

## ESSENCE AND TYPES OF ECOTOURISM: LITERATURE REVIEW

### *EKOTŪRISMA BŪTĪBA UN VEIDI: LITERATŪRAS APSKATS*

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**Abstract.** *Ecotourism is one of the components of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism is perceived as an effective means of achieving sustainable development. Most countries in the world have begun to recognize ecotourism as a key tool for economic development and conservation. Ecotourism involves exploring nature to learn and carry out environmentally friendly tourism activities. Ecotourism provides an exciting natural experience that contributes to the economic and social development of local communities. Ecotourism mainly includes visits to the landscape, nature, flora and fauna, as well as others. The aim of the research is to study and analyze the essence, types and impact of ecotourism on the development of sustainable tourism*

**Keywords:** *ecotourism, sustainable tourism, types of ecotourism.*

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### Introduction

Tourism can be defined as the process and act of spending time away from home to pursue pleasure, relaxation, and recreation while making use of the commercial provision of services (Yu *et al.*, 2012). In modern social arrangements, tourism plays an essential role in boosting any country's economy. It enriches a business, employs millions of people, and improves public services. In other words, tourism is significant because of the various benefits or the roles it plays in commercial activities, which create growth and demand for many industries. Moreover, tourism contributes toward more economic activities and generates revenue, which supports the development of a country.

Sustainable development has become a common phrase used by development planners, academic papers and environmental activists, and economists. The concept has attracted many critics and professionals basing their arguments on the development concept (Mensah, 2019). Despite its popularity and growth among development planners and economists, many people have questioned its meaning. Sustainable development is the type of development that accomplishes the present's needs without interfering with the abilities of the future generations to meet their needs and wants (Okeniyi *et al.*, 2020). Most of the countries worldwide have impacted on coming with strategies to achieve sustainable development. One of the strategies is the promotion of ecotourism. Ecotourism is one of the components of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism is perceived as an effective and efficient tool for achieving sustainable development. For instance, most developing countries have started recognizing ecotourism as the key tool for economic development and conservation tactics. Ecotourism entails touring natural areas to learn, study, or carry out eco-friendly activities. Ecotourism brings a fascinating natural experience that contributes to the local communities' economic and social development (Kiper; 2013). Ecotourism primarily involves visiting landscapes, nature, flora and fauna, and other natural habitats. When an ecotourism site is managed carefully, the local community benefits from it due to income generation.

Ecotourism is helpful for the economy's sustainability since it provides an alternative source of livelihood to local communities. Ecotourism also aims at conserving resources and maintaining sustainable use of resources. Achievement of ecotourism is based on the applicability of ecological, environmental, and economic sustainability. Ecotourism is essential for community development since it conserves the environment that in turn provides financial incentives to the community.

The **aim** of the research is to study and analyze the essence, types and impact of ecotourism on the development of sustainable tourism.

The following tasks were set to achieve the aim:

- 1) to analyze the essence of the concept of ecotourism;
- 2) to analyze the types of ecotourism and their impact on the development of sustainable tourism;
- 3) make conclusions and suggestions.

The methods applied in the research: logical and constructive, synthesis and analysis.

Research period 2015-2021

### **Ecotourism: Literature review**

The term and the idea of ecotourism came into existence in the 1980s, but there is an issue in understanding the concept. This is since people assign different interpretations to the concept, which shows that different people have varying views of ecotourism (*National Park Service, 2009*). Though this is the case, there are underlying concepts that are shared among all people who have tried to support and understand ecotourism. Some of the commonly shared views include: Stronza and Hunt give the idea of responsible conservation and use of nature, highly regarded in ecotourism (*Stronza et al., 2019*). Another concept by Tisdell in support and development states that ecotourism is done in small-scale measures and is organized by communities to enrich and educate people on methods of conserving the environment (*Tisdell, Wilson, 2005*). Upon many definitions which it has been given over the history, there is a conclusion which has been made as mentioned. This is the fact that it means different in different communities (*Center for Economic Forecasting and Analysis, 2001*). There is much stress and on the value of nature, which is commonly shared among all people and communities, even with the view that there are different definitions assigned to this term.

