# A STUDY ON THE PROSPECTS OF ECO-TOURISM AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN KODAIKANAL, INDIA

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***Abstract :***

*Ecotourism has expanded fast and in a revolutionary way. It is an offshoot wave of environmental awareness. Kodaikanal has a vast opportunity in this area. Ecotourism has the capacity to deliver a lot of economic benefits to traditional cultures. The study is exploratory in nature and depended both on primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected with the help of a well-structured questionnaire to get comprehensive information about the profile of tourist, their purpose of visit, perception regarding facilities, their activities and major attractions to choose the place, their major expectation and to know about their satisfaction. The respondents for primary data includes both international and national tourist visiting Kodaikanal. This study reveals that tourism has a positive impact on the social aspects as it provides more and high quality services. The economic benefit of such an activity should accrue to the local population to ensure sustainability.*

***Keywords:*** *Eco-tourism, Environment, Kodaikanal, Economic Benefit, Perception*

## Introduction

The term ecotourism was coined by Mexican architect Hector Ceballos-Lascurain in 1983, the definition has been evolving ever since. His original description provided a powerful introduction to this new term: "Ecotourism is that tourism that involves traveling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects found in these areas. Ecotourism implies a scientific, esthetic, or philosophical approach, although the 'ecotourist' is not required to be a professional scientist, artist, or philosopher. The main point is that the person who practices ecotourism has the opportunity of immersing him or herself in nature in a way that most people cannot enjoy in their routine, urban existences. This person will eventually acquire a consciousness and knowledge of the natural environment, together with its cultural aspects, that will convert him into somebody keenly involved in conservation issues" The definition has evolved throughout the years, but the core principles of Ceballos-Lascurain's initial vision remain.

The word ecotourism may be new, but the concept of ecotourism actually has roots much earlier in history. We could go back to the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations to find

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the earliest forms of tourism, but throughout those times nature tourism was still relatively absent (at least in the written literature of the times). It wasn't until a grand revolution in society, culture, and education that we see something largely resembling today's ecotourism. This was the period of the Grand Tour.

The Grand Tour predominated tourism in the 18th and 19th centuries when it became relatively popular for young men (around today's college age range) to embark on pre-planned, multi-year journeys of discovery across the Europe for the sake of education. Early on in the Grand Tour Era, the itineraries and routes focused on the hubs for culture, fashion, and the arts. Places like Versailles and Paris were must-dos. Think of the tour as a culmination of social refinement of the time. However, over the course of 100 years or so, the education encapsulated in these tours began to focus on the natural world. By the 19thcentury, Grand Tours revolved around the natural components between major cities and in some cases, the tours changed completely. Prominent figures like Darwin, Wallace, Humboldt, and Bates were some of these young Grand Tourists who pushed the envelope and deviated from the typical European circuit. Visiting places like Malaysia, the Galapagos Islands, and the Amazon, these "Pioneers of Ecotourism", as I like to call them, initiated a new Grand Tour that emphasized discovery, education, and novel experiences in nature. They didn't just embark on "nature tourism", for they positively impacted local cultures, wrote essays on the benefits of environmental conservation, and developed new ways to educate the world about the wonders of nature.

The Grand Tour did not stop evolving. As the 19th century progressed, the Grand Tour became more and more popular and practical for much of society at the time. Tours began to shorten from multi-year to only weeks or months. Destinations, durations, and even age ranges of Grand Tourists became more and more varied. By the mid 19th century, a true travel industry was born, with travel agencies and tour operators becoming relatively large enterprises catering to all levels of society.

Fast forward to today. The travel industry is alive and well, with new modes of transportation (i.e., airplanes and cars) enabling all sorts of new travel possibilities. Finding wilderness no longer requires multi-year journeys by ships and is no longer reserved for the most intrepid of explorers and adventurers. A sense of discovery and adventure is now available to a massive subsection of our global society, exposing people to remote areas that are in critical need of advocacy and conservation. Ecotourism is now a tool to promote conservation of nature and culture, not just a way to culminate one's education in a grand learning experience.

