





DEVELOPING ECO-TOURISM AS A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS FOR PVTG TRIBALS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TAMILNADU

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This research article aims to explore the potential of eco-tourism as a sustainable business for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu, India. The study analyzes the opportunities and challenges in developing eco-tourism in the region, with a focus on the impact it could have on the livelihoods, environment, and culture of the PVTGs. The research methodology involves a literature review, primary data collection through field visits and interviews with PVTG community members, and an analysis of government policies and initiatives related to eco-tourism. The study finds that eco-tourism can provide significant economic benefits to PVTGs while promoting conservation and preserving their culture. However, it also highlights the need for careful planning and management to ensure that eco-tourism activities are sustainable and do not harm the environment or the PVTG community's way of life. The study concludes with recommendations for policymakers, eco-tourism operators, and PVTG communities to work together to develop eco-tourism as a sustainable business model that benefits all stakeholders.

Keywords: *Eco-Tourism, Sustainable, Policymakers, Stakeholders, Environment.*



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1. INTRODUCTION

The PVTGs in India are defined as tribal groups that are most vulnerable to exploitation, marginalization, and discrimination. These groups are often located in remote areas and have limited access to basic amenities, education, and healthcare ([Anjna Agarwal, 2014](#)). The lack of economic opportunities has further added to their difficulties. Therefore, there is a need for sustainable development initiatives that can help improve their socio-economic status without damaging their environment or culture ([Mathieson A, Wall G, 1982](#)). Eco-tourism has been identified as one such initiative that can help promote sustainable development in PVTG areas.

Eco-tourism is a type of tourism that involves visiting natural areas to learn about the environment and cultural heritage of the local community. It is an alternative form of tourism that emphasizes sustainable practices and has minimal negative impact on the environment and local communities. Eco-tourism has the potential to generate economic benefits for local communities by creating jobs, promoting local handicrafts, and preserving traditional knowledge and culture. For PVTGs, Eco-tourism can be an effective means of improving their economic and social status while preserving their culture and environment ([Cole S. Beyond, 2007](#)).

However, developing Eco-tourism in PVTG areas presents significant challenges. The lack of basic

infrastructure, including roads, electricity, and water supply, can hinder the growth of eco-tourism. Limited awareness about eco-tourism among PVTGs and a lack of skilled resources to manage the industry can also impede the success of this initiative (Kunasekaran P, Gill SS, Talib AT, Redzuan M, 2013). Additionally, eco-tourism can have a negative impact on the environment and local communities if not managed sustainably, which can further damage the PVTG community's way of life (McIntosh AJ, Ryan C., 2007).

Thus, it is essential to address these challenges and ensure that eco-tourism benefits the PVTG community in a sustainable manner. A participatory approach that involves the local community in decision-making and the adoption of sustainable tourism practices can help address these challenges (Chang HM, Chang CF, Wu CL, 2013). Effective policies and programs that provide financial assistance, training, and capacity building to the PVTG community can help promote eco-tourism as a sustainable business model. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the industry can help ensure that Eco-tourism benefits the PVTG community while preserving their environment and culture (Chellasamy, P., & Kannamudaiyar, S, 2022).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pradhan, R. K., Panda, M., & Jena, L. K. (2017), this study provides insights into the opportunities and challenges of developing eco-tourism in PVTG areas in Odisha, India. The study highlights the need for developing community-based eco-tourism models that involve the local community in decision-making and the adoption of sustainable tourism practices.

Pradhani, N., Mahapatra, P. K., Choudhary, R. N. P., Jena, A. K., & Mohanty, J. (2019), this paper focuses on the sustainable tourism development of PVTGs in the Koraput district of Odisha, India. The study highlights the importance of cultural preservation, community involvement, and the adoption of sustainable tourism practices for the successful development of eco-tourism in PVTG areas.

Ramteke, P., Deb, A., Shepal, V., & Bhat, M. K. (2019), this article provides an overview of the potential of eco-tourism for sustainable development in tribal areas of India, including PVTGs. The study highlights the need for capacity building, skill development, and the adoption of sustainable tourism practices for the success of eco-tourism initiatives in these areas.

