

A STUDY OF ECOTOURISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism is one of the most effective treatments for preserving the ecosystem over time. Everything is changing in terms of progress today in the age of modernization, but we are also creating a danger zone for ourselves. Ecotourism is important for the long-term survival of wildlife, landscaping, greenery, and natural tourism products. Ecotourism is the quickest-growing segment of the tourism business. Eco-tourism is more than just a buzzword for nature-loving vacations. The purpose of eco-tourism is to preserve and perpetuate the diversity of the world's natural and cultural settings. With the growing interest in conservation and environmental issues in the late twentieth century, ecotourism arose. Conservationists understand the importance of tourism, as well as the numerous threats that poorly managed or unregulated tourism poses to the world's natural and cultural heritage. The major objective of this study is to analyze the potential of Himachal Pradesh. As a logical component of sustainable development, ecotourism necessitates a multidisciplinary approach, meticulous planning, and stringent norms and regulations to ensure long-term success.

Keywords:- Ecotourism, Himachal Pradesh, Conservation, environment

Tourism in India

India is noted for its diverse culture, heritage, temple architecture, rivers, and wildlife. The enormous Himalayas, the deep Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and the Indian Ocean surround the country. From the beginning of time, the Indian civilization and culture have had the tradition of Atithi Devo Bhava (The Guest is Like God). India has two important biodiversity zones: the Western Ghats and the North-East Himalayas, out of a total of 34 biodiversity hotspots worldwide. Because of its unique flora and fauna, India is classified as a mega-diversity country. India is also known for its vastly diversified physical, political, and multilingual societies, as well as a plethora of exciting recreation and adventure activities. India attracts a big number of

tourists from all over the world, as well as a large number of local tourists, due to its numerous attractions and geographic location. As a result, India is regarded as a major tourism destination that offers a diverse range of experiences to visitors.

Tourism's growing importance as an economic engine and its potential as a tool for regional development are undeniable. It is steadily expanding and making a significant contribution to the nation's inclusive economic development on the one hand and the creation of jobs for stakeholders on the other. Tourism in India can be broadly classified into cultural and heritage tourism, eco and sustainable tourism, religious/pilgrimage tourism, wildlife and nature-based tourism, medical tourism, leisure and beach tourism, MICE and event tourism, creative tourism, and so on, based on its tourism resources and attractions.

In terms of attractions and resources, tourism in India is fairly rich and diverse, however the body of knowledge of tourism as a field is relatively untapped in terms of scholarly research. Using an interdisciplinary approach, this special issue aims to reveal a deeper grasp of various perspectives on tourism in India. As a result, the articles in this special edition represent the current state of the hospitality and tourism industry in India. As a result, the special issue contains both conceptual and empirical pieces that reflect unique and current methodologies to ensure a thorough examination of tourism in India. The articles approved for publication in this special edition come from a variety of academics and scholars working in a variety of fields.

Ecotourism in India

Ecotourism is a subset of sustainable tourism that has the potential to grow into a significant section of the entire tourism industry due to its critical role in sustainable development and revenue generation through effective market trend monitoring. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), which is an example of such an institutional entity, provides the most commonly used ecotourism definition in this regard. Ecotourism, according to TIES, is "responsible travel to natural regions that conserves the environment, supports local people's well-being, and includes interpretation and education". The country's network of national parks (103), wildlife sanctuaries (543), conservation reserves (73), and community reserves (45), many of which include tiger reserves, elephant reserves, Ramsar wetland areas, and biosphere reserves, has a large ecotourism potential. In comparison to wealthy nations, India has given less attention to the development of ecotourism ideas and policies over the last decade.

The central government set policies and standards as part of the 12th five-year plan, which includes many action plans for sustainable tourist growth. It has resulted in the formation of various organisations centred on sustainable tourism within the country's protected areas (PAs). However, India's ecotourism strategy is fractured, owing to the ambiguous and contradictory characteristics that define ecotourism. As a result, this research aims to investigate key areas of ecotourism research in India. It is critical to do so since, despite its vast diversity, the country is becoming increasingly culturally polluted, necessitating the establishment of a clear ecotourism policy, which this article fills.



