Exploring the Ecological Footprint: A Conceptual Study on Green Tourism Influence on Environmental Sustainability

¹Dr. Ashish Kumar Sharma, ²Dr. Ankita Goyal, ³Dr. Anjali Sharma

¹Assistant Professor School of Business Mody University of Science and Technology Lakshmangarh, Rajasthan, India

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1205-8299

²Assistant Professor School of Business Mody University of Science and Technology Lakshmangarh, Rajasthan, India

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1309-4010

³Assistant Professor School of Law Mody University of Science and Technology Lakshmangarh, Rajasthan, India

ORCID ID: 0009-0007-6250-6786

Abstract:- Green tourism, also known as sustainable tourism or eco-tourism, has gained significant attention as a means to minimize the negative environmental impacts of conventional tourism. The core characteristics of green tourism, which include sustainable practices, environmental responsibility, and community engagement, emphasize the interdependence of environmental, social, and economic factors in sustainable development. Green tourism practices influence specific environmental indicators, such as carbon emissions, waste reduction, water consumption, preservation of natural habitats, and biodiversity protection. It is widely acknowledged that different activities under the domain of green tourism may have synergies or trade-offs with respect to these outcomes, and there is an urgent need to identify and understand these dynamics. Also, the marketing efforts of various firms in the tourism industry may be closely integrated with the concept of sustainability to achieve the twin objectives of a green business and an environment-friendly market.

This paper presents a detailed conceptual approach to assessing the impact of green tourism on environmental sustainability. The framework identifies a range of green tourism practices that contribute to environmental sustainability. These practices include Community Engagement and Benefits, Waste Management and Pollution Control, Management of Biodiversity and Ecosystems, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, Natural Resource Conservation, Education and Knowledge, Sustainable Land Use and Cultural Heritage Preservation. Integrating key concepts, theories, and measurable indicators, provides valuable insights into the potential of green tourism to contribute to environmental sustainability. The framework serves as a guide for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in promoting and implementing sustainable tourism practices that enhance environmental sustainability outcomes.

To assess the impact of green tourism on environmental sustainability, the framework examines various practices adopted by different nations of the world. These practices allow researchers and practitioners to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of green tourism initiatives.

Keywords: Environment, Green Tourism, Sustainability, Ecology

1. Introduction

In the modern times, the tourism sector has expanded significantly, making it one of the largest and fastest-growing industries worldwide. But the tourism industry's quick growth has created new environmental problems. Green tourism, sometimes referred to as sustainable tourism or eco-tourism, has emerged as a viable strategy to alleviate the negative environmental impacts linked to conventional tourist as a reaction to these problems.

The goal of green tourism is to conserve the environment, preserve cultural and natural heritage, and advance sustainable practises across the entire tourism value chain. Green tourism is distinguished by its dedication to environmental sustainability. It incorporates a variety of elements, including ecotourism, responsible tourism, tourism based on the environment, and tourism based on local communities, among others.

Green tourism is significant because it has the ability to balance social and environmental welfare with economic growth. Green tourism aims to safeguard the long-term viability of travel destinations, safeguard delicate ecosystems, maintain cultural heritage, and advance the welfare of regional populations. Additionally, it aims to improve visitor experiences by giving them chances to engage meaningfully with local cultures and the natural world.

There are a number of reasons for the rising interest in ecotourism. First, travellers are becoming more conscious of environmental problems and motivated to make a positive impact on sustainability. Travellers are increasingly looking for locations that share their values, expressing preferences for accommodations that are environmentally friendly, low-impact activities, and real cultural experiences. Search for 'silence' also greatly contributes to the rise of green tourism [1].

Second, tourist destinations and industry players are becoming aware of the financial advantages of green tourism. An eco-conscious niche market of tourists may be attracted by sustainable tourism practises, increasing the number of visitors, their length of stay, and their spending. Green tourism may also diversify local economies and open up job opportunities, especially in rural and environmentally vulnerable areas. When green tourism practices are implemented, it helps in increasing the competitive advantage, enhances the productivity and sustainability, building a rapport in the society and overall financial efficiency of an organization [2].