The spirit of early ecotourism is still with us today and the values and components have become more organized. Since 1983, the term ecotourism continues to gain popularity and evolve in its message and influence. Large organizations like the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and the UN (United Nations) have adopted ecotourism as both a term and a strategy for sustainable travel and environmental conservation. Ecotourism is not only present in the travel industry, but also in academia, with entire college degree programs focusing on the subject. Organizations like The International Ecotourism Society and others offer online education, ecotourism certification programs, and a host of other tools to promote ecotourism and to make sure that it's done right, with

environmental conservation and community welfare front and center.

So, the takeaway point is that ecotourism, although new in definition, has been around for centuries. There were early pioneers that led us to our current methodology, but ecotourism continues to evolve. We are at a very interesting time in the evolution of ecotourism, primarily because of its extreme popularity and its ability to make meaningful change in the way we as a society view our world.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Following are the Main Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the prospects of ecotourism at Kodaikanal.
2. To trace the motivational factors of ecotourism in Kodaikanal.
3. To analyze the problems faced by the local stock holder in the study area.
4. To offer suitable suggestions to develop ecotourism in the study area.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study will be exploratory in nature and will depend on primary and secondary sources. Primary data will be collected with the help of a well-structured questionnaire (one each for Domestic and Foreign Tourists) prepared to get comprehensive information about the profile of tourist, their purpose of visit, perception regarding facilities, their activities and major attractions to choose the place, their major expectation and Satisfaction. The respondents for primary data would be all International and National Tourist visiting Kodaikanal.

Secondary data will be collected from books, magazines, newspapers. Data available in Various Reports of World Tourism Organisation (WTO), Department of Tourism, Government of India, Government of Tamilnadu and Tamilnadu Tourism Corporation besides some publications will be used. Reports of research scholars, universities and economists will be used. Above all, the wealth of information available on the internet would be used after cautiously analysing the contents and their limitations.

## SAMPLING

A Sample size of 50 Respondents will be collected from the Stakeholders of Kodaikanal. The Stakeholders includes - Tourism-oriented non-governmental organizations, Educational institutions, Government bodies, Industry bodies, Shop keepers, Hoterliers, Educational institutions, Suppliers, Local community.

A sample size of the present study will be 50 Respondents, which will be collected from Hoteliers, Shop keepers and other Stake holders in Kodaikanal. The tourist population at Kodaikanal is floating and infinite. Hence convenience sampling technique will be adopted for selecting the sample.

## ANALYSIS AND INERPRETATION OF DATA

The calculated data could be tabulated according to the need of the study, in the present study the following Statistics will be used for Data Analysis and Interpretation.

- Chi-Square tests
- Percentage Analysis

## REVIEW - STUDIES ON ECO-TOURISM

Following are some of the research studies on tourism and ecotourism. Batra (1990) in his

study on 'Tourism in Rajasthan-Problems, Potential and Future Prospects' points out the various snags, impediments and obstacles in the promotion of tourism in the state of Rajasthan in particular and India in general, some of which are in-built in nature. He strongly recommends that, tourism activity in Rajasthan must be taken as a dynamic tool in uplifting the 37 social status of the society. For this he recommends frequent get together of local people with the foreign tourists. According to him such meetings will help to break some of the age-old rotten social barriers and orthodox systems prevalent in the state.

**Sudheer's (1992)**[1] study on 'Tourism in Kerala-Problems and Prospects' highlighted the importance of tourism in Kerala and various problems confronting the tourism sector.

According to **SanthoshThampi (2001)**[2] ecotourism came into prominence as a strategy for reconciling conservation with development in ecologically rich areas. He points out that ecotourism comprises a number of inter-related components all of which should be present for authentic ecotourism to occur.

**Rajakumari (2007)**[3] in her study on 'Tourism-An Epitome of Incentives' explains that to decrease financial leakages in tourism, it would be important to increase local ownership of tourism-related business, building up tourism infrastructure using local investors and avoiding purely foreign investment.

**BijenderPunia (1999)**[4] in his study on 'Problems and Prospects of Tourism in Haryana' has highlighted the importance of elements like climate, seasonality, accessibility, attitude of host population, availability of man-power resources and the planning expertise in tourism development in any area, region, state or country.

