

ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON LOCAL POPULATION IN INDIA

Rema. R¹, Dr. N. Karunakaran²

Rema. R, Department of Economics, Sree Krishna College, Guruvayur, Kerala, India.

*Dr. N. Karunakaran, Department of Economics, EKNM Government College, Elerithattu, Kerala,
India,*



DR.N.KARUNAKARAN

ABSTRACT

Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry. It entertains the visitors in a way that does not affect the world's natural and cultural environments. It promotes the preservation of wildlife and natural habitats ensuring for future generations. Aside from tour guides, a range of local businesses benefited from ecotourism. Crafts people, innkeepers and restaurateurs provide services that help tourists discover local features. In fact, education and awareness may be the true benefits of ecotourism and provide the most lasting effect. Ecotourists meeting people who live more closely with nature may learn to live more simply themselves. Meanwhile, locals gain the funds and the ability to pursue more education of their own, giving them a better understanding of world issues like environmentalism.



REMA. R

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Introduction

India is a perfect destination for an Eco tourist as it is the land of geographical varieties and natural bliss that offers tourists excellent opportunities to de-stress and let them fill them with a new spirit and outlook. In India the movement of ecotourism is getting the momentum as more travel related organizations are addressing the need of ecotourism and promoting it (Bhatt and Syed, 2008). The need of the hour is tourists should make their tours, eco-friendly and protect the environment from getting polluted. Civil society and many non-government organizations have been generating awareness about environmentally destructive practices.

Emergence of Ecotourism

Ecotourism, a very small segment of the overall tourism sector, is one of the fastest growing segments. In 1996, the World Tourism Organization had predicted an increase of 86 percent tourism receipts, of which majority would come from action, adventure, nature and culture related travel (Scheyven, 1999). The principles that form the basis of ecotourism started in the year 1960. Then through eco-development movement in 1970's and 1980's the term ecotourism gained importance (Price, 2003). The final principle to which ecotourism should adhere is that of education and Guides should therefore have been taught conservation issues and properly informed on "ecotourism etiquette". Silva and Mc Dill (2004) addressed that Ecotourism is often found in designated protected areas or national parks which may have been imposed upon the indigenous population. Donohoe and Needham (2006) measured the opportunities (benefits)

and threats (risks) involved in tourism development. Sharpley (2006) observed ecotourism as the fastest growing sector of the world's largest industry is an alternative sources of income and employment. Nawab Ali Khan (2004) specified the adverse impact of ecosystem. Karunakaran (2017) investigated the arguments in favor of ecotourism and justified the conservation factors.

Ecotourism thus ensures work opportunities, indirect employment generation, foreign exchange earnings and income to business and individual class (Table 1). It broadens economic base, encourage entrepreneurial activity and enhances local understanding of the importance of Eco-tourist spots.

Table. 1: Foreign Exchange earnings (FEEs) from Tourism in India (1999-2016)

Year	FEEs, in Rupees (crore)	Percentage (%) change over the previous year
1999	12959	6.6
2000	15629	20.7
2001	15083	-3.5
2002	15064	-0.1
2003	20729	37.6
2004	27944	34.8
2005	33123	18.5
2006	39025	17.8
2007	44360	13.7
2008	51294	15.6
2009	53700	4.7
2010	64889	20.8
2011	77591	19.6
2012	94487	21.8
2013	107671	14.0
2014	123320	14.5
2015	135193	9.6
2016	73065	14.1

Source: Reserve Bank of India.



Environmental Impacts Of Ecotourism

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) characterizes Ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people” (Govt. of India, 2016). It is also very important to regard ecotourism from another point of view. Due to its financial benefits for local communities, ecotourism can be considered as an alternative to other activities in remote areas like clear cutting, slash and burn, cattle ranching or mining, which are often much more destructive. Eco-tourism is more than a catch phrase for nature loving travel and recreation. It is concentrated for preserving and sustaining the diversity of world's natural and cultural environment (Donohoe and Needham, 2006). It accommodates and entertains visitors in a way that is minimally intrusive or destructive to the environment and sustains and supports the native cultures in locations it is operating. The responsibility of both travelers and service providers is the genuine meaning for ecotourism. Eco-tourism focuses on local culture, wilderness adventures, volunteering, personal growth and learning new ways to live on vulnerable planet. Responsible Eco-tourism includes programs that minimize the adverse effects of traditional tourism on the natural environment, and enhance the cultural integrity of local people.

Negative Impact Of Eco-Tourism Development

Eco tourism tends to conserve environment at the expense of development prospects for the third world communities. Located in the eco systems, eco tourism projects is the biggest obstacle in the way of development of environment. Competition among various groups leads to social disharmony. Increased use

of resources by human, even in the smallest sense, leads problem to the environment. Production waste and effluent pollution are also increasing.

Motivation For Involvement In Ecotourism

Hotel and travel companies in India function in a relatively free environment. The country is slowly but surely moving towards a market economy where commercial considerations dictate motivation for private sector to take up various activities. The environment has to be protected through awareness-generation, legislation, policy and administrative action. The travelling public is also becoming conscious of the need to protect the environment, to some extent at least. As a result, many enterprises in the hospitality sector have adopted environment-friendly practices like conserving energy and water and recycling unutilized hotel outputs. The Government has also set up institutions to deal with the defaulters.

The Non-Governmental Organizations And Research Institution

The NGOs, scientific and research institutions can also play a key role in the development of ecotourism resources in India. They should create awareness about the importance of sound eco-practices for tourism development. Besides, motivate local communities to increase their involvement in sustainable ecotourism activities; also organize training programs to prepare local people for ecotourism related activities.



Conclusion

Tourism does not reduce the availability of resources and inhibit future travelers from enjoying the same experiences. Therefore ecotourism structure may be improved by reducing leakages for the successful implementation in alleviating poverty in developing regions with promising opportunities.

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