Thirdly, in order to accomplish more general sustainability objectives, governments and international organisations are encouraging green tourism. As part of its impetus on eco-tourism, countries like India are using animals in their advertising campaigns to attract foreign tourists to visit and witness the Indian wild animals roaming across various forest areas and national parks [3]. In order to promote sustainable practises in the travel and tourist industry, numerous nations have created legislation, certifications, and guidelines. These programmes seek to reduce the negative effects of tourism, combat climate change, safeguard wildlife, and improve the general standard of travel experiences. On the contrary, the 'happiness' of tourists is also affected by the green tourism policies of the government. One study examined how the tourist footfall saw a downfall when several western governments implemented their environmental policies which led to an increase in the cost of travelling [4].

Green tourism is becoming more and more popular, yet there are still difficulties and complexities in putting it into practise. This gap arises because future cannot be predicted with full accuracy. The future is dependent on many unpredictable factors as was shown by a study in China [5]. It can be challenging to balance the socio-

cultural, economic, and environmental aspects of tourism. Understanding all of the relevant variables and indicators is essential to evaluating the effect of green tourism on environmental sustainability.

By offering a conceptual framework for evaluation, this paper seeks to advance our understanding of how green tourism affects environmental sustainability. This study aims to teach stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers on the potential of green tourism to support a more sustainable future for the tourism sector by analysing the positive and negative impacts, defining key indicators, and offering case studies and best practises.

In a perfect green tourism scenario, indigenous group, tourists with genetic distinctiveness and green tourism as a whole, may all profit from one another in a connected, symbiotic way (Fig. 1). The framework shown in Fig. 1 suggests that tourism, like any industry attempting to be sustainable, should be taken into account in the contexts of both the genetic distinctiveness and indigenous group's ambitions. The framework, however straightforward, emphasises the importance of building strong connections between indigenous group, the genetic distinctiveness, and green tourism. The green tourism paradigm as a whole is larger than the sum of its parts, according to theory, because of the traits that result from implementation of the framework. A good place to start when evaluating a green tourism site is by looking at the connections that already exist or have the potential to exist between indigenous groups, genetic distinctiveness and green tourism, using a list of pertinent indicators created through stakeholder consultation [6].

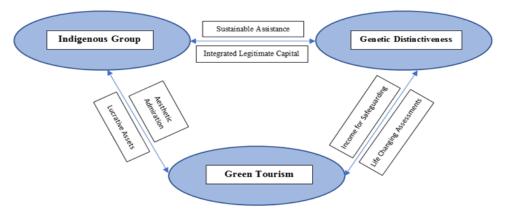


Fig. 1 Green Tourism Model (Ross & Wall, 1999)

2. Review of Literature

A study by Gossling, Scott, & Hall provides an overview of the interactions between tourism and water resources [7]. Their research examines the impacts of tourism on water availability, quality, and ecosystems, and discusses the potential of green tourism practices to address these challenges. They also highlighted the need for effective assessment methods to evaluate the impact of green tourism on water-related environmental sustainability.

Eijgelaar, Peeters, & Piket examined the development and application of monitoring and reporting tools for assessing the sustainability of tourism destinations [8]. They highlighted the importance of measuring and evaluating the impact of green tourism practices on environmental sustainability, and provided insights into the implementation of assessment frameworks and indicators.

Garrod & Fyall explored the interactions between tourism and water resources, focusing on the impacts of tourism activities on water availability, quality, and ecosystems [9]. The study discusses the potential for green tourism practices to minimize water-related environmental impacts and emphasizes the importance of assessing their effectiveness in promoting environmental sustainability.

In another study, Gossling, Scott, & Hall examined the interactions between tourism and water resources, highlighting the potential environmental impacts of tourism activities [10]. It discusses the role of green tourism practices in reducing water consumption, managing wastewater, and protecting water ecosystems. It also

emphasizes the need for effective assessment approaches to evaluate the impact of green tourism on environmental sustainability.