**Seema and Jojo (2006)**[5] in their study hold the view that ecotourism inthe Indian context has significant implications for nature and culture conservation, rural livelihoods and conservation education. Existing documents on ecotourism policy are briefly reviewed in this paper to draw insights for the Indian context. This paper also suggests ways of linking indicators of impacts and incentives.

**PoyaMoli (2007)**[6] in his paper on 'Eco-Cultural Tourism in Indian Islands: Some Implications' attempted to focus on paradigm shifts in tourism and environment management with particular reference to Indian Island eco systems. Sustainable alternatives are suggested to ensure that the tourism in Indian Islands are not merely financially self-sustainable, but ecologically and sociallysustainable as well, besides culturally responsible.

**Haque Immanuel and Shanawaz Ahammed Dur (2007)**[7] in their study titled 'Dynamics of Tourism Economics: An Indian Perspective', showed the significance of tourism specifically with reference to employment sector, infrastructural facilities and poverty eradication.

According to **Vijayakumar (1995)**[8] "ecotourism implies an enjoyment of nature's bounty as well as understanding the culture and natural history of the environment". His thesis mainly stressed the promotion of ecotourism in Kerala as it cares the conservation of eco-system, while respecting the environment.

**KatjaPactz (1997)**[9] studied the relationship between sustainable development and tourism and concluded that "sustainable development is to be seen as the way forward to guarantee the long term viability of the tourism business".

**Rao (2005)**[10]after analysing the relationship between tourism and foreign exchange

concluded that tourism is a revenue earner and the most significant source of foreign exchange in several countries. He warns that a badly organized tourism development strategy will have some adverse effects on the country rather than the development of the country.

**Anil Reddy (2000)**[11] in his paper holds the view that ecotourism is entirely a new approach in tourism. It is reserving travel to natural areas to appreciate the cultural and natural history of the environment. He reviews various issues and information about ecotourism.

**Manonmoney (1995)**[12] in her study highlighted the benefits and problems encountered while framing and implementing ecotourism measures. According to her the three main aspects to be emphasised under ecotourism are prevention of pollution, carrying capacity based tourism and tourist environmental policy.

According to **Dhanasekaran (2005)**[13] "protection, development and improvement of the various constituents of the environment are among the basic conditions for the harmonious development of tourism". Similarly intelligent tourism management can contribute in large measure to the protection and development of the physical environment and cultural heritage of mankind as well as the improvement of the quality of human life. It is therefore advisable that tourism development and sound environmental management should be integral concerns of national development policies.

**Syamala (2002)**[14] believes that ecotourism has become a need for everyone who wants to refresh from the routine fast city life. Ecotourism provides many interesting tours to the heart of Mother Nature. Ecotourism in India is about taking a break from the busy life and leading a slow paced life in the midst of greenery. In her words, instead of waking up with the alarm we can wake up with the chirping of birds, we can have healthy and timely food rather than having fast food-fried stuffs. India offers many ecotourism spots, which are safe.

**Aga IqrarHaroon (1999)**[15]emphasised the role of communities in ecotourism. To him ecotourism has no meaning without the role of local communities. Ecotourism is a blend of controlled activities of a group of people having a goal of sustainable development in their respective area.