Jefferson indicated that ecotourism should be attached to the affairs of the government, and the whole idea should actually be accepted politically for it to thrive. In essence, there is no way ecotourism can flourish, and activities that are involved cannot succeed without political support (*Florida Greenways and Trails Council, 2018*). According to Jefferson, Historically, those nations and regions that have successfully introduced ecotourism have had a great back up from their governments. This is important because the government is responsible for making policies. Thus when they intervene in such matters, they can provide financial support and any other kind of guidance that is needed. In the same manner, it is good to understand the fact that maintaining nature is not easy, and it is an expensive process that requires proper preparation and financial assistance. Governments can be an effective tool, and history has proven this considering that they have provided support through financial provision (*East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, 2011*). Additionally, governments provide power where laws that are introduced by locals or communities regarding the preservation of nature and control of this process are enhanced.

Ecotourism is a tool that has helped to preserve nature or the environment. With the current increased activities due to rising populations and increased functions, there is a dire need to focus on this activity (*International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 2002*). Some environments are deteriorating due to lack of management, and animals and vegetation have become extinct in their watch. Ecotourism seeks to preserve. As stated, another vital part of ecotourism is educating and mainly focusing on the issue of informing people about nature and how people ought to take care of it. When people are aware of their surroundings, they can value it and do their best in following the rules which are put in place to conserve nature. This is with the consideration of the financial benefit that people gain in this process.

According to Koens, Dieperink, and Miranda, ecotourism is covered in a wide range of activities where some regard transport while others are on conservations (*Koens et al., 2009*). For instance, in the source by Theodore, the study regards a report on the danger of motorized trails, which cause issues to the ecosystem, and the shift to the non-motorized trail that supports transport in ecotourism. Stronza and Javier also show what happens when communities have come together to support ecotourism which contributes to great success in earning benefits and conserving wildlife and nature in general (*American Sportfishing Association, 2006*). It is important to note that with the wide range of section

within ecotourism, each author has focused on a specific area that seems reasonable and productive. In the end, these details are combined to produce data that is necessary not only to researchers but even to policy makers in their development of important guidelines.

It is good to note that not all tourists are Eco-tourists. Some people who travel from one nation to another do not intend to support and learn about the nature of the people's culture. For example, in Laos, it was discovered that only 15% of the total number of people who come to the nation are interesting in conserving nature (*Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 2003*). The majority of visitors from Chile, Vietnam, China, and others areas were mainly concerned with nature tourism. On the other hand, visitors from Europe and the United States were very much concerned with the conservation of nature, and thus they participated in ecotourism. Though this is the case, this case can be changed, and many people can be fed with details that can make them interested in ecotourism. In other words, motivation can be created through learning, where people are educated about the essence of supporting ecotourism based on its benefits.

World statistics suggest that ecotourism has been growing at a rate of 10% worldwide. Additionally, the world received \$777 from ecotourism businesses and in the list of the areas which support ecotourism is hotel and travel, which stand at 5-7% (*Tisdell, 1996*). Some data shows that the most significant percentage of all travelers, which make 87%, desire to travel responsibly. This indicates that they do not want to cause specific adverse effects on the ecosystem. Though this is the case, only 40% of travelers manage to travel responsibly. Among the people who travel, 33% are interested in having a better accommodation experience (*Lindberg, 2001*). 34% of the people desire to have a good experience on their travel activities. In a study which was done in 2018, it was realized that 68% of the people were interested in spending time in ecofriendly areas, including accommodation. Among the people who have been traveling, it has been realized that 54% of the people are inspired by the desire to impact communities. Among this group, 66% of the people are inspired by the experience of travel and the beautiful sceneries that they are exposed to.

Moreover, in some of the World Tourism Organization statistics, there are more than 600 million travelers globally (*UNWTO, 2021*). The arrival of tourists is expected to continue growing every year in the next few years to come. According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism is the world's largest employer, generating either indirectly or directly near 200 million jobs or more than 10% of jobs globally.

Originally, the term ecotourism was used in describing the nature tourism phenomenon. The original definition of ecotourism was coined by Ceballos Lascurain in the 1980s. Ceballos Lascurain termed ecotourism as visiting natural areas that are not contaminated with the aim to study, admire and enjoy the beautiful sceneries, flora, and fauna (*Donohoe et al., 2006*). Despite the efforts made by Ceballos Lascurain in defining the term "ecotourism," the idea has received many criticisms from renowned authors. Some critics argue that the definition overlooked practical opportunities. The definition provided by Ceballos Lascurain only focuses on the things tourists do when visiting ecotourism destinations, rather than saying what they need to do. Since the 1980s, the definition of ecotourism has been broadened to include other elements that were missing. For instance, Donohoe and Needham (2006) link ecotourism with sustainable development. Others link ecotourism to the natural environment. The idea of ecotourism has been accepted by many sociologists, ecologists, and economists across the globe, where it is believed to be a sub-component of sustainable tourism (*Kiper, 2013*). According to Kiper (2013), both professionals agree that ecotourism aims at conserving the environment, tourist satisfaction, and developing tourism.

