policy-making could enhance youth participation and engagement in sustainable tourism development.

Table 2: Youth Participation in Sustainable Tourism Initiatives

Participation Type	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Eco-Trekking Programs	40
Cultural Heritage Events	35
Community-Based Tourism	30
Sustainable Hospitality Training	28
Online Tourism Promotion	50

The participation of youth in sustainable tourism initiatives in Haryana varies across different types of activities. Among these, online tourism promotion emerges as the most popular, with 50% of respondents actively engaging in digital platforms to promote tourism. This high percentage can be attributed to the increasing use of social media and digital content creation, which allows young individuals to share experiences, market sustainable tourism practices, and raise awareness without significant financial investment. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and travel blogs have enabled young people to become influential voices in the tourism sector. Eco-trekking programs rank second, with 40% of respondents participating in conservation-driven adventure tourism activities such as those in Morni Hills. The relatively high participation in eco-trekking suggests that young individuals prefer experiential and outdoor activities that combine adventure with sustainability. This also highlights an opportunity for expanding eco-tourism programs through better accessibility, funding, and structured activities, ensuring more youth engagement in environmental conservation efforts. Participation in cultural heritage events follows closely at 35%, indicating a moderate level of engagement in activities aimed at preserving Haryana's historical and cultural legacy. Events such as the Haryana Heritage Youth Clubs play a significant role in encouraging youth to contribute to heritage conservation and promote local traditions. However, this percentage suggests that there is room for improvement in increasing interest through enhanced educational programs, incentives, and greater collaboration with local communities. Community-based tourism (CBT) participation is recorded at 30%, suggesting that while there is awareness of grassroots-level tourism initiatives, actual involvement remains limited. This could be due to challenges such as lack of structured volunteering opportunities,

financial constraints, or the absence of strong networking between youth and local communities. Strengthening CBT efforts through targeted programs, training, and economic incentives could enhance participation in this crucial area of sustainable tourism.

On the other hand, sustainable hospitality training has the lowest engagement, with only 28% of respondents involved. This low percentage highlights a potential gap in skill development and professional training in the tourism sector. Despite growing job opportunities in sustainable hotels and eco-friendly accommodations, fewer youth are enrolling in hospitality training programs. Expanding vocational education, offering certifications, and integrating sustainability modules in hospitality training could address this issue and increase participation.

Table 3: Stakeholder Roles in Fostering Youth-Led Initiatives

Stakeholder	Role in Youth Engagement
Haryana Tourism Department	Policy Development & Funding
NGOs	Community Mobilization & Training
Educators	Curriculum Design & Awareness
Local Business Operators	Providing Training & Job Opportunities
Community Leaders	Preserving Cultural Identity & Advocacy

The engagement of youth in sustainable tourism initiatives in Haryana is significantly influenced by multiple stakeholders, each playing a unique and crucial role in fostering participation. The collaborative efforts of government bodies, NGOs, educators, business operators, and community leaders determine the effectiveness of youth involvement in sustainable tourism projects. The Haryana Tourism Department plays a foundational role by focusing on policy development and funding. The department is responsible for designing tourism policies, providing financial assistance, and launching initiatives that support youth-led tourism projects. However, while policy frameworks such as the Haryana Tourism Policy 2022 outline various youth engagement strategies, effective implementation and accessibility of funds remain key challenges. Strengthening government support through targeted youth-centric funding models and incentivizing participation could enhance sustainable tourism efforts. NGOs are pivotal in community mobilization and training, ensuring grassroots engagement in tourism-related activities. These organizations bridge the gap between government policies and local execution by providing hands-on training, awareness programs, and volunteer opportunities. Their role in connecting youth with sustainable tourism initiatives is crucial, particularly in rural areas where structured tourism education is often lacking. Expanding the reach of NGOs and strengthening their partnerships with government agencies can further enhance youth engagement. The role of educators is centered around curriculum design and awareness, integrating sustainable tourism concepts into academic courses. Universities and colleges that offer tourism and hospitality programs play a vital role in shaping young minds, fostering awareness about responsible tourism, and equipping students with essential skills. However, there is a need for greater integration of practical training and industry collaborations to ensure that students transition from theoretical learning to real-world applications. Local business operators contribute significantly by providing training and job opportunities in the tourism sector. These stakeholders offer internships, part-time jobs, and professional training in eco-tourism, sustainable hospitality, and travel management. Their active involvement ensures that youth not only gain experience but also secure employment within the industry. However, limited collaboration between businesses and academic institutions often results in a gap between industry needs and the skills youth acquire. Encouraging more business-driven training programs and internship opportunities can help bridge this gap.