## Statistical Tools

**Origin of Clients**

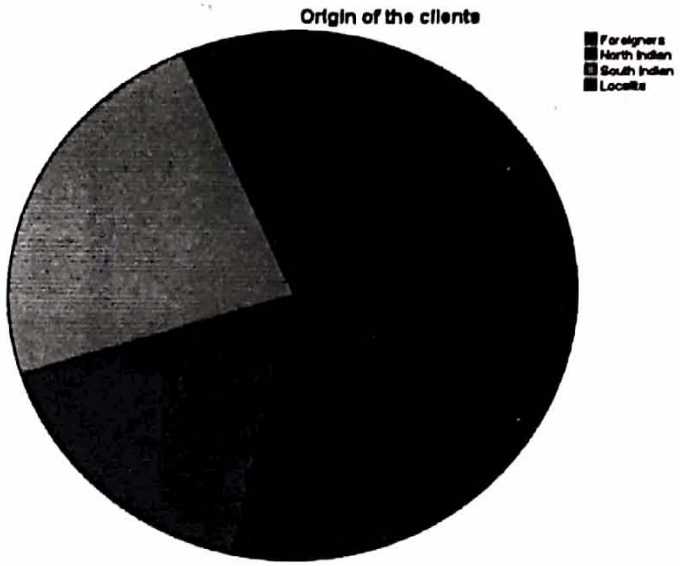
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Foreigners | 16 | 53.3 | 53.3 | 53.3 |
| | North Indian | 5 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 70.0 |
| | South Indian | 7 | 23.3 | 23.3 | 93.3 |
| | Localites | 2 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: Primary data

## Inference

Foreigners use the maximum use of the facilities provided by the respondent that is 53.3 % then comes South Indians with 23.3% and thirdly North Indians with 16.7% and finally localites with 6.7% .

## Figure No 1:




**Type of Client**

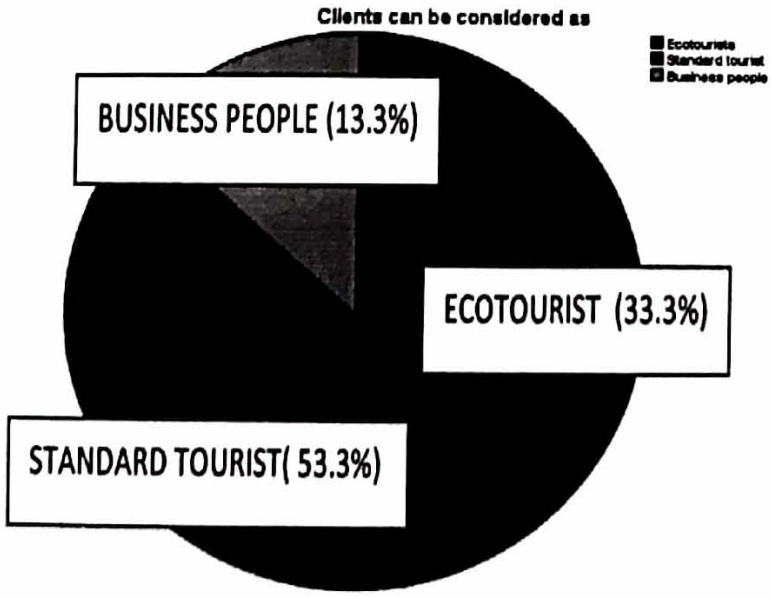
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Ecotourists | 10 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 33.3 |
| | Standard tourist | 16 | 53.3 | 53.3 | 86.7 |
| | Business people | 4 | 13.3 | 13.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: Primary data

### Inference

53.3% of the clients can be considered as standard tourist, 33.3% of the clients are considered as Ecotourists and the rest 13.3% are business people.

## Figure No 2:



## Scope of Ecotourism in Kodaikanal

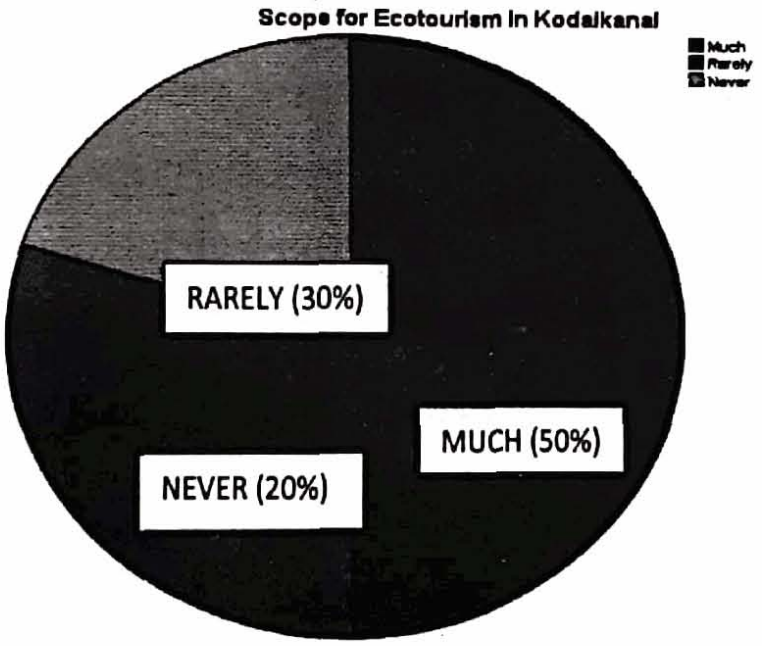
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Much | 15 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| | Rarely | 9 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 80.0 |
| | Never | 6 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: Primary data