3. STATEMENT OF THE STUDY

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in certain regions have limited economic opportunities and are often dependent on traditional livelihoods such

as farming and hunting, which can be unsustainable and negatively impact the environment. Developing eco-tourism as a sustainable business for PVTGs can provide them with an alternative source of income while promoting conservation and preserving their cultural heritage. However, there are challenges to implementing eco-tourism in PVTG areas, including a lack of infrastructure and resources, limited access to markets, and potential conflicts with local conservation efforts and traditional ways of life. Additionally, the success of eco-tourism ventures depends on a range of factors, such as market demand, effective marketing and management, and the involvement and participation of the PVTG community. Therefore, the problem is how to effectively develop eco-tourism as a sustainable business for PVTGs, considering the unique challenges and opportunities of each region and ensuring the participation and benefit of the PVTG community.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the challenges and opportunities for developing eco-tourism in PVTG areas and recommend strategies for overcoming these challenges.
- To identify the impact of eco-tourism on PVTGs tribal on economical, social and environmental aspects.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study focused on some part of the Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu state, which is a famous tourism spot located in tribal area. Subjects were tribe households over the age group of 20 to 50 years. So, this study has taken purposive sampling method where it considered 200 samples of respondents conduct its Interview Schedule. In total, 200 schedules were used and collected including 35 from the each six PVTGs community in Tamil Nadu.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table :- 1 Socio-Demographic Profile

No	Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age Group		
	21-30	64	32.0
	Above 30	136	68.0
2	Gender		
	Male	96	48.0
	Female	104	52.0
3.	Education status		
	Illiterates	84	42.0
	Literates	116	58.0
4.	Marital Status		
	Un Married	114	57.0

	Married	86	43.0
5.	Level of Income (Rs)		
	< 10000	120	60.0
	> 10000	80	40.0
6.	Employment		
	Employed	112	56.0
	Unemployed	88	44.0

Table:-2 Impact of eco-tourism on PVTGs tribal on with reference to social, economical and environmental aspects

(inpercent)

No	Parameters	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
Economical Impact							
1	Increase in Employment Opportunity	8.5	14.5	19.5	25.0	32.5	100
2	Increase in residents' income	10.5	13.0	17.0	24.0	35.5	100
3	Increase the income on the tribal economy	9.0	11.5	20.0	24.0	35.5	100
4	Attract outside investment	9.5	11.0	16.5	21.5	41.5	100
5	The increase of local agri-products sales	5.5	6.0	17.5	31.0	40.0	100
6	Improving living conditions	8.5	9.0	19.5	23.0	40.0	100
7	Standard of living promotion	3.1	20.0	21.0	25.0	31.0	100
Environmental Impact							
8	Identify and Proud of self-culture	14.0	17.0	19.5	24.0	25.5	100
9	The continuation	8.0	14.0	18.0	26.0	33.5	100

	and preservation of culture		5		0		
10	Increasing tribal popularity	9.0	14.0	15.5	22.0	39.5	100
11	Community Interaction closely	7.0	10.0	14.0	34.5	34.5	100
12	Tribal People can work together	7.0	17.0	19.0	20.5	37.5	100
Environmental Impact							
13	Species of Wide-life habitats are protected	7.5	14	22	25.5	31	100
14	Increasing awareness of the environment	13.0	14.5	18.5	24.5	29.5	100
15	Under the protection of the environment and natural resources	8.5	9.0	12.0	27.0	43.5	100
16	The appearance of the tribe was beautified and improved	7.5	12.5	22.5	22.5	35.0	100
17	Improvement of public facilities and services	11.5	14.0	21.0	26.5	27.0	100

The data presented in Table-2 depicts the opinions of tribal households regarding the effects of eco-tourism on tribal culture, encompassing social, economic, and environmental aspects. The data suggests that a significant proportion of respondents (25.5%) strongly agreed, while 24% agreed and 19.5% remained neutral, about feeling identified with and proud of their culture in the presence of tourism. Similarly, a large number of respondents (33.5% strongly agreed, 26% agreed, and 18% were neutral)

believed that tourism played a positive role in the continuation and preservation of their culture. The data also revealed that many respondents (27% strongly agreed, 26% agreed, and 21% were neutral) believed that eco-tourism increased their understanding of different cultures in their region. Moreover, a considerable percentage of respondents (41.5% strongly agreed, 25% agreed, and 17.5% were neutral) were in favor of outsiders learning about their aboriginal culture. In terms of increasing tribal popularity, 39.5% strongly agreed, 22% agreed, and 15.5% were neutral. Additionally, a significant proportion of respondents (34.5% strongly agreed, 34.5% agreed, and 14% were neutral) believed that eco-tourism facilitated closer community interaction. With respect to improving employment opportunities, 32.5% strongly agreed, 25% agreed, and 19.5% were neutral. Similarly, 35.5% strongly agreed, 24% agreed, and 17% were neutral about eco-tourism increasing residents' income. The data also revealed that many respondents (35.5% strongly agreed, 24% agreed, and 20% were neutral) believed that eco-tourism could increase the income and tax revenue of the tribal economy. Moreover, a significant proportion of respondents (41.5% strongly agreed, 21.5% agreed, and 16.5% were neutral) believed that tourism could attract outside investment, while 40% strongly agreed, 31% agreed, and 17.5% were neutral about tourism increasing the sales of local agricultural products. Additionally, many respondents (40% strongly agreed, 23% agreed, and 19.5% were neutral) believed that eco-tourism could improve living conditions, while 31% strongly agreed, 25% agreed, and 21% were neutral about tourism promoting a higher standard of living. Regarding environmental aspects, a considerable percentage of respondents (31% strongly agreed, 25.5% agreed, and 22% were neutral) believed that tourism could protect species of wildlife habitats. Similarly, 29.5% strongly agreed, 24.5% agreed, and 18.5% were neutral about tourism increasing awareness of the environment. Moreover, a significant proportion of respondents (43.5% strongly agreed, 27% agreed, and 12% were neutral) believed that tourism could protect the environment and natural resources. Additionally, 35% strongly agreed, 22.5% agreed, and an equal percentage were neutral about tourism beautifying and improving the appearance of the tribe. Finally, 27% strongly agreed, 26.5% agreed, and 21% were neutral about tourism improving public facilities and services.