Sharma & Subramanian presented a systems thinking approach to assess sustainable tourism development [11]. They explained the complex interdependencies and feedback mechanisms between tourism, the environment, and local communities and emphasized the importance of considering multiple dimensions of sustainability, including environmental sustainability, in assessing the impact of green tourism practices.

A meta-analysis conducted by Koens, Postma, & Papp examined the impact of tourism on biodiversity and highlighted the potential for green tourism practices to contribute to biodiversity conservation [12]. It emphasized the importance of assessing and managing the impact of tourism on environmental, particularly in ecologically sensitive areas.

Stronza discussed the anthropological perspective on tourism and its implications for assessing the impact of green tourism on environmental sustainability [13]. They explored the cultural dimensions of tourism and highlighted the importance of local communities in shaping sustainable tourism practices.

A study by Tapper & Font provided an introduction to the concept of tourism supply chains and their role in promoting sustainability [14]. In this research, they discussed the potential of assessing the impact of green tourism practices on environmental sustainability within the context of supply chain management.

Research done by Fennell & Dowling focused on ecotourism policy and planning, including the assessment of the impact of green tourism on environmental sustainability [15]. It explored the role of policies, regulations, and planning frameworks in promoting sustainable tourism practices and managing the environmental impacts of tourism activities.

Andereck examined the impacts of tourism on water resources [16]. This study discussed the potential for green tourism practices to mitigate water-related environmental issues, such as water scarcity and pollution. It emphasized the need for assessing the impact of tourism on water resources to ensure sustainable water management in tourist destinations.

3. Objectives of the Study

- 1. To identify the finest green tourism practices and insights.
- 2. To study the impact of green tourism initiatives adopted by various nations towards environmental sustainability.

4. Range of Green Tourism Practices

The ability of the tourism industry to reduce its adverse environmental effects, conserve natural resources, and protect ecosystems, while also promoting the long-term viability of destinations, is referred to as environmental sustainability in tourism.

The range of green practices in tourism includes a number of factors and dimensions, including:

- 1. Community Engagement and Benefits: Sustainable tourism aims to integrate regional communities in tourism growth, assuring their significant involvement, empowerment, and fair distribution of benefits. It entails promoting community-based tourism projects, supporting local businesses and enterprises, and encouraging positive sociocultural exchanges between tourists and local populations. Green tourism aligned with community engagement results in many economic benefits. When steps are taken to conserve the natural and social resources, it helps both the regional sections of society as well as countries to achieve the goal of sustainable environmental development [17].
- 2. Waste Management and Pollution Control: Environmentally responsible waste management and waste minimization are key components of sustainable tourism practises. This entails cutting back on single-use plastics, putting in place suitable waste disposal methods, and educating visitors and locals on the significance

of responsible waste management. One method to achieve this aim is to document all the implications of tourism on the environment [18].

- 3. Management of biodiversity and ecosystems: Environmental sustainability in tourism entails safeguarding biodiversity and ecosystems. This entails preserving sensitive habitats, reducing the negative effects of tourism on wildlife, encouraging eco-friendly behaviour in protected regions, and supporting projects for habitat conservation and restoration [19].
- 4. Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation: Travel, lodging, and other tourist-related activities are the main sources of tourism's greenhouse gas emissions. To ensure the long-term resilience of destinations, environmental sustainability in tourism entails lowering carbon emissions, supporting low-carbon transportation choices, putting energy-efficient practises into place, and responding to the effects of climate change [20].
- 5. Natural Resource Conservation: By implementing effective technology, encouraging responsible resource use, and advocating conservation measures, sustainable tourism practises strive to reduce the use of scarce resources, such as water and electricity. This encompasses programmes like waste minimization, renewable energy use, and water and energy conservation [21].
- 6. Education and Knowledge: Environmental sustainability in tourism necessitates increasing public knowledge of sustainable practises, the value of conservation, and the relevance of responsible tourism among travellers, industry stakeholders, and local communities. Programmes for interpretation and education can build a deeper awareness of environmental challenges and encourage responsible behaviour [22].
- 7. Sustainable Land Use and Cultural Heritage Preservation: Responsible land use practises that reduce the conversion of natural areas for tourism development are essential to ensuring environmental sustainability in the tourism industry. To ensure the protection of local communities' cultural identities and heritage, it also entails maintaining cultural heritage, promoting regional traditions, and supporting local customs [23].