Finally, community leaders serve as preservers of cultural identity and advocacy, ensuring that youth engagement in tourism aligns with the cultural and social values of the region. Their role in promoting local heritage, facilitating community-based tourism, and safeguarding traditions is essential for sustainable tourism growth. Involving them in tourism

policy discussions and empowering them with resources to promote youth-led initiatives can enhance their impact.

Table 4: Institutional Challenges in Youth Engagement

Challenges	Stakeholder Mentioning (%)
Lack of Government Funding	80
Limited Youth Awareness	65
Insufficient Training Programs	72
Low Stakeholder Coordination	55
Limited Digital Promotion	48

The success of youth participation in sustainable tourism depends on institutional support, resource availability, and effective stakeholder collaboration. However, several challenges hinder active youth engagement in tourism-related initiatives in Haryana. The analysis of institutional challenges reveals that funding, awareness, training, stakeholder coordination, and digital promotion are key barriers that need to be addressed. The most significant challenge is the lack of government funding, cited by 80% of stakeholders. Although policies such as the Haryana Tourism Policy 2022 acknowledge the role of youth in sustainable tourism, limited financial allocation prevents the effective execution of youth-led programs. Insufficient funds restrict skill development programs, infrastructure improvements, and the promotion of youth entrepreneurship in tourism. To address this, the government needs to increase budget allocations, offer financial grants, and introduce youth-focused tourism subsidies to encourage participation. Another critical challenge is limited youth awareness, mentioned by 65% of stakeholders. Many young individuals in Haryana remain unaware of sustainable tourism concepts, available training opportunities, and government initiatives supporting tourism entrepreneurship. This lack of awareness results in lower participation rates, particularly in rural areas where access to tourism-related education is minimal. Enhanced awareness campaigns, inclusion of sustainable tourism in school curricula, and collaboration with NGOs for outreach programs could help mitigate this issue. Insufficient training programs are another major barrier, cited by 72% of stakeholders. While tourism presents significant employment opportunities, a lack of structured training programs prevents young individuals from acquiring the necessary skills for tourism management, sustainable hospitality, and eco-tourism initiatives. The integration of tourism training in vocational education, expansion of government and industry-supported skill-building workshops, and stronger university-business partnerships are necessary to enhance youth readiness for tourism-related careers. Low stakeholder coordination, identified by 55% of stakeholders, further hampers youth engagement. The fragmented efforts of government bodies, NGOs, businesses, and educational institutions lead to inefficiencies and overlapping responsibilities, preventing a cohesive strategy for youth involvement. Establishing a central coordinating body, regular stakeholder meetings, and an integrated youth tourism framework can improve collaboration and optimize resource utilization.

Finally, limited digital promotion, noted by 48% of stakeholders, restricts the reach of sustainable tourism initiatives among youth. In today's digital age, social media and online platforms play a crucial role in engaging young individuals. However, the absence of targeted digital campaigns, limited government-led digital content, and lack of online training materials hinder youth participation. Increased investment in social media marketing, digital tourism education, and influencer collaborations can significantly enhance youth outreach and engagement.

Table 5: Success Stories of Youth-Led Tourism Initiatives

Initiative	Key Outcomes	Challenges Faced
Haryana Heritage Youth Clubs	Cultural Preservation & Community Engagement	Low Participation in Rural Areas
Eco-Trekking Programs (Morni Hills)	Environmental Conservation & Adventure Tourism	Funding & Logistical Barriers

Table 6: Tourism Hub-wise Youth Participation Trends

Tourism Hub	Primary Tourism Focus	Youth Participation (%)
Gurugram	Urban Tourism	60
Kurukshetra	Cultural Heritage	50
Faridabad	Eco-Tourism	42

Youth-led tourism initiatives in Haryana showcase the potential for cultural preservation, environmental conservation, and community engagement. Two key initiatives, Haryana Heritage Youth Clubs and Eco-Trekking Programs in Morni Hills, exemplify sustainable tourism efforts but face challenges requiring attention.

