

A Study on Eco Tourism In Himachal Pradesh

Dr. Ina Rani

Assistant Professor Commerce, Government College Barotiwala, District Solan, Himachal Pradesh

Abstract

Tourism is an important part of any economy. It is an incredible way to showcase magnificent history, culture and diversity. Now tourism is being seen not only from the economic point of view but also from the nature point of view. Ecotourism is a form of sustainable tourism that actively contributes to the conservation of natural heritage. The main component of ecotourism is the use of natural resources as a component of tourist attractions without harming the environment. It involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna and cultural heritage are the main attractions. It also promotes a greater appreciation of our natural habitats. Himachal Pradesh has carved a unique place on the Indian tourism map due to its rich natural and cultural diversity. It has great heritage value and beautiful temples. To maintain the natural beauty of Himachal Pradesh, the importance of Eco tourism increases even more. The main objective of this study is to evaluate the factors which influence and demands eco-tourism in Himachal Pradesh. This study also assesses the awareness level of Eco tourism among tourists.

Keywords: Ecotourism, tourists, cultural diversity, natural resources, heritage.

Introduction

Ecotourism has emerged as a sub-component in the field of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism is concerned with socially responsible travel, personal development and environmental sustainability through interaction with the biological components of the natural environment. Ecotourism gives tourists the opportunity to learn about the natural world and teaches individuals to live more environmentally conscious lives.

Ecotourism is considered an important step by environmentalists who want future generations to experience natural sites relatively untouched by human interference. Ecotourism not only increases tourism but also protects our nature. It attracts the attention of those tourists who are nature lovers. It focuses on educating travelers about the local environment and natural surroundings. Recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation are an integral part of ecotourism. It also increases the income of local communities which is beneficial for the community.

According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), ecotourism can be defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education”

Eco tourism in Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh is popular for its Himalayan landscape and hill-stations. Tourists have been enjoying various eco tourism activities in Himachal Pradesh for a long time. Many activities such as rock climbing, water adventures, mountain biking, caving, camping in protected areas, tree planting, hiking, bird watching, wild life viewing, paragliding, ice-skating, trekking and rafting are popular tourist

attractions in Himachal Pradesh. Vast flowing rivers, dense pine forests and pristine lakes make Himachal Pradesh a complete ecotourism destination.

Eco-trails, nature parks and eco-huts make Eco tourism more attractive in the state. Considering the natural beauty of Himachal, Himachal Tourism has also addressed it with the tagline of "Unforgettable Himachal."

Some of the Ecotourism destinations of Himachal Pradesh are Kullu, Manali, Shimla, Kangra Chamba, Dharamshala, Kinnaur, Spiti valley, Khajjiar, Nahan, Lahaul Valley, Mandi, Chamera Lake, Chitkul, Kufri, Solang Valley, Tirthan Valley and Jalori pass.

In view of such diversity and popularity of eco-tourism, Himachal Pradesh Forest Department prepared an eco-tourism policy in 2001, which was later revised from time to time as per the requirements.

The revised Eco-Tourism Policy 2016 aims to bring the forests and untouched ecosystems of Himachal Pradesh closer to the visitors and ensure adequate safeguards for the protection and conservation of these natural resources.

Himachal Pradesh Forest Department re-revised the policy for the development of eco tourism in Himachal Pradesh in 2017, under which the mission was set to make Himachal Pradesh a leading eco tourism destination.

In October 2023, Himachal Pradesh Government and Himachal Pradesh Eco tourism Society have identified 11 sites to promote ecotourism on a large scale. These sites having scenic and natural beauty are Swaar, Saurabh Van Vihar, Neugal Park, Bir-Billing in Palampur forest division, Kasol, Kheer Ganga and Sumarupa in Parvati forest division, Sojha in Seraj, Narkanda in Kotgarh and Shogi camping site besides Potter Hill camping site under Shimla forest division.¹⁰

Himachal Pradesh is also a good place for eco camp. Pine hill eco camp is one of the ecotourism resort near Barog in Himachal Pradesh. This is a perfect tourist spot for nature lovers. Enriched with spectacular and beautiful landscapes, Himachal is a paradise for travelers – lush green valleys, high snow peaks, flowing rivers, beautiful temples and time-immersed monasteries are an integral part of Himachal Pradesh's ecotourism.

Ecotourism also provides positive effects in Himachal Pradesh as it helps conserve natural resources, creates opportunities for travel and discovery, encourages understanding between cultures and raises people's environmental consciousness.

Keeping all this in mind, it is necessary to evaluate the factors affecting ecotourism and also study about the awareness of ecotourism.

Objectives

1. To evaluate the factors which influence and demands of eco-tourism in Himachal Pradesh
2. To access how many of respondents are aware of Eco tourism and value of it.
3. To assess the various problems faced by the tourists who are visiting Eco tourism sites in Himachal Pradesh.