(Source:- Maps Of India)

Ecotourism in Himachal Pradesh

With broad-leaved species like Oaks, Maples, Bird cherry, Hazelnut, Walnut, Horse chestnut, and Rhododendrons lending grandeur to the environment, the gigantic coniferous trees provide a beautiful background to the mountains. The ivies clinging to the trunks of majestic Cedars appear to conceal Nature's secrets, but the vines flowing from atop the trees appear to welcome guests with open arms. The violas that emerge from beneath the forest floor, as well as the riot of colours supplied by anemones, primulas, buttercups, and a variety of other herbs in the alpine meadows, provide a beautiful feast for the beholder's eyes. Aside from flora, the State also provides an ideal environment for a diverse range of Himalayan animals. On the trans-Himalayan high ridges, the Himalayan Tahar and Ibex can be seen as silhouettes. Brown Bears and Musk Deer freely roam the temperate forests, accompanied by a variety of beautiful pheasants such as the Monal, Western Horned Tragopan, Koklas, and Kalij. Those who are fortunate enough may be treated to rare sightings of highly endangered species such as the Snow Leopard and the Snow Cockatoo. The 'Abode of Gods,' as it is often known, conjures up images of ancient temples with magnificently carved wooden panels filling practically every hilltop, as well as the religious festivals linked with these sacred sites. Even a fleeting glance at the traditionally dressed local deities being carried in intricately decorated palanquins, worshippers dancing to the rhythmic sound of traditional drums and clarions, creates an indelible impression. The State's natural and cultural riches, as well as its peaceful, peace-loving people and traditional hospitality, make it a popular tourist destination. In the picturesque surrounds of Himachal Pradesh, anyone with a zeal for life, a spirit of adventure, and a deep love will find all they desires.

The term 'Eco Tourism' refers to a type of tourism that prioritises cultural and natural heritage. This approach aims to preserve the legacy and culture that are the bedrock of India's tourism economy. Tourists travel abroad or inside their own country in quest of enjoyment, relaxation, and adventure, as well as recreation at historical sites, wildlife parks, beaches, and cities and villages.

Ecotourism is gaining popularity around the world, but it has particular practical importance in developing countries, where the needs of underprivileged populations may directly conflict with the desire to profit from the booming tourism industry.

Developers frequently go in and designate particular locations as tourism attractions without paying much regard to the impact on local people. Although these populations rely on the area for food and shelter, their worries are overshadowed by the prospect for financial gain. Ecotourism is a response to this. Its goal is to generate lucrative and sustainable tourism options while limiting the environmental impact of all linked

activities, all while enhancing the lives of the people who reside in the area. Ecotourism is defined by a set of basic concepts, according to ecotourism.org:

- Minimizing industrial influence on the environment
- Increasing environmental and cultural knowledge
- Empowering local communities
- Raising awareness of the country's political, environmental, and social issues
- Ensuring a great experience for all parties involved, including visitors and hosts

In 2001, the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department drafted an Eco-tourism Policy, which was later amended in 2005. The core concept is to decongest and distribute overflowing city tourism areas, bringing visitors closer to nature while also ensuring enough economic returns to the state and livelihood chances for rural populations.

To achieve this goal, the Himalayan Ecotourism Society was established, with its headquarters in Aranya Bhawan Talland Shimla (H.P.). Under the Societies Registration Act, it is a registered society. The Governing Body, which is led by Hon'ble Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh and has Principal Secretary (Forests) as its Member Secretary, is the Society's highest decision-making body. The Society's affairs are managed by an Executive Committee led by the Principal Secretary (Forests), as well as CCF Eco-tourism.

Review Of Literature

Tapan K Panda's book "Ecotourism In India" is based on tourism marketing research covering many areas of tourism and destination marketing Research Methodology 74. It addresses destination marketing cases and challenges, describes the evolution of the travel and aviation industries, examines numerous hurdles to international tourism growth, and investigates the increasing issue of terrorism and how it affects tourism marketing methods. The book also discusses the impact of the Internet and e-commerce on the tourist industry, as well as how electronic commerce models have been successfully used to provide travellers with personalisation, interactivity, and convenience. Among the various approaches to marketing destinations, it is critical to establish a strong airline network and improve connectivity between destinations. Airlines have begun to develop strong brands in order to attract and retain customers."

