



Eco-Tourism in India: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

Eco-Tourism is the form of tourism that involves visiting fragile and relatively undistributed natural areas and conserving the same. Its purpose may be to educate the travelers, generate funds for ecological conservation and to contribute to the economic development of nation. Eco-Tourism promotes sustainable development of a nation. It focuses tourism to the destinations where cultural and historical heritage, flora and fauna are the main attractions. If ecotourism is not maintained properly, it can be as damaging as mass tourism. This paper is an attempt to study the opportunities and challenges of Eco-Tourism in India.

Keywords: Eco-Tourism, tourists, sustainable development, India

Introduction

Tourism has becoming an important sector that impacts the economic development of a nation. It creates job opportunities and income as well. For the country like India, it acts as the engine of economic growth through foreign exchange earnings. It also acts as the major driver of world trade, prosperity and well-being. Tourism and Eco-Tourism is somehow different from each other. When we talk of Tourism, it is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that entails the movement of person from one place to another for personal or any other purpose. But Eco-Tourism is better defined and wider in scope than Tourism. Eco-Tourism is the form of tourism that involves visiting fragile and relatively undistributed natural areas and conserving the same. Its purpose may be to educate the travelers, generate funds for ecological conservation and to contribute to the economic development of nation. According to WTO, Eco-Tourism is considered as the growing market in the industry. It creates the wide variety of tourism products satisfying the nature lovers and tourists. This paper is an attempt to bring together all the possible opportunities and challenges of Eco-Tourism in India.

Objectives of the Paper

1. To study the brief overview of Eco-Tourism in India.
2. To study the opportunities and challenges of Eco-Tourism in India.

Data Collection



The proposed study is descriptive in nature. It solemnly based on secondary information which is collected from the concerned sources as per the need of the research. The relevant books, papers, articles and websites are used in this study.

Overview of Eco-Tourism in India

India is a beautiful nation, very much rich in spiritual traditions and ancient landscapes. Despite its deeply entrenched roots in the past, India is a progressive country, full of ecotourism experiences that reflect their inspiring past and their promising future. As the new millennium is unfolded, we are becoming so aware of the finite, interconnected and precious nature of our planet home. Same way, tourism is becoming an increasingly popular expression of this awareness. Today, tourism is ubiquitous in the sanctuaries and national parks. This is becoming the principal means by which people are able to experience the beauty of nature.

The origin of Eco-Tourism lies in nature and outdoor tourism. It is a form of tourism that is inspired by the natural history and natural beauty of the area. It has gained momentum recently in India, but as a way of life, Indians have practiced ecotourism since times immemorial b their traditional approach to nature and rich cultural heritage. Eco-Tourism is wider in scope than nature tourism. Eco-Tourism emphasis is on conservation, education, traveler responsibility and active community participation. Nature tourism, low impact tourism, green tourism, bio-tourism and others have been used in literature, although they are not necessary synonymous with ecotourism.

Another name of eco tourism is ecological tourism. Within the ambit of international tourism, ecotourism is a fast growing segment. Usually ecotourism or ecological tourism involves travelling to places where flora, fauna and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. The revenue generated through eco-travel can be channeled into the development of infrastructural services like transport, communication facilities, management of protected areas, etc. It generates employment to local people directly from tourist sector and from various allied sectors.

India is the land if varied geographical tourist destinations that not just de-stress but also rejuvenate tourist. There are several ways to enjoy Mother Nature. The few places like the Himalayan Region, Kerala, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the like are some of the places to visit. Thenmala in Kerala is the first eco tourism in India created to cater eco-tourists and nature lovers.

India has many wildlife sanctuaries. Currently, there are about 80 national parks and 441 sanctuaries in India which works for the protection and conservation of wildlife resources in India.

Opportunities of Eco-Tourism in India

- 1. Revenue generation:** Ecotourism helps in generating revenue for the nation in diverse ways. Donations, entrance fees, from tourists are some of the sources from which tourism can contribute to the nation's GDP.
- 2. Environmental Conservation:** Ecotourism helps creating better appreciation of world's natural resources, like landscapes and wildlife. Funds generated from tourists via various ways can be utilized to conserve and preserve the environmental beauty.



3. **Private sector concessions:** Tour guides, restaurants can be privately owned or managed and they then return a portion of profits to protected areas.
4. **Educate tourists:** Ecotourism can educate the visitors about environmental responsibilities. It also makes them aware of natural beauty and their related political and social issues.
5. **Local community benefits:** Ecotourism are planned and managed at a local level. Community members involved in all the stages of process empower and encourage travelers to their areas. It brings the better standard of living to the local people and their area.

Challenges of Eco-Tourism in India

- The major challenge of ecotourism is to deliver practical ecologically sustainable tourism. Ecotourism also need high tech information, techniques and procedures further saying it need huge funds to invest.
- Implementing effective ecotourism concept is also a great challenge. We have to take into account various issues like sustainable consumption system, women empowerment, human and animal rights and social problems and a like. Undertaking all such issues is a complex task as well as a challenge for the system.
- Ensuring that ecotourism delivers effective interpretation of environmental and cultural values is also a challenge. Interpretation should be about explanation, stimulation, provocation, revelation and understanding in such a manner that tourists enjoys and feel interested.
- Ensuring real and long lasting economic contributions to conservation is also a challenge of ecotourism.
- Cultural exploitation and deterioration also results from ecotourism and it is also a challenge.

Conclusion

Ecotourism is about sustaining the environment and many nations including India making efforts to develop and enhance the natural beauty. India is making contributions for the development of ecotourism so that it pays back to the government in terms of revenue generation, employment generation and long lasting natural beauty. But, the challenges hinders the process of growth still India is making efforts to overcome these challenges and effectively implementing ecotourism concept.

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