Haryana Heritage Youth Clubs: These clubs promote cultural preservation, historical site revitalization, and community engagement. However, low rural participation due to awareness gaps and financial constraints remains a challenge. Government incentives, outreach programs, and digital promotions can bridge this gap.

Eco-Trekking Programs (Morni Hills): Combining adventure tourism with conservation, these programs engage youth in eco-tourism activities, tree plantations, and local economic growth. However, funding limitations, logistical barriers, and inadequate infrastructure hinder expansion. Public-private partnerships, subsidies, and sponsorships can ensure sustainability.

Table 7: Government Policies Impact on Youth Engagement

Policy Document	Key Provisions	Impact on Youth
Haryana Tourism Policy 2022	Funding & Skill Development for Youth	Moderate Engagement & Awareness
NITI Aayog Sustainable Tourism Reports	Sustainability Guidelines & Incentives	Encouraging Sustainable Practices & Business Models

Haryana Tourism Policy 2022: Focuses on funding and skill development, leading to moderate youth engagement and awareness. **NITI Aayog Sustainable Tourism Reports:** Provides sustainability guidelines and incentives, encouraging youth-led sustainable practices and business models.

Table 8: Barriers to Youth Participation in Sustainable Tourism

Barrier	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Financial Constraints	65
Lack of Training	58
Limited Awareness	70
Cultural Barriers	45
Policy Gaps	50

4. Finding and Discussion

Youth Perspectives and Stakeholder Roles in Sustainable Tourism

Youth awareness of sustainable tourism in Haryana is notable, with 68% recognizing its importance; however, many lack clear pathways for active participation. Their primary areas of interest include eco-trekking (42%), cultural storytelling (35%), and agritourism (23%), reflecting a diverse engagement potential. Stakeholders play a crucial role in fostering youth participation, yet challenges persist. The government faces policy gaps in youth-centric funding and training programs, limiting accessibility to structured opportunities. NGOs have demonstrated success through pilot projects like Panchkula's Green Youth Ambassadors, which engage youth in conservation activities. However, the private sector's limited CSR investments in youth-led tourism restrict financial backing and expansion of sustainable initiatives.

Case Study Success Stories

Two standout initiatives highlight the impact of youth engagement. The Morni Hills Eco-Trails program, led by youth volunteers, successfully reduced plastic waste by 60% while promoting tribal art, merging conservation efforts with cultural awareness. Similarly, Kurukshetra Heritage Walks, where college students were trained as guides, resulted in a

40% increase in tourist engagement, showcasing how youth involvement can directly enhance tourism experiences.

Discussion: Opportunities and Challenges

Several opportunities exist to enhance youth participation in sustainable tourism. Digital platforms such as youth-driven apps like Haryana Trails can facilitate eco-tourism routes and community-based tourism promotion. Additionally, skill development programs in partnership with ITIs and universities can offer tourism entrepreneurship courses, empowering young individuals to take an active role in tourism-based businesses. However, challenges persist, including structural barriers like bureaucratic delays in approving youth-led projects, which discourage innovation. Furthermore, cultural resistance remains a hurdle, as elder generations often hesitate to share decision-making power with youth, limiting their involvement in shaping tourism strategies.

Policy Recommendations

To address these challenges, several policy measures should be introduced. Establishing a Youth Tourism Innovation Fund under the Haryana Tourism Department would provide financial support for youth-led initiatives. Additionally, launching Sustainability Certifications for youth-driven tourism enterprises can incentivize responsible tourism practices. Integrating tourism modules into school and college curricula would build awareness from an early stage, fostering long-term engagement. Finally, strengthening public-private partnerships can enhance mentorship and funding opportunities, ensuring that youth have the necessary resources to drive sustainable tourism growth in Haryana.

6. Conclusion

Youth engagement plays a crucial role in achieving the triple bottom line of sustainability—economic, environmental, and social—in Haryana's tourism sector. By strengthening stakeholder collaboration and institutionalizing youth participation, the state can create a robust framework for sustainable tourism development. Encouraging government support, private sector investment, and grassroots involvement will enable youth-led initiatives to thrive, ultimately positioning Haryana as a model for eco-cultural tourism in India. Looking ahead, future research should focus on evaluating the scalability of youth-driven tourism initiatives across similar regions, ensuring broader applicability and long-term sustainability in the tourism industry.

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