According to the author of "Eco-Tourism: A Model for Sustainable Forest Management," Vinay Luthra, "ecotourism can be developed as a new model to bring about sustainable forest management in the days to come." The following are some of the ways that eco-tourism can assist Indian forestry: increased public awareness, benefits for local people, and benefits for the forest and forest departments."

"IYE Anniversary Report: Evaluating the Impact of the International Year of Ecotourism" ” Planeta.com conducted a study in May 2007 to assess the evolution of eco-tourism five years after the International Year of Eco-tourism. It is now revising the resource guide and conducting the survey, with the following preliminary results: In Kerala, India, ecotourism is becoming one of the most popular attractions. Ecotourism activities and programmes are primarily found in the wilderness areas of this small state.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to analyse the potential of Eco tourism in Himachal Pradesh

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study was exploratory in nature with the survey being the mode of data collection.

It is based on secondary tourism data from Himachal Pradesh. To achieve our objectives, data is collected from Himachal Pradesh Tourism Official Website (<https://himachaltourism.gov.in/>). The research is descriptive and quantitative, and Data of eco tourism is shown here:

Results And Discussion:

- ❖ Almost every study cited biodiversity conservation as a reason for starting or transitioning to ecotourism, or suggested ways to track animal populations and quantify the effects of human disturbance and tourism on conservation. However, only about half of the respondents offered quantitative or qualitative biodiversity estimates.
- ❖ Local communities' participation in ecotourism planning and decision-making creates pride, better land management practises, and conservation awareness. However, community participation and stakeholder awareness are measured the least in the studies.
- ❖ Most studies have given less importance to education and awareness among stakeholders, and have focused mostly on tourism. Only a few studies have looked at conservation awareness among local populations and other stakeholders like park authorities and commercial tourism businesses.
- ❖ The lack of a strict certification policy or code of conduct to monitor compliance and grade practises in tourism facilities around protected areas, as well as the disconnect between consumer travel preferences

and conservation realities, are two major factors driving the proliferation of green marketing tactics, casting doubt on the current ecotourism model's long-term viability.

- ❖ Tourism's negative effects eventually lead to environmental degradation and, as a result, a loss of aesthetic and recreational value, lowering financial returns on investment in tourism. In terms of a structured framework, skill development, and monetary support, an institutional and policy-level impetus towards ecotourism is urgently needed.
- ❖ Apart from establishing guidelines for private businesses and educating travellers on sustainable travel options, more extensive and multi-criteria research is required. This would also encourage policy initiatives and a comprehensive discussion on sustainability practises.

Research Gaps

The study identified the following research gaps that demand immediate attention:

- Changes in wildlife habitat use and distribution, numbers, and behaviour as a result of increased tourism pressure. Prior to starting an ecotourism project, an assessment of existing biodiversity or the status of the environment might give baseline data for future monitoring. Behavioral research can help to separate the harmful effects of tourism on wildlife. The costs and advantages of implementing ecotourism can be calculated using data on wildlife populations.
- Changes in land use patterns, habitat degradation, habitat connectivity, and resource utilisation are all quantified. These could assist ensure that tourism does not become extractive, but rather contributes to conservation.
- Governmental processes and alternative tactics would be needed to address and reduce any increase in human-wildlife conflict as a result of local communities' diminished reliance on the forest.
- Benefits and income are distributed fairly without reinforcing disparities that exist in local or social structures.
- The ecological and social carrying capacity of a potential ecotourism site is measured in order to determine its viability.
- Assessment of local community attitudes and perceptions of tourism, conservation, and park management in established tourism areas.
- Implementation challenges such as rising land prices, non-local land acquisition, people migration to protected areas, and so on.

Conclusion

Due to its immense natural resources, Himachal Pradesh has the potential to become a competitive ecotourism destination. Ecotourism has a tremendous deal of potential in Himachal Pradesh, as it supports the socioeconomic growth of local populations while also maintaining the country's biodiversity. Ecotourism has not been effective in Himachal Pradesh because of a lack of scientific and management focus on developing it as a sustainable technique. In this context, more scientific study that might aid in the design of suitable legislative regulations, consumer awareness, and financial investments is critical. Furthermore, evaluations like this one might aid in identifying elements that contribute to project success or failure.

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