

**ECOTOURISM EFFECTS ON LOCAL ECONOMY SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT**

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**ABSTRACT**

Ecotourism has become an emerging form of alternative tourism as it provides authentic experiences to nature lovers. This paper discusses on the concept of ecotourism and the characteristics of ecotourism. The primary objective of promoting ecotourism is to conserve the environment and improve the socioeconomic well being of local people. The present research article found out that ecotourism directly provides benefits to the people living in the concerned areas in the form of income, employment, decent facilities and dignified social life. The impacts of ecotourism on society, local economy and environment are complex. The paper made an enquiry into the current scenario of ecotourism in Kerala and its effects on local economy, society and environment.

**KEYWORDS** Ecotourism, Sustainable Development, Local Community, Nature, Environment, Economy, Education, Culture

**INTRODUCTION**

Ecotourism is an effective tool to conserve nature and brings about sustainable development to the area concerned. The international ecotourism society defines it as the responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well being of local people and involves interpretation and education with the specification that education is for both staff and guests (The International Ecotourism Society, 2015). Conservation of the environment and preservation of biodiversity is possible by the financial benefits provided by ecotourism. Increase in the local people's capabilities and economic opportunities due to ecotourism activities empowers the local communities. Interpretation and education allow greater understanding and appreciation for nature, local society and culture. (The International Ecotourism Society, 2015). It is a novel form of tourism which provides knowledge and entertainment to nature lovers and wellbeing to local people. Conservation of the environment, the well being of the local people and understanding the importance of nature protection are three of the primary aims that ecotourism stands for. Figure 1: Three principal features of ecotourism. The three essential components of ecotourism are the conservation of environment and culture, local community empowerment for sustainable development and Education and interpretation for understanding nature and culture.



Growth of mass tourism or conventional tourism is at the cost of damage to the ecosystem. Infrastructure development as part of mass tourism gradually kills the environment. Today, ecotourism is one among the fastest growing segments as its potential for growth is virtually unlimited. Ecotourism envisages employment opportunities for the local population, providing business opportunities for the local community, creating a market for local produce such as