### Inference

50% of the respondents do think there is much scope for ecotourism in Kodaikanal, 30% of the think that there is not much scope for Ecotourism and another 20% declares that there is no scope for Ecotourism in Kodaikanal.

### Figure No 1




## Prospects Perceived to Promote Ecotourism

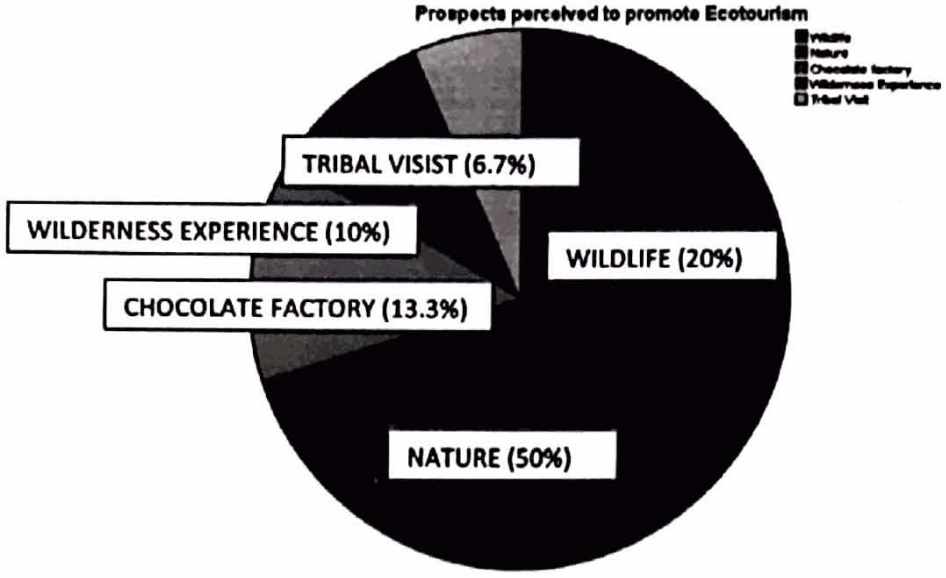
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Wildlife | 6 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 20.0 |
| | Nature | 15 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 70.0 |
| | Chocolate factory | 4 | 13.3 | 13.3 | 83.3 |
| | Wilderness Experience | 3 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 93.3 |
| | Tribal Visit | 2 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: Primary data

### Inference

Majority 50 % of the respondents chose nature as the main prospect to promote Eco Tourism and 20 % selected wildlife and another 13.3% selected chocolate factory visit and 10% promote wilderness experience and the rest 6.7% thinks tribal visit should be promoted.

## Figure No 2




**Classification of Business * Prospects perceived to promote Ecotourism (Cross tabulation)**

Count

| | | Prospects perceived to promote Ecotourism | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Wildlife | Nature | Chocolate factory | Wilderness Experience | Tribal Visit | |
| Classification of Business | Small | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| | Medium | 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 16 |
| | Large | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 8 |
| Total | | 6 | 15 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 30 |

**Chi-Square Tests**

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 11.625[a] | 8 | .169 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 14.297 | 8 | .074 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .634 | 1 | .426 |
| N of Valid Cases | 30 | | |

a. 14 cells (93.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .40.

