

ECOTOURISM IN THE MAHARASHTRA STATE

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Abstract

Ecotourism is one of the fastest-growing areas of tourism which have attracted lot of debate all over the world. Ecotourism involves visiting the places where are close to the nature without much disturbing flora and fauna of that region. Its main purpose is to create awareness among the tourist about the ecological conservation so that there may be regional and economic development along with the preservation of the environment.

Maharashtra is an epitome of the natural beauty and grace, with dense forests, heavy rains during monsoon, innumerable varieties of flora-fauna, harmonious folk music, dances and festivals, variety of many delicious dishes, handlooms and handicrafts, and above all its green landscape representative of the region, has been at the centre stage of tourist attraction. Maharashtra has vast potential for tourism.

The researcher tries to draw attention to the potential of tourism in promotion economic development. It also attempts to study the trends in the flow of tourists to Maharashtra state. Also, suggests recommendations for making tourism industry as a perspective tool for economic Development in Maharashtra

Keywords: *Ecotourism, Economic development, Flow of tourist, Tourism industry*

Introduction:

Ecotourism is a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural areas, intended as a low-impact and often small scale alternative to standard commercial mass tourism. It means responsible travel to natural areas conserving the environment and improving the well-being of the local people. Its purpose may be to educate the traveler, to provide funds for ecological conservation, to directly benefit the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, or to foster respect for different cultures and for human rights. Since the 1980s, ecotourism has been considered a critical endeavor by environmentalists, so that future generations may experience destinations relatively untouched by human intervention

Generally, ecotourism deals with interaction with biotic components of the natural environments. Ecotourism focuses on socially responsible travel, personal growth, and environmental sustainability. Ecotourism typically involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. Ecotourism is intended to offer tourists an insight into the impact of human beings on the environment and to foster a greater appreciation of our natural habitats.

Responsible ecotourism programs include those that minimize the negative aspects of conventional tourism on the environment and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Therefore, in addition to evaluating environmental and cultural factors, an integral part of ecotourism is the promotion of recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and creation of economic opportunities for local communities. For these reasons, ecotourism often appeals to advocates of environmental and social responsibility.

The term 'ecotourism', like 'sustainable tourism', is considered by many to be an oxymoron. Like most forms of tourism, ecotourism generally depends on air transportation, which contributes to global climate change. Additionally, "the overall effect of sustainable tourism is negative where like ecotourism philanthropic aspirations mask hard-nosed immediate self-interest

Objectives:

1. To review ecotourism development in the Maharashtra State.
2. To study the trends in the flow of tourists to Maharashtra.
3. To suggest recommendations for making tourism industry as a perspective tool of economic development in Maharashtra

Research Methodology:

The data has been collected from secondary resources like articles and research papers, internet websites and magazine articles as well as Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation website.

Ecotourism:

This kind of tourism focuses on protection of the environment, the host community and sustainability. So, the stake-holders in ecotourism must concentrate on the following issues-

1. Reduction of impacts on the environment and the local population whether physical, sociocultural or psychological.
2. Promotion of respect of local culture and the environment.
3. Restricting them from leaving non-biodegradable waste material in the form of plastic or metal.
4. Ensuring that there is a favorable exchange between the locals and the tourists, thus making both benefit from the interaction.
5. Delivering economic benefits to the local population that can be partly diverted towards the protection and upkeep of the natural attractions.
6. Encouraging the multiplier effect of tourism, that can be beneficial for the locals personally as well as for creating commercial opportunities.
7. Generation of awareness about local issues amongst visitors.
8. Building facilities that create minimum negative impacts on the environment, by following norms such as CRZ etc.
9. Respecting the local customs and traditions and sensitizing visitors to them.
10. Not carrying any kind of plants (in the form of cuttings etc.) away at the end of a trip from the destination.
11. Experiencing the local way of life, eating the same cuisine and staying as the locals do.

Suggestions:

Tourism, thus, can be considered as an important sector for economic development.

Some recommendations can be made in the following ways-

1. Proper planning of master plans needs to be prepared with specific objectives is integrated with Maharashtra's overall economic and social development objective.
2. Government intervention is necessary to enhance the contribution of tourism for socioeconomic development and poverty reduction.
3. Proper co-ordination and monitoring amongst various agencies and bodies of tourism.
4. Private sector partnerships and public-private partnerships should be incorporated.
5. Proper development of infrastructure, tourist facilities, enhancement of communication networks etc.
6. States to identify inter-state circuits for relaxing Restricted Area.

References:

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Web Resources:

<http://www.mahaecotourism.gov.in/Site/Common/nationalParks.aspx>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecotourism>