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SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH ECOTOURISM: A REVIEW ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Through boosting local community participation in ecotourism management and planning, ecotourism plays a key role in the socio-economic empowerment of local communities. The existing research literature reveals many characteristics that can help to maximise socio-economic advancement while also protecting the environment. The goals of this study were to understand, on the basis of past studies on ecotourism, how ecotourism contributes to the socioeconomic development of local communities. The study has depicted the issues that locals will encounter as a result of ecotourism development in their area. On the basis of previous studies on ecotourism, the current research proposes several development strategies for overcoming the obstacles.

KEYWORDS: ***Ecotourism, Community Participation, Socio-Economic Development, Development strategies.***

1. INTRODUCTION

Responsible travel has expanded at a quicker rate than traditional sun and sand tourism in recent years. These types of searches are becoming more prevalent, with some researchers estimating that ecotourism now represents 11.4% of total consumer spending. And, as the negative consequences of mass tourism on world-famous places become more evident, the answers to these questions will become increasingly critical. Nowadays, Ecotourism is the tourism industry's fastest-growing segment. It has the potential to boost local economies, encourage cultural exchange, and promote tourism's long-term sustainability. Nowadays, it is one of the most prominent forms of alternative tourism. Its supporters believe that once residents learn that conservation does not imply a loss of economic opportunities, they will feel compelled to safeguard the environment. Ecotourism is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that protect the environment, promote local people's well-being, and include interpretation and education. "All the tourism development concepts have the goal of making the travel and tourism sector as a whole implement more environmentally sustainable practices, preserving a destination's natural and cultural heritage, and helping local communities. The United Nations declared 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, highlighting the global importance of ecotourism in concerns concerning nature, culture, and the future of travel and tourism.

Ecotourism contributes to community development by providing a more sustainable alternative source of income for the local population. Its goal is to conserve resources, particularly biological diversity, and to ensure sustainable resource usage, in order to provide travellers with an ecological experience while also conserving the environment and gaining an economic advantage. Ecotourism promotes the involvement of the local community in the preservation of the area's ecosystem and biodiversity, which in turn provides economic incentives to the local community. Eco-tourism contributes to biodiversity conservation; maintains the well-being of local people; entails responsible action on the part of tourists and the tourism industry; promotes small and medium-sized tourism enterprises; requires the least amount of natural resource consumption possible; emphasises local participation, ownership, and business opportunities, particularly for rural people; and, above all, includes the learning experience.

Ecotourism was first coined in 1983 by the Mexican environmentalist "Hector Ceballos Lascurain" to describe nature-based travel to relatively undisturbed places with an emphasis on education. Ecotourism ensures the sustainable use of natural resources while also providing economic opportunities for locals (Farrell & Runyan, 2001; Bhattacharya, Chowdhury, and Sarkar, 2011).

Ecotourism is defined as visiting unspoilt natural places with the purpose of learning, admiring, and enjoying the beauty, as well as the wild creatures and plants that live there. (Lascurain Ceballos, 1987; Joshi, 2011). Ecotourism is now described as "responsible travel to natural regions that conserves the environment, supports local people's well-being, and includes interpretation and education" (TIES, 2015). Both staff and visitors are expected to participate in education. According to the International Ecotourism Society (TIES), In 1980, ecotourism became popular as a concept. Sustainable tourism, green tourism, nature tourism, responsible tourism, ethical tourism, mindful travel, aware travel, pro-poor tourism, and many more terms have recently become popular in the tourism sector. Traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated areas with the express goal of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

A significant amount of work has already been done on the impacts of tourism on the quality of life of local communities all around the world. Tourism development has an economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impact on local populations (Harrill, 2004; Moscardo, 2009; Nunkoo & Smith, 2010; Nunkoo & Smith, 2010; Sharpley, 2013, Sharpley, 2014); For the past three decades, tourism studies have devoted close attention to the effects of tourism development on local communities' lives. This is a critical issue for local populations in tourist areas, as they have seen both positive and negative effects, and more research is needed to pinpoint these effects. Guo, Kim, and Chen, 2014. The majority of previous studies reported that local communities recognised positive economic development on local community life (Pizam, Milman, and Jafari, 1991; Allen, Hafer, Long, and Perdue, 1993; Ap and Crompton, 1998; Perdue, Long, and Kang, 1999; Lee, Kim, and Kang, 2003; Mbaiwa, 2005; Lepp, 2006; Wang & Wu, 2006; Leea & Changb, 2008; Marzuki, 2009; Spencer &However, according to a number of studies (Perdue, Long & Allen, 1990; Perdue, Long & Kang, 1995; Perdue et al. 1999), residents are still concerned about the potential detrimental socio-cultural and environmental repercussions of tourist expansion in their neighbourhoods..

The etymology or origin of the term "ecotourism" has long been a subject of debate, as shown by the extensive literature on the topic. For example, some (Orams 1995 and Hvenegaard 1994), for example, believe that the term derives from the late 1980s, although others (Higgins 1996) claim that it dates from the late 1970s, thanks to Miller's work on eco-development (Miller 1989). One of the common themes in the literature supports Ceballos-claims Lascuráin's as being the first to originate the word in the early 1980s. Thompson, 1995. He described it as "travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural places with the specific goal of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any extant cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these locations" (Boo 1990). Ceballos-Lascurain claims that he first used the phrase in 1983 while working to establish PRONATURA, a Mexican non-governmental organisation (Van der Merwe 1996). However, the phrase appears to have originated with Hetzer (1965), who used it to describe the complex relationship that exists between tourists and the ecosystems and cultures with which they engage.

For a more responsible kind of tourism, Hetzer established four key pillars that must be followed. This includes (1) minimal environmental damage; (2) minimal influence on – and maximum respect for – host cultures; (3) maximum economic advantages to the grassroots of the host country; and (4) maximum ‘recreational' satisfaction to participating tourists. According to Hetzer's personal communication, in October 1997, the formation of the notion of ecotourism arose out of frustration with negative approaches to development, especially from an ecological perspective. Nelson (1994) takes a similar stance in demonstrating that the concept of ecotourism is not new, having emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a result of scholars' concerns about the misuse of natural resources. According to Nelson, the word "eco-development" was coined as a way to eliminate wasteful resource consumption in development.**)** observed that ecotourism and ecotourism incentives the link between tourism, local benefits, and conservation. The data from the Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve in the Ecuadorian Amazon shows that tourism has provided significant additional income that out-competes other income sources, and the mode of local participation is less decisive for the local income generation than the tourists’ attraction to the natural site, the degree of tourism specialization, and the level of local organization. On the other hand, the conservation incentives, the value of income depends on the inducement structure intrinsic to the mode of involvement, and substitution versus complementary of other fruitful activities Only if tourism diversifies labour and land allocation decisions will it have a local conservation impact. The study also indicates that the specialised tourism villages' income flow raised environmental awareness and gave incentives for new rationality in the usage of traditional resources. Tourism revenue is less likely to reverse non-traditional, degrading growth patterns in advanced stages, and tourism income can assist to unite actors to

support the protected area endangered by competing for land practice. This study leads to some general lessons for government policies and for the design of integrated conservation and development projects (Wunder, S. 2000). Through studies on the socioeconomic, political, and psychological empowerment of women in third-world contexts, taking into account both the empowering and disempowering aspects of women's participation in ecotourism,It has been revealed that significant changes in gender roles and relations often come about through women's participation in ecotourism and lots of stereotypes have been abridged in society regarding gender issues, e.g., women's involvement in tourism. It has been suggested that the need for gender-sensitive planning and management of ecotourism in any region where local community involvement in ecotourism has seen a potential development strategy **(**Scheyvens, R. 2000). Further, according to Bansal (2002), current and future generations will be unable to safeguard their well-being without economic progress. Ecotourism provides a viable source of income for the local people, and tourism opportunities have led to local people's abundance in their cultivated land in their area and less involvement in environmentally destructive activities because of their full employment in the tourism sector. Indirect tourism benefits and education levels indicate a stronger association with conservation behaviour and perspectives and also indicate that ecotourism might be the most effective tool of a conservation strategy (C.J. Stem et al. 2003). The local community's awareness and support for conservation efforts were shown in the early stages of both study areas, and the socio-economic benefits of the local community were not contributed to earning revenues toward conservation to date. The local community's awareness and support for conservation efforts is optimistic about the benefits of tourism growth. Ecotourism planning direction is offered with the intention of enhancing the capacity of ecotourism to generate benefits for both the community and the tourism park, and thus contribute to the sustainable development of the region. Stone Mike and Wall Geoffrey (2004) have broad applicability for ecotourism development (Stone Mike and Wall Geoffrey 2004). The success of ecotourism in the Periar Tiger Reserve reflects the concern for achieving a balance between the conservation of the sanctuary and the livelihoods of the people living in and around it. It found that the participation of localities in ecotourism activities is a step in the right direction. It provides them with an alternative source of income that revolves around it. Thus, their dependence on forest resources and their commitment to keeping the forest intact. It legitimately shows the need for communities and conservation to go hand in hand. Thampi, Santosh P. 2005. Long-term viable community-based ecotourism development in unapproachable areas needs close collaboration and sustained support from trustworthy community representatives and knowledgeable and committed outsiders' stakeholders. An approach should be emphasised that is tailored to local circumstances. (Sebastien Nault & Paul Stapleton, 2011). Ecotourism has improved the regional economy and generated employment in different national parks in North Bengal. It also improved with an agrarian background. Most of the people of the region are engaged in the primary sector. Therefore, ecotourism, with its rich natural endowments, can do a lot for the good regional economy and society of this economically backward area of India (Karmakar, Madhusudan 2011). Ecotourism improves the socio-economic condition by reducing the problem of unemployment and youth migration, and is also a good source of foreign exchange for the country. They suggested that ecotourism sites help in the conservation of the physical resources and ecology of the region (Had, Devender Gopal 2013). There is a potential for small-scale, cost-effective CBET projects in areas where there is little tourism activity, providing some external assistance, and it requires good management and essential skills and training (Sakata Hana and Prideaux Bruce 2013). Economic benefits have a direct impact on residents's pro-environmental behaviour; and; the cognitive rather than high level of social capital has partially mediating effects on this relationship. These findings show a high level of social capital, particularly the cognitive variant, is instrumental in encouraging residents' pro-environmental benefits. Jingyan, "et al." (2014). Ecotourism is a strategic tool for the development of the Kumaun region, and ecotourism provides employment-generating opportunities to the local communities without affecting the nature and cultural heritage. Aggarwal, Manjari, and Pathak, Pranchi 2014, reveals that Vanavihari gives livelihood to 68 families and has a larger impact on local people's livelihoods; it also encourages the local people's entrepreneurship activities; it also reduces forest degradation and dependency on forest resources; it also condenses 2017 Surayya Teki.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Sources of information and search the research looked at SSCI and SCIE-class articles on socio-economic development through ecotourism that were found using a Scopus and Web of Science search. This study's search was conducted only for the 20 years from 2000 to 2020, to provide the most relevant information. Various kinds of studies were examined to collect research related to ecotourism and socio-economic advantages for local people.

3.1. Screening of research papers and the data collection process

Only peer-reviewed journal articles were chosen as the study's focus. Because the writers determined that papers, books, and editorial materials did not contribute significantly to knowledge progress, they were eliminated. Also omitted were articles Journals are written in languages other than English. The data extraction forms were then created to identify the research papers that were included in the study and to provide an overview of ecotourism and community economic advancement tourism research. Each paper was rated in a standardised data extraction format based on the study's quality. Author, year, title, journal, abstract, keywords, study objective, topics, specific topics, research techniques, and data source were among the information collected. The context of the keywords contained in each piece of content, as well as the abstracts, were examined in the next phase of paper screening. Using this method, research studies could be classified into those that are fundamentally related to community socio-economic development and those that are unrelated to local community economic development through ecotourism (for example, if the research topic is not ecotourism or if the subject of the study is not associated with community economic development).

The results indicate that ecotourism and community economic growth are substantially linked in various research. Finally, the contents of these publications were categorised into those in which the economic advancement of the local people was addressed as the study's main concern and those in which it was treated as a supporting issue. Finally, research studies that concentrated on the economic importance of ecotourism as the main issue were selected as the material for the systematic review. The researchers accomplished this screening procedure independently, and in the event of data conflicts, the consensus was obtained through conversations among the review authors. The context of the keywords contained in each article, as well as the abstracts, were examined in the next phase for research study screening. Studies could be categorised into those that are essentially related to the economic significance of ecotourism and studies that are unrelated to ecotourism using this method (for example, if the research area is not ecotourism and community economic advancement through ecotourism or if the subject of the study is not associated with local community economic development).

The results show that 100 articles are fundamentally related to the role of ecotourism in the community's socio-economic development. Secondly, by analysing the contents of the selected 100 studies, they were classified into those where the socio-economic concept was addressed as the main issue of the study and those where it was treated as a supporting issue of the study. Finally, 40 articles covering the topic of socio-economic advancement of local communities through ecotourism as the main issue were selected as the targeted material for the systematic review (Figure 1). This screening process was conducted independently by identification.

Identification **Step 1**	Phase 1: Recent reviews from the wider literature (N=4) Phase 2: Online database screening (N=100) Scopus (N=30), Web of Science (N=40) EBSCOhost (N=30)	Keywords: ***Ecotourism, Community Participation, Socio-Economic Development.***
Screening **Step 2**	The Article screened (N=50)	Article evaluated from the title or abstract with the reason (N=20) Duplicates (N=5), Non-Peer Reviewed (N=5)
Eligibility **Step 3**	The Article assessed for eligibility (N=50) The Articles were excluded after reading in full with reasons (N=10)	
Inclusion **Step 4**	The Article included from other sources (N=20) References list (N=10) Peer discussions (N=10)	The Article included in the final stage (N=40)

Figure: 1

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4. ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism contributes to community development by providing a more sustainable source of income for the local community. It aims to protect natural resources while also promoting local people's socio-economic development. Local economies benefit when tourist-related businesses develop to support these activities. A thriving tourist economy, for example, benefits travel agencies, local craft markets, hotels, and restaurants. A thriving tourist economy, for example, benefits tour agencies, local craft markets, hotels, and restaurants. According to the

International Ecotourism Society, "ecotourism is also an excellent tool for empowering local communities around the world to fight poverty and ensure development by increasing capacity-building opportunities." Local communities get social-economic benefits from ecotourism, and ecotourism provides a viable source of income for the local people. Tourism opportunities have led to local people's abundancy in their cultivated land in their area and less involvement in environmentally destructive activities because of their full employment in the tourism sector. Tourism is the source of revenue generation (Scheyvens, R, 2000; C.J. Stem et al. 2003, Stone Mike and Wall Geoffrey 2004, Thampi, Santosh P. 2005). Ecotourism integrates conservation and tourism (and the economics that go along with it) to benefit local people, with a particular focus on sustainability (Myburgh & Saayman, 2002). Community livelihoods are improved by the creation of jobs, which increases the community's disposable income. When compared to mining, hunting, farming, and other commercial uses of natural resources, ecotourism operates as one or more of the environmentally friendly alternatives (Li, 2006). Ecotourism has improved the regional economy and employment generation, Ecotourism improves the socio-economic condition by reducing the problem of unemployment and youth migration and is a good source of foreign exchange, (Nault & Paul Stapleton 2011, Karmakar, Madhusudan 2011, Had, Devender Gopal 2013). Tourism has been identified as a form of global capitalism; in the case of ecotourism, it arose from the need to generate economic value from something that would otherwise be left in the wilderness (Fletcher, 2011).Ecotourism has the ability to generate significant economic value through a variety of marketing and other planning techniques, Ecotourism has the ability to generate significant economic value at a local and regional level through a variety of marketing and other planning strategies. Cunningham et al. reference the following figures: In 2012, they show that in 2008 "there were over 13 million (whale-watching) participants in over 119 countries, generating approximately US $2.1 billion" (p.143). As Massey (1995) However, as the following example demonstrates, the ability to create financial rewards does not ensure the long-term viability of capitalism on a local level. Ecotourism should be linked to nature conservation (protected areas), authenticity preservation, and participation of local communities in all phases of the process. The development process is a long one that takes consistent effort from all parties involved but can provide significant benefits in the long run, contributing directly to the formation of "sustainably existing goal areas" (Roxana, 2012). Ecotourism is a strategic strategy for development that generates jobs for local populations while preserving the environment and their cultural heritage. Pranchi (Manjari, Aggarwal, and Pathak, 2014). Ecotourism provides local people with a source of income and employment opportunities, as well as reduces forest degradation and dependency on forest resources (Surayya Teki 2017). Ecotourism in protected areas can lead to increased economic benefits through both the direct expenditures of ecotourists and the associated employment opportunities that are generated, both within and adjacent to the natural resource (Gosling, Shackleton, & Gambiza, 2017). Ecotourism helps to alleviate poverty, but it may be improved by focusing on non-economic factors and limiting negative effects on household livelihoods (Agyeman, Y. B., Yeboah, A. O., & Ashie, E. 2019). Under the CBET Model (Community Based Ecotourism Model), physical capital, human capital, and social capital all improved significantly. There is a need to strengthen local people's access to financial capital by providing them with other sources of income. CBET, they contend, is a better model for ecotourism development in Cambodia (Kry, S., Sasaki, N., Datta, A., Abe, I., Ken, S., & Tsusaka, T. W. 2020). Another study found that community-based ecotourism benefited the local community and provided them with an alternative source of income in their country area (Kunjuraman, V. 2020). Furthermore, research shows that development opportunities through coastal CBET provide viable avenues for low-resource coastal communities, such as those in Indonesia's Selayar Regency, to augment primary income and, in certain circumstances, support seasonal activities such as fishing or farming. In addition, in remote biodiversity-rich places, homestay and cultural ecotourism contribute to annual community revenue, improve community pride and ties, and contribute to long-term coastal management. They contend that community-based ecotourism provides an entry point into the blue economy for low-resource coastal communities and that, with the right assistance, it may help steer alternative livelihood paths toward more sustainable outcomes (Phelan, A., Ruhanen, L., & Mair, J. 2020).

4.1. Social benefits of Ecotourism

Ecotourism is focused on the natural and cultural landscape values. Geographical location, microclimatic conditions, the presence of water, natural beauties, natural vegetation, wildlife, surface features, geomorphologic structure, local food, festivals and pageants, traditional agricultural structure, local handicrafts, regional dress culture, and historical eve are some of these values, as are heritage sites, architectural diversity, traditional music and folk dance, artistic activities, and so on (Gerry, 2001; Lane, 1993, Lanquar, 1995; Soykan, 1999; Brassoulis, 2002, Catibog-Sinha & Wen, 2008; Mlynarczyk, 2002; Mlynarczyk, 2001; Drzewiecki, 2001; Kiper, 2006). Significant changes in gender roles and relations often came about through women’s participation in

ecotourism, and lots of stereotypes have been abridged in society regarding gender issues, e.g., women's involvement in tourism (Scheyvens, R. (2000). Local communities are not simply victims of the globalisation process and the commodification of local culture, they can also become sites of resistance to the wider process of transformation and globalisation (Richards and Hall 2000). The historical pattern of paternalism, in which outside resources were transferred to such groups in exchange for political support without a corresponding opportunity for local participation and without any meaningful consultation about the program's design or implementation, should be overcome by the new development paradigm (Barkin and Bouchez 2003). Building bridges to span and establish values among community members, so enhancing social ties within the community through encouraging collaboration, Individuals and families work together to develop a successful ecotourism company, which improves community cohesiveness. (Tran & Walter, 2014;). Ecotourism is essential in mobilising community resources to adjust to unpredictability, reconfiguring community-tourism ties, and changing River Closure from a community-based response to exploitation into a strong Indigenous movement. While innate social capital has been shown to be a critical component of community activity, it is becoming increasingly rare in modern society. As a result, boosting social capital is a key component of the exogenous approach to tourism industry resilience (Shie, Y. J. 2020).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Ecotourism has just recently evolved as a sector capable of bringing about significant socio-economic and cultural changes. On the one hand, the major goal is to promote environmental awareness by ensuring not just economic growth but also the protection of natural and cultural landscape values. According to Richards and Hall (2000), community empowerment is a concept that is founded on creative power rather than distributive power. "Most models of sustainable tourism presume a distributive kind of empowerment of local communities from above, rather than generating empowerment from within," they argue. Both local social ties and global political economic conditions must be considered in community development. "The global only becomes manifest where it is rooted in the local, because it is here that globalization's power connections and integrations are seen and felt, even if they are formulated elsewhere. Local communities are the epicentre of resistance to globalization's looming homogeneity.' (Richards and Hall, 2000). Ecotourism has improved the regional economy and employment generation. Ecotourism improves the socio-economic condition by reducing the problem of unemployment and youth migration and is a good source of foreign exchange, (Nault & Paul Stapleton 2011, Karmakar, Madhusudan 2011, Had, Devender Gopal 2013). Ecotourism in protected areas can lead to increased economic benefits through both the direct expenditures of ecotourists and the associated employment opportunities that are generated, both within and adjacent to the natural resource. Gosling, Shackleton, & Gambiza, 2017. Building bridges to span and establish values among community members enhances social ties within the community through encouraging collaboration, Individuals and families work together to develop a successful ecotourism company, which improves community cohesiveness. (Tran & Walter, 2014; Tran & Walter, 2014; Tran & Watler, 2014). Ecotourism provides local people with a source of income and employment opportunities, as well as reduces forest degradation and dependency on forest resources (Surayya Teki 2017). The paper theorises that the socio-economic situations of communities that practise ecotourism support the goals of community development, based on the aforementioned research review. For the local community, ecotourism provides a variety of socioeconomic benefits. It has evolved into a new source of revenue and a useful tool for cultural exchange. Ecotourism provides socio-economic benefits for the local community and provides an alternate source of employment and earnings, also aiding in poverty alleviation by boosting social capital, (Agyeman, Y. B., Yeboah, A. O., & Ashie, E. 2019; Kry, S., Sasaki, N., Datta, A., Abe, I., Ken, S., & Tsusaka, T. W. 2020; Kunjuraman, V. 2020; Phelan, A., Ruhanen, L., & Mair, J. 2020; Shie, Y. J. 2020).

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