| Main Activity * Is Ecotourism benefiting Kodaikanallocalite (Cross tabulation) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Count | | | | |
| | | Is Ecotourism benefiting Kodaikanallocalite | | Total |
| | | Yes | No | |
| Main Activity | Accomodation | 9 | 3 | 12 |
| | Food & Beverage | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| | Tour Guide | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| | Transporaton | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| | Tour Operator | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Total | | 23 | 7 | 30 |

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.517[a] | 4 | .824 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 2.407 | 4 | .661 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .001 | 1 | .975 |
| N of Valid Cases | 30 | | |
| a. 8 cells (80.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .70. | | | |

## Suggestions

- The analysis shows in that 36% of the respondents are not interested to conserve local environment and to promote eco-tourism at Kodaikanal. Hence the researcher suggests, Awareness campaigns would advantage Eco Tourism.
- The data interpreted from theis that 43.3% of the Employees are untrained Employees about the Prospects of Ecotourism at Kodaikanal. Effective training programmes would enhance the promotion of Eco Tourism.
- Hoteliers can be offered with Subsidies and incentives to promote Ecotourism. With Annual awards or achievement form the Government.
- The study reveals that 60% of the tourist who come to Kodaikanal are non packaged tourist. Hence it is suggested that a Package can be designed which includes the uniqueness of Kodaikanal, Tribal visit in the rural areas of Kodaikanal can be done to understand more about the culture diversity and social lively hood of the people in those area, exploring wildlife and bird watching, nature safari, chocolate factory visit, sheep farm rearing coffee estates , trekking etc. and the same can be promoted through Advertisement, TV Ads, Banners, Pamphlets and Online Portals.
- To promote Adventure Tourism, five Centres may be set up initially, with international standard, with the operational support of agencies having the necessary experience and expertise.

- At present, there is no mechanism to assess the quality of services provided in the Tourism sector. Hence a mechanism has to be developed to assess the quality of services.

- To attract tourists in large numbers, cleanliness plays a vital role. Hence priority should be given to removal of garbage and cleaning the water ways. The Local bodies may be actively involved in the cleaning campaign and a part of proceeds from the income generated by the tourism may be devolved to Local Bodies.

**Conclusion**

Ecotourism has expanded fast and in a revolutionary way. It is an offshoot wave of environmental awareness. Due to tourism's strong role in the nations and economies of the world, the need for tourism research is imperative. The movement towards ecotourism in India is at once a threat and an opportunity to create more sustainable tourism. By diverting tourist traffic to ensure that the carrying capacity of any destination is not exceeded, by planning for regeneration of natural resources, and by generating awareness in the host community whereby they are prepared to deal with the negative impact of mass tourism are the ways of attaining sustainability. There is a considerable scope for research on the evaluation of ecotourism projects in Kodaikanal.

International tourists would want to travel in environmental friendly ways to environmentally sound destinations. As ecotourism grows in popularity there are a number of challenges that need to be faced. For eliminating weaknesses mentioned in this thesis, a planned approach is needed and thereby Kodaikanal can attract more and more eco-tourists and create an image of one of the world's best ecotourism destination. Kodaikanal has a vast opportunity in this area. Ecotourism has the capacity to deliver a lot of economic benefits to traditional cultures. However, whether those benefits are realized depends on how well the ecotourism is managed. There is an urgent need for improved analysis of ecotourism issues as part of the ecotourism planning and development process.

The growth of tourism without proper control and supervision will endanger the environment. Tourism in ecologically sensitive area needs close monitoring. In Short, tourism in nature-based areas should be ecologically sustainable. There should also be provision for learning process for a visitor. Ecotourism could be a tool for environmental conservation, local empowerment, poverty alleviation and so on. So it requires well planning on the basis of regulations. This study reveals that tourism has a positive impact on the social aspects as it provides more and high quality services. The economic benefit of such an activity should accrue to the local population to ensure sustainability.

Ecotourism enjoys a significant superiority over general tourism with regard to tourist arrivals and economic, social and environmental benefits. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that ecotourism development and protection of environment can be made possible with the careful planning and execution by the government departments, tourist officials along with the co-operation of the public. In future, ecotourism will continue to grow in several parts of the world as a profitable way of life.

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