

## **16. The Impact of Sustainable Tourism on Local Communities and the Environment**

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### **Abstract:**

*Tourism is defined as the movement of people to a certain place of interest without the intention of permanently settling or earning a living in the places visited. Tourism is also an economic activity with unique growth potential which, if properly managed, can be a valuable tool for ensuring long-term development and promoting and supporting local communities.*

*The rise of tourism in the past has raised awareness of the environmental impact of tourism among politicians, local governments, tourists and host communities. As a result, the development of sustainable tourism has become a requirement in today's world. However, there is a lack of international tourism cooperation, including exchanges related to sustainable tourism development, to assist, support and assist national and local governments in improving their environmental and socio-cultural performance in relation to tourism. Tourism activities should be developed with the help of local communities and their resources. Tourism also contributes for the local communities to maintain control over their development in their regions; and that full community participation will be a critical aspect in achieving the long-term sustainability of tourism.*

### **Keywords:**

*Sustainable Tourism, Socio-cultural, Local communities, Ecotourism, Environment*

### **16.1 Introduction:**

Tourism is an important source of income for many local, regional and national economies. In many areas, mass tourism has led to unplanned development, causing the deterioration of natural, social and cultural resources. As a result of this uncontrolled expansion, customer behavior in the travel industry has changed. With the growing and fragmented number of social groupings, the tourism market has increasingly segmented and changed.

### *Sustainable Solution for Green Environment*

Traveling to have a good impact on the environment, society and economy while avoiding negative consequences is known as sustainable tourism. This seems to be the case in every situation, but it is not always the case.

Increase in public awareness of societal environmental challenges, combined with the increase in public responsibility for the protection of the environment and resources, has motivated and prompted many individuals to engage in various forms of sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism development means "achieving tourism growth that prevents environmental damage, as such facts could have a major impact on future quality of life".

Sustainable tourism means that the needs of a growing number of tourists are met in a way that continues to attract tourists, while the needs of host communities are met through the improvement of living standards, the environment and the preservation of the destination's cultural heritage.

Ecotourism involves responsible travel, enjoying natural beauty and promoting conservation. The difference of this concept from other types of tourism is that it emphasizes the satisfaction of nature, responsible travel, less impact on tourists, promotion of local communities and educational contexts.

Ecotourism is an opportunity to explore beautiful places while learning about local culture, customs and traditions. But beyond that, choosing this type of travel also helps preserve natural resources.

By reducing energy use when you travel, you can reduce your carbon footprint and help preserve wildlife habitats and ecosystems for future generations to enjoy. [1-5]

#### **Objectives of Sustainable Tourism: [6,7]**

- Environmental protection, conservation of natural resources and preservation of community heritage.
- Ensuring the basic needs of the local community and raising the standard of living.
- Applying the principle of justice at the level of the current generation and future generations in order to use environmental resources and distribute income.
- Provision of environmental accounting standards and control over environmental tourism.
- Basic environment and development of services in local communities.
- Creating an environment for investment that will provide income and work for the local community.
- Developing environmental awareness among tourists, workers and local communities and providing new markets for local products.

Figure below shows landscape beauty of Jammu and Kashmir which totally following objectives of sustainable tourism. Dal Lake (the second largest lake in Jammu and Kashmir and is the most visited place in Kashmir by the tourist [8,9]



**Figure 16.1: Landscape Beauty and Dal Lake of Jammu and Kashmir [9]**

#### **Ecotourism Activities [10]**

- Nature based activities such as hiking, walking, tours etc.
- Agrotourism
- Wildlife Volunteering activities
- Educational trips and tours
- Community based tourism/cultural immersion



**Figure 16.2: Kashmiri Girls Showcasing Their Culture [9] Himachal Girls Showcasing Their Culture [11]**

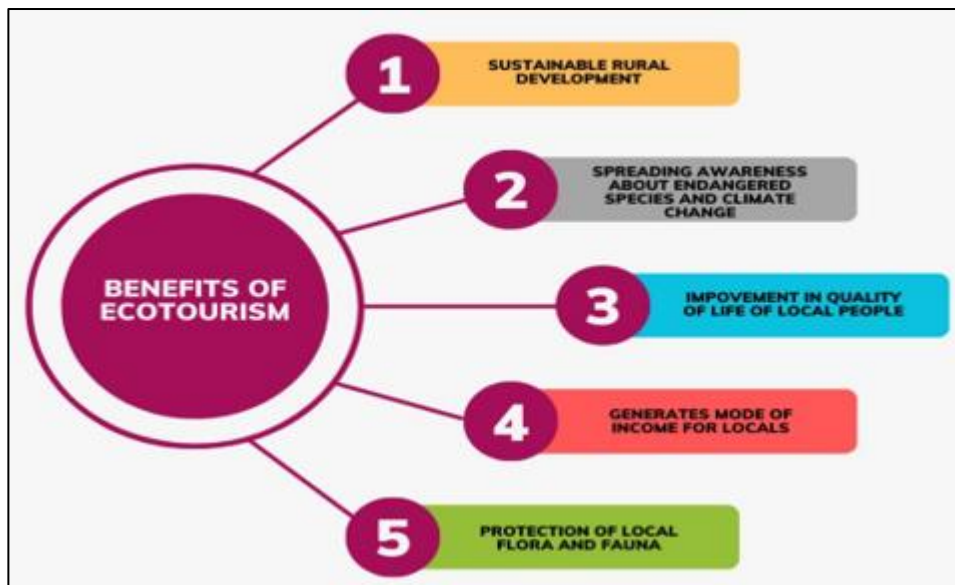
There are many types of ecotourism, and the most popular are agriculture, community development, eco-residency and eco-walking. The eco-tourism area is famous for activities such as scuba diving, snorkeling, food walks, bird watching, heritage walks and gardens. Additionally, ecotourism helps build local communities that do not have access to modern amenities. Ecotourism helps local communities become more independent. It also helps them gain political influence by giving them greater negotiating power and a say in the development of the land. Income from tourism also helps finance the region's infrastructure.

The Indian government generally recognizes the importance of ecotourism in protecting the environment and supporting the development of local communities. The federal government allocates funds for the development of ecotourism projects under the Central Financial Assistance (CFA) programme. Himachal Pradesh, for example, plans to promote as many as 37 tourist destinations in the state with government support over the next few years. Odisha plans to develop selected forests as eco-tourism areas to provide accommodation to eco-tourists. [12, 13]

Here is the list of top ten ecotourism places in India: [14]

- **Thenmala in Kerala:** Thenmala in Kerala is one of the top ecotourism places in the country. It is located in the Western Ghats and is famous for its lush greenery, waterfalls and hills. It is divided into three zones: the Cultural Zone for foodies, the Adventure Zone for those who love adventure, and the Entertainment Zone for those who love exploring the city.
- **Matheran, Maharashtra:** Declared an Environmentally Sensitive Area According to the Environment Agency, this hill station in Maharashtra is popular for its natural beauty. Located at an altitude of 2500 meters, Matheran is home to an ancient fort and is ideal for studying history.
- **Kumbalangi, Kerala:** Kumbalangi Tourist Village Project makes people aware of the culture and heritage of the state. Near Kochi, people come to this island not only for its beauty but also to interact with local fishermen. Guests can stay with a local family and discover the culture of the region.
- **Mawlynnong, Meghalaya:** This small village is declared as the cleanest village in Asia, why is there no bamboo dust everywhere to prevent people from littering. It is approximately 90 kilometers from Shillong and attracts a large number of tourists every year with its beauty and lush greenery.
- **Coorg, Karnataka:** Coorg is often referred to as the Scotland of the East, with its splashing waterfalls, lush greenery and rolling hills. Nagarhole National Park and coffee plantations make this a perfect destination for sightseeing.
- **Ladakh:** Despite its rugged location, Ladakh attracts millions of tourists every year with its beautiful scenery among wide rivers and snow-capped mountains. Winter temperatures often drop below freezing and locals are famous for their hospitality.
- **Goa:** Often called the ultimate party destination, this state has another side that attracts many tourists who come here to explore the culture of the state. Goa is a Dutch colony and represents a blend of Indian, British, French and Dutch culture. It is home to beautiful churches, ancient temples and rare beaches.
- **Munnar, Kerala:** This is another feather in Kerala's cap. With its rolling green hills, hills and tea plantations, Munnar is a traveler's paradise. Apart from the cultural experience, Munnar is also home to many wonders like the rare Neelakurinji flower.
- **Chilika, Odisha:** Chilika is the largest beach in India and the second largest in the world. Stretching for 3500 km, Chilika is flocked by many tourists every year as migratory birds. This region also has a lot of biodiversity, as it is home to many rare species such as Irrawaddy dolphins, blackbucks and green sea turtles.
- **Majuli, Assam:** Majuli is the world's largest island on the banks of the Brahmaputra River. Every year many migratory birds gather in its waters. Local people such as Sonowal Kachris, Mising and Deoris also live on the island.