Green tourism promotes environmental sustainability, and the failure to achieve this goal is a problem in the modern world. This idea has helped several nations secure development of their nations. According to this theory, green tourism and geographical development can both contribute to environmental sustainability (Fig. 2). The political, economic, and social components of green tourism development are referred to as its dimensions, and an appropriate balance between these dimensions must be achieved to maintain its long-term sustainability [23].

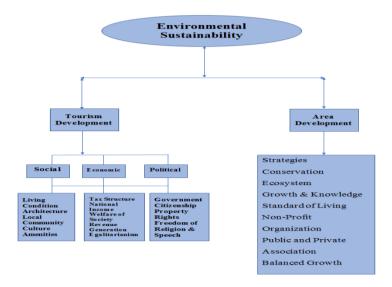


Fig. 2 Environmental Sustainability through Green Tourism (Kiper, 2013)

5. Successful Green Tourism Initiatives Adopted by Various Nations

1. Green Mountain Hotel, Norway: This eco-friendly hotel is a shining example and is situated in the Svalbard Arctic archipelago. The hotel uses a combination of solar panels, wind turbines, and hydroelectric power to run fully on sustainable energy. To reduce energy usage in the harsh Arctic climate, it has put in place energy-efficient measures like cutting-edge insulation and heat recovery systems [24].

- 2. Costa Rica: Costa Rica is frequently used as a model for effective green tourism programmes. By putting in place numerous conservation and sustainability measures, the nation has established itself as a destination for sustainable tourism. In order to preserve its rich biodiversity and ecosystems, Costa Rica has designated a sizeable amount of its land as protected areas, including national parks and reserves. The nation has also fostered community-based tourism initiatives, in which regional communities take a direct interest in the growth of tourism and profit from it. A certification programme for sustainable practises in hotels, tour companies, and other tourism-related organisations has also been formed in Costa Rica under the name Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) [25].
- 3. Lofoten Islands, Norway: The Lofoten Islands in Norway have effectively embraced sustainable tourism practises while preserving their pristine environment and distinctive cultural heritage. To safeguard its delicate ecosystems, the area has put in place stringent rules that restrict visitor numbers, encourage sustainable fishing methods, and control infrastructural growth. The Lofoten Islands also take part in environmentally beneficial programmes such projects for renewable energy, energy-efficient lodging, and responsible trash management [26].
- 4. Bhutan: Bhutan, which places a strong emphasis on Gross National Happiness, has adopted a distinctive strategy for promoting ecotourism. To protect the preservation of its natural and cultural legacy, the nation has put in place a high-value, low-impact tourist policy. Bhutan charges a daily tourist price that covers lodging, meals, transportation, and a fee for sustainable development, helping to fund the nation's efforts in the fields of the environment and social welfare. This strategy intends to regulate the amount of tourists, encourage responsible tourism, and guarantee that local residents share the benefits fairly [27]
- 5. The Green Key Programme, Denmark: The Green Key is a global eco-label given to lodgings, tourist destinations, and eateries that exhibit excellent environmental standards. With many establishments that have received the Green Key certification, Denmark has been at the forefront of this programme. These businesses place a high priority on waste management, the use of eco-friendly products, and environmental education for both workers and visitors [28].
- 6. Chumbe Island Coral Park, Tanzania: Off the coast of Zanzibar, Chumbe Island Coral Park is a privately owned marine protected area and ecolodge. The eco-lodge in the park makes use of eco-friendly techniques like solar energy, rainwater collection, composting toilets, and waste minimization techniques. Chumbe Island has put in place stringent conservation measures, such as restricted visitor access and environmental education initiatives, to conserve the coral reefs [29].
- 7. Soneva Resorts, Maldives: This upscale resort chain in the Maldives has proven to be strongly committed to sustainability. The resorts have integrated a number of eco-friendly practises, such as waste management systems, significant recycling programmes, and energy-efficient construction. Soneva Resorts also places a high priority on community involvement, hires local workers, aids regional projects, and encourages cultural preservation. In addition, they actively engage visitors in sustainability initiatives by providing learning opportunities and experiences that promote environmental consciousness [30].
- 8. Grootbos Private Nature Reserve, South Africa: Grootbos Private Nature Reserve is a South African ecotourism attraction that mixes community development with conservation initiatives. The reserve is dedicated to preserving the distinctive fynbos habitat, encouraging biodiversity preservation, and providing eco-friendly travel opportunities. To improve the surrounding areas, Grootbos works with regional organisations, hires people from the community, and supports educational and training initiatives. Along with offering chances for interactive experiences and educational excursions, the reserve also involves visitors in conservation-related activities [31].
- 9. Costa Rica's Finca Rosa Blanca Eco-Lodge and Inn: This country's Finca Rosa Blanca is a coffee plantation and inn. Sustainable business practises are used throughout the site, including organic coffee