Understanding ecotourism has also been linked to jungle tourism. Some of the authors, Bansal and Kumar (*Bansal et al., 2013*), have linked the term ecotourism as nature tourism, green tourism, bio tourism, and low impact tourism, among others.

**Key concepts on ecotourism definitions** (Created by Author)

Author	Ecotourism Definition	Key concepts
Donohoe, H. M., & Needham, R. D. (Donohoe et al., 2006).	Ecotourism as the visiting natural areas that are not contaminated with the aim to study, admire and enjoy the beautiful sceneries, flora, and fauna	Visiting natural areas.
Bansal, S. P., & Kumar, J. (Bansal et al., 2013).	Ecotourism as nature tourism, green tourism, bio tourism, and low impact tourism, among others.	Nature tourism, green tourism, and bio tourism.
Atieno, L., & Njoroge, J. M. (Atieno et al., 2018).	Ecotourism is visiting natural areas	Visit.
Anup, K. C., Rijal, K., Sapkota, R. P. (Anup et al., 2015).	Ecotourism is a tourist activity that incorporates ecological principles	Tourist activities.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) went ahead to provide the meaning of ecotourism. According to the International Ecotourism Society, ecotourism is visiting natural areas (Atieno et al., 2018). TIES has elucidated that a tourist is supposed to be responsible when traveling to natural areas without destroying the existing environment. Ecotourism's main aim is to conserve the natural environment and promote coexistence.

Other attempts at understanding ecotourism have been linked to individual ecotourism components. In literature, the individual ecotourism components have been referred to as dimensions, principles, themes, and characteristics. For instance, a dimension-based model was introduced that consists of the following elements; environmental education, conservation, and nature-based undertakings (Donohoe et al., 2006). Other authors, Bhuiyan et al. (Bhuiyan et al., 2012), have tried to come with principles that support ecotourism. Some of the outlined principles include creating awareness about conservation, democratization, and providing educational opportunities about ecotourism.

Other attempts to understand ecotourism have been linked to tourist activity. Authors KC, Rijal, and Sapkota (Anup et al., 2015) argue that ecotourism is a tourist activity that incorporates ecological principles. Ecotourism aims at conserving the environment. Therefore, as a tourist, you are required to be responsible when visiting ecotourism destinations. Any tourist is not supposed to interfere with the natural environment or wildlife in national parks and preserves. Tourist companies have also supported conservation of the natural environment. These companies promote ecotourism by providing hotels, lodgings, guides, and operators. For instance, many tourism companies have stepped up to promote ecotourism in the US. Some of the US's known tourism companies are intrepid travel, G Adventures, Discovery Nomads Good, National geographic journey, and Bindlestiff Tours, among others. These tourism companies have played a critical role in promoting ecotourism in the United States. These companies have inspired most of the tourists who visit the US since they offer good customer service and promote the ecotourism products present in the US to other countries (Vainikka, 2013).

Ecotourism is not a new concept since it was coined in the 1980s. Many researchers have tried to explain different types of ecotourism. The main know types of ecotourism are mass tourism and alternative tourism. Mass tourism has been a topic of discussion for many years. However, it remains an ambiguous term that lacks a clear definition (Vainikka, 2013). Due to its nature, mass tourism has attracted different definitions from many people. This shows how researchers have been concerned with the term "mass tourism." In earlier days, tourism only focused on generating income and maximizing the collected revenue. Tourism development in the early days was considered a clean industry by many nations. Countries termed tourism as a clean industry since it generated income through foreign exchange earnings. Also, it led to economic development through the creation of jobs and the development of infrastructure. Due to its benefits, researchers have termed mass tourism a beast.

