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HERITAGE TOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY: SURVEYING THE ASIAN SCENARIO

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Tourism, has been one of the oldest forms of recreation man has ever known; the desire to explore and the longing to know more, has always led man to known and unknown territories.

Today tourism is a full-fledged industry, sites, and areas of various kinds, be it pilgrimage sites, beaches, forests, forts, historical sites and the likes that hold heritage value have always attracted a man.

Asia, boasts of some of the most exciting tourist spots; making it second only to Europe as a favourite travel destination. Even ASEAN recognizes it as a priority area for integration.

The need of the hour, however, is to identify the role of tourism in promoting socio-cultural advancement, to evaluate sustainability and find out the forms of sustainable development not only in the overall heritage tourist industry but also at the sites itself.

Factors that surface as challenges to sustainable heritage tourism development are related to national fiscal policies; governmental norms; the role of UNESCO in managing World Heritage Sites and the response of the host nation; the role of the organizations that work towards the maintenance of the sites; emerging environmental issues; over commercialization of the structures; international, domestic and local tourist flow and other such pointers.

This paper intends to look into the above mentioned issues in an attempt to figure out solutions to the challenges faced by the industry, its operators, the policy-makers, the actual implementation and the impact of an operationally sustainable framework, from heritage sites across Asia.

Key Words: *Heritage, Sustainability, Tourism, Asia, Challenges, and solutions.*

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