Table 1 Responses on factors which influence and demands of Eco-tourism in Himachal Pradesh

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
Changing	56	11	-	13	-

community attitude towards tourism	(70)	(13.75)		(16.25)	
Increased Leisure Time	71 (88.75)	9 (11.25)	-	-	-
Population growth	34 (42.5)	12 (15)	12 (15)	16 (20)	6 (7.5)
Easier access to Ecotourism Sites	43 (53.75)	16 (20)	-	-	21 (26.25)
Rising levels of education	69 (86.25)	11 (13.75)	-	-	-
Growing income levels	72 (90)	8 (10)	-	-	-
Government support	32 (40)	22 (27.5)	-	19 (23.75)	7 (8.75)
Protects flora and fauna and cultural heritage	73 (91.25)	7 (8.75)	-	-	-

Table 1 shows that approx 83 % of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that changing community attitude towards tourism is the factors that influence and demands Eco tourism in Himachal Pradesh. All respondents agreed that increased leisure time, rising income levels and protection of flora and fauna have influenced and increased the demand for Ecotourism.

Table 2 Responses on Awareness on Eco Tourism

Have you used any tourism that are working on the principle of Eco tourism?	Yes				No
	33 (41.25%)				47(58.75 %)
Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
Practicing Eco tourism is important in Himachal Pradesh	58(72.5)	13(16.25)	9(11.25)	-	-
Eco Tourism can affect tourism packages	36	14	24	6	-
Himachal Pradesh has sufficient resources to switch to Eco tourism practices.	14(17.5)	19(23.75)	17(21.25)	19(23.75)	11(13.75)
Eco Tourism practices can improve the economic condition of Himachal Pradesh	42	17	-	12	9

Eco Tourism can improve the quality of life of locals	56	24	-	-	-
Eco Tourism can create job opportunities in hospitality and conservation for local communities.	56	24	-	-	-

Table 2 shows that only 41 % of the respondents have done such tourism who follow the principles of Eco tourism. The rest of the tourists did not have any experience of eco tourism. 72.5 % of the respondents strongly agreed that practicing Eco tourism is important in Himachal Pradesh. Only 41.25 % of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that Himachal Pradesh has sufficient resources to switch to Eco tourism practices. All of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that choosing ecotourism can provide economic opportunities for local communities by creating jobs in hospitality, conservation, and other related fields. These jobs can help reduce poverty levels and improve the quality of life for locals.

Table 3 Responses on problems faced by the tourists on Ecotourism places

Items	No. of respondents
Inconvenient Parking facilities	11(33.33)
Unclear road sign	22(66.66)
Expensive tickets	-
Crowd of tourists	9(27.2)
Insufficient infrastructure	6(18.1)
Banking and communication problem	17(51.5)
Any other	

It is clear from table 3 that out of the tourists who had experienced Eco tourism, 33 % of the respondents faced parking issues. 27 % of the respondents faced crowd problem. 18 % of the respondents felt that the infrastructure was insufficient and it should be further improved. It was also found that 51% of the respondents have faced banking and communication problems.

CONCLUSION

All the tourist respondents are in the opinion that increased leisure time, rising income levels and protection of flora and fauna have increased the demand for ecotourism. This study also revealed that 59% of the tourist respondents had not experienced ecotourism. It was also observed that ecotourism can provide economic opportunities for local communities by creating jobs in hospitality and conservation. The study had shown that 33 % of the respondents faced parking issues, 27% tourists faced crowd problem while experiencing ecotourism in the state and 51 % of the tourists experienced banking and communication problems.

In concern of above study it is suggested that proper banking and communication services for tourists must be available at ecotourism spots. Further, it is suggested that eco tourism spots should also have

clear sign boards for easy access and attention should also be given to improving infrastructure for parking facilities.

References

1. Agrawal .Isha and Chakraborty.Abhishek, **A Study on Green Tourism and its impact on Sustainability in Indian Society**, International Journal of Scientific Research in Engineering and Management, Vol 6 Issue 9, September 2022
2. himachalecotourism.hp.gov.in.
3. himachaltourism.gov.in
4. hpgeneralstudies.com
5. info@himalayanecotourism.com
6. Nag. Ashish, **A Study of Tourism Industry of Himachal Pradesh with Special Reference to Ecotourism**, Sumedha Journal Of Management, Vol.7, No.1 Jan- March 2018.
7. Sharma, Shivam, **A Study of EcoTourism with Special Reference to Himachal Pradesh**, International Journal of Scientific Research in Engineering and Management, Vol.6 issue 5, May 2022.
8. SK, Aftabuddin and Jain. Kadambari, **Green Tourism Practices in India-A Paradigm shift in Sustainable Development**, International Journal of Science Technology and Management, Vol. 6 Issue 5, May 2017.
9. Thakur. Karan, Khanna. Manish , Vaibhav .S and Sharma , Sandeep, **Tourist's Problems in Himachal Pradesh – A Study on Dhauladhar and Beas Circuit**, Asian Journal of Advanced Basic Sciences, 2018 ,vol6(1) pg 72-76.
10. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/travel/list-of-11-eco-tourism-sites-that-will-attract-tourist-in-himachal-pradesh-101697531425429.html>