Alternative tourism is the current paradigm that has attracted many discussions from scholars. This type of ecotourism has become a competing paradigm for mass tourism. Scholars indicate that alternative tourism is a general term that consists of tourism strategies that act as alternatives to mass

tourism. Alternative tourism is supposed to be eco, people to people, and responsible (*Triarchi et al., 2017*). For instance, ecotourism entails the conservation of the natural environment. Alternative tourism is termed as any form of tourism that exhibits heritage, culture, and rural life. Therefore, it is evident that alternative tourism aims at conserving the natural environment.

With different types of ecotourism, comes up with various principles, which are to be followed in the view of ecotourism. This includes activities that should be undertaken by the people who seek to introduce and support ecotourism.

### Conclusions and suggestions

1. Tourism refers to the process and act of spending time away from ones' home, either for the pursuit of pleasures, relaxations, and recreation. There are varied definitions of ecotourism. Ecotourism is among the major aspects that supports any given country's development. In the research, many countries have experienced positive impacts created by tourists as they engage in various tourism activities. Ecotourism has experienced tremendous growth as the need to conserve the environment has grown amidst the threat posed by climate change.
2. Ecotourism as a tool has helped preserve the environment and nature, regardless of the increased activities resulting in a rise in functions and populations. There are also many ways in which ecotourism supports business and promotes economic stability, such as through revenues, sales of services and products, employment to the locals or community members. Thus, the sector has a significant impact on local business and development.
3. There is a dire need for the government and tourism management organizations to focus on ecotourism to preserve the environment and nature. The environment is deteriorating due to the lack of management on vegetation, or even animals, which might become extinct, e.g., Rhino. Based that ecotourism is based on conserving the environments, the tourist is required or should be responsible when visiting ecotourism destinations. To ensure the economy's sustainability, governments should consider supporting ecotourism, which even provides an alternative source of livelihood to many local communities.
4. Local people should integrate ecotourism in their cultures by providing a room in which they can be exercised and contained for the purpose of preservations. Whenever resources are needed, the government and tourism initiatives should support the process and efforts and ensure that funds contribute to these activities. There is also a need for facilitation of having new experiencing for foreigners and learning different aspects of culture and communities as well as nature to be informed about the context of the local culture and how it should integrate with environmental sustainability. They also contribute to enlightening locals in diverse ways in which they can handle issues that affect them.
5. A business that grows in ecotourism areas could have both negative and positive impacts if the people start affecting the ecotourism centers through various means. Therefore, it is suggested that local businesses should be regulated to ensure that they are expanding structures and building more spaces to accommodate and support their businesses do not interfere with ecotourism. Such businesses may take up space, which is supposed to be preserved for ecotourism, and they disadvantage some wildlife and nature.

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## Kopsavilkums

Rakstā pētīti ekotūrisma jēdzieni, veidi un tā ietekme uz ilgtspējīga tūrisma attīstību. Tūrisms attiecas uz darbībām un procesu brīvā laika pavadīšanai ārpus savas patstāvīgās dzīves vietas, dažādu motīvu dēļ. Ekotūrisms pēdējos gados kļuvis par vienu no populārākajiem tūrisma veidiem visā pasaulē, Ekotūrisma attīstību atbalsta ļoti daudzas pasaules valstis, jo tas dod papildus ienākumus vietējo reģionu valsts budžetā. Ekotūrisms ir piedzīvojis milzīgu izaugsmi, jo klimata pārmaiņu radīto draudu vidū ir pieaugusi nepieciešamība saudzēt vidi. Ekotūrisms kā rīks ir palīdzējis saglabāt vidi un dabu neatkarīgi no pastiprinātām aktivitātēm, kā rezultātā palielinās uzņēmumu darbību un iedzīvotāju skaits. Ir arī daudzi veidi, kā ekotūrisms atbalsta uzņēmējdarbību un veicina ekonomisko stabilitāti, piemēram, rada ienākumus no pakalpojumu un produktu pārdošanas, kā arī rada nodarbinātību vietējiem iedzīvotājiem. Tādējādi nozarei ir būtiska ietekme uz vietējo uzņēmējdarbību un attīstību. Ļoti svarīgi, lai gan valsts, gan reģionu un vietējā līmenī uzņēmējdarbība orientētos uz ekotūrisma attīstību, jo tas saglabātu vidi un dabu. Tūrisma uzņēmumiem savi produkti jāorientē ekotūrisma attīstības virzienā, kas var dot arī būtiskus ienākumus.