cultivation, wastewater treatment, reforestation projects, and habitat preservation. The resort offers opportunity for tourists to explore the local wildlife and actively involves visitors in environmental education [32].

10. The Long Run Initiative, Global: The Long Run Initiative is a network of sustainable tourism companies and locations dedicated to environmental protection, local economic growth, and cultural preservation. To further long-term sustainability, members of The Long Run follow a comprehensive strategy known as the "4Cs" (Conservation, Community, Culture, and Commerce). The programme promotes collaboration, stimulates the exchange of best practises, and provides funding for initiatives that advance social and environmental well-being [33].

India is a varied nation with a vibrant tourism sector and a rich cultural legacy. Here are a few instances of ecofriendly tourism projects and top practices in India:

- 1. Himachal Pradesh has embraced practises for ethical adventure tourism: Himachal Pradesh is a state in the Himalayan area. Sustainable adventure activities like paragliding, river rafting, and trekking are offered in places like Manali and Kullu with a focus on reducing negative environmental effects and maintaining visitor safety. Additionally, the state has set regulations for adventure tour providers to encourage ethical and sustainable behaviour [34].
- 2. Kerala, a state in southern India: This state is well-known for its backwaters, beaches, and extensive cultural history. The state has adopted eco-friendly travel strategies, such as responsible houseboat travel in the backwaters, eco-friendly lodging, and the promotion of regional handicrafts and arts. The Green Carpet Initiative, which strives to make all tourism-related activities in the state eco-friendly and sustainable, has also been put into place by Kerala Tourism [35].
- 3. Rajasthan has developed ethical wildlife tourism practises: Rajasthan is a state in northwest India. Ecotourism projects that emphasise community involvement and conservation have been successfully implemented in Sariska Tiger Reserve and Ranthambore National Park. These programmes include tourist awareness campaigns, community-based tourism initiatives, and ethical safari practises [36].
- 4. Eco-sensitive tourism in the Western Ghats: The Western Ghats, an area of India that is home to a significant amount of biodiversity and is a UNESCO World Heritage site, have adopted eco-sensitive tourism practises. Sustainable tourism efforts have been launched by protected places like the Periyar Tiger Reserve and Silent Valley National Park in Kerala. These projects emphasise the preservation of the delicate ecosystems, the promotion of responsible tourists, and the involvement of local communities [37].

6. Recommendations

A thorough framework for assessing the environmental effects of green tourism must be created. Important factors including carbon emissions, water use, waste management, and biodiversity preservation should be included in this framework. Policymakers and stakeholders can learn more about the efficacy of green tourism practices in achieving environmental sustainability goals by methodically evaluating these elements. To fully comprehend the direct and indirect effects of green tourism on the environment, extensive research and data collection are also essential. Surveys, interviews, and literature analysis can all be used to this end. Such studies can highlight areas for development and offer useful information on the success of specific green tourism efforts. Additionally, the success