Ecotourism not only plays an important role in supporting biodiversity, but also helps local communities thrive. Although ecotourism's contribution to environmental protection is undeniable, it can backfire and lead to the destruction of culture, tradition and natural heritage if appropriate controls such as government support are not put in place.



**Figure 16.3: Flowchart Represents the Benefits of Ecotourism [10]**

- **Environmental Benefits:** One of the biggest benefits of ecotourism is its positive impact on the environment. Ecotourism aims to reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment. This means that when you choose to walk this way, you are helping to protect and preserve the environment. Many ecotourism areas have strict rules to ensure that local animals and plants are not harmed and natural resources are not overused.
- **Economic Benefits:** Ecotourism can also provide significant economic benefits to local communities. Many ecotourism sites are located in rural areas where local businesses may experience problems. Ecotourism can provide sustainable income to local communities, provide employment opportunities and support local businesses. When you choose to walk this way, you support local businesses and contribute to sustainability.
- **Cultural Benefits:** Ecotourism also provides opportunities to learn about local culture. Many ecotourism areas offer the opportunity to interact with local communities and learn about their way of life. This could be a change that promotes understanding and respect for different cultures.
- **Educational Resources:** Ecotourism can be a great way to learn about the environment and the importance of conservation. Many ecotourism areas offer educational programs to educate visitors about local ecosystems and the importance of protecting them. This can be a great way to learn about your environment and increase your understanding of the natural world.
- **Personal Care:** Ecotourism is also a good way to heal the body and mind. Many ecotourism areas offer opportunities for activities such as hiking, kayaking or

snorkeling. Being in nature is also a great way to reduce stress and improve mental health. When you choose to walk this way, you're not only helping the environment, you're also benefiting yourself.

- Saving money Ecotourism can also contribute to conservation efforts. By promoting sustainable tourism, ecotourism can help protect and preserve natural resources. Many ecotourism areas use revenue from tourism to support conservation efforts such as protecting animals, preserving ecosystems, and reducing carbon emissions.
- Benefits of Sustainable Development: Ecotourism can also contribute to sustainable development. Ecotourism can contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction by providing valuable income to local communities. This can benefit both the environment and the lives of local communities.
- Cultural Preservation: Ecotourism also allows the preservation of culture. Many ecotourism sites are located in regions with unique heritage and culture. Ecotourism can help preserve these traditions and support the local communities that depend on them.
- Responsible travel: Ecotourism encourages responsible travel. This means that when you go this route you are trying to minimize the negative impact on the environment and local communities. Responsible travel can include many actions, from using environmentally friendly products to supporting local businesses and avoiding activities that harm the environment.
- Mitigation of Climate Change: Ecotourism can also play a role in mitigating climate change. Many ecotourism sites use renewable energy and utilize sustainable practices to reduce their carbon footprint. By supporting these sites, travelers can help to promote the use of renewable energy and reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment.
- Wildlife conservation: Ecotourism can also contribute to wildlife conservation. Many ecotourism areas are home to endangered species. Ecotourism can help protect and preserve these animals and their habitats by promoting sustainable tourism in these areas.

## **16.2 Scope of Ecotourism:**

Tourism as a whole has negatively affected the natural beauty of some places. This is a result of marketing travel destinations that meet travel standards. The worsening climate is a warning for those who like to travel. In the face of these difficulties, nature tourism has become a blessing. Ecotourism in general has advantages and benefits for hosts, travelers, and the world at large. Ecotourism as a profession offers professionals the opportunity to see the world from a different perspective and work to create a better environment.

## **16.3 Conclusion:**

In summary, tourism, defined by its transient nature, emerges as a dynamic economic force with the potential for both prosperity and environmental repercussions. Recognizing its significance, global collaboration is crucial to navigate the complex landscape of sustainable tourism. While the industry's expansion raises awareness about environmental impact, a comprehensive approach to sustainable development is imperative. The absence of international cooperation is a notable hurdle, underscoring the need for unified efforts to guide national and local governments in fortifying their environmental and socio-cultural

resilience. In steering the course of tourism, active involvement of local communities is not just a necessity but a cornerstone for success. Their resources, insights, and participation are pivotal for steering the industry toward a future where economic growth harmonizes with environmental stewardship. As we strive for a balanced and sustainable tourism landscape, the empowerment of local communities emerges as the linchpin for charting a course that respects the environment, cultures, and aspirations of all involved stakeholders.

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