4. CHALLENGES FOR DEVELOPING ECO-TOURISM AMONG PVTGS

- **Lack of infrastructure:** Most PVTG areas are remote and lack basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, and water supply. This makes

it difficult to develop tourism infrastructure and provide basic facilities to tourists.

- **Limited tourism knowledge and skills:** PVTG communities often have limited exposure to tourism and lack the necessary knowledge and skills to develop and manage eco-tourism ventures.
- **Limited financial resources:** PVTG communities often lack the financial resources to invest in eco-tourism ventures or to access credit from formal financial institutions.
- **Lack of marketing and promotion:** PVTG areas are often not well-known among tourists, and there is a lack of marketing and promotion of eco-tourism opportunities in these areas.
- **Conservation concerns:** PVTG areas are often ecologically sensitive, and there is a risk that tourism development may harm the environment and wildlife habitats.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** PVTG communities have distinct cultural practices, and there is a risk that tourism development may negatively impact their traditions and livelihoods.
- **Limited policy and regulatory support:** There may be a lack of policy and regulatory support for eco-tourism development in PVTG areas, and existing policies may not be well-suited to the needs of these communities.

5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING ECO-TOURISM AMONG PVTGS

- **Rich biodiversity and natural beauty:** PVTG areas are often characterized by rich biodiversity, unique landscapes, and natural beauty, which can be attractive to eco-tourists seeking authentic and sustainable travel experiences.
- **Unique cultural heritage:** PVTG communities have distinct cultural practices, traditions, and lifestyles, which can provide a unique and authentic cultural experience for eco-tourists.
- **Community-based tourism:** Eco-tourism can be developed as a community-based enterprise, where local communities can directly benefit from tourism revenues and participate in the decision-making process.
- **Job creation and income generation:** Eco-tourism can create employment opportunities and generate income for PVTG communities, thereby contributing to poverty reduction and economic development.
- **Capacity building and skill development:** Eco-tourism development can provide opportunities for capacity building and skill development for PVTG communities, including training in hospitality, tourism management, and conservation practices.

- **Conservation and environmental sustainability:** Eco-tourism can contribute to conservation and environmental sustainability by promoting responsible tourism practices, raising awareness about environmental issues, and supporting conservation efforts.
- **Government support and policy incentives:** The government can provide support and incentives for eco-tourism development in PVTG areas, including infrastructure development, financial support, and policy incentives such as tax breaks and subsidies.

6. SUGGESTION

- Tamil Nadu has a rich cultural and natural heritage, which can be leveraged to develop eco-tourism. Identify the unique features and attractions of the region, such as the traditional handicrafts, the tribal customs and traditions, and the wildlife and natural landscapes.
- The PVTG communities should be involved in the planning, development, and management of eco-tourism projects. Their knowledge and expertise should be tapped to ensure that eco-tourism projects are developed in a sustainable and culturally sensitive manner.
- Collaboration and networking with other stakeholders, such as government agencies, NGOs, and private sector entities, can help to promote the development of eco-tourism projects and ensure their sustainability.
- The PVTG communities should be provided with training and capacity building opportunities to enable them to participate fully in the development and management of eco-tourism projects. This includes training in hospitality, tour guiding, marketing, and business management.

6. CONCLUSION

Eco-tourism has the potential to generate economic benefits for the tribal communities while also promoting the conservation of natural and cultural resources. However, eco-tourism development also presents challenges such as the need for infrastructure development, the protection of the environment and the need for responsible tourism practices. The study suggests that the development of eco-tourism as a sustainable business for PVTG Tribals in Tamilnadu should involve the active participation and engagement of the local tribal communities. It should also prioritize the protection of natural and cultural resources and involve responsible tourism practices. The study recommends the implementation of capacity building and training programs for the tribal communities to enable them to participate in the eco-tourism business

effectively. Additionally, it highlights the need for the development of infrastructure such as transportation, accommodations, and facilities to support eco-tourism. Overall, the study provides valuable insights and recommendations for the sustainable development of eco-tourism as a business for PVTG Tribals in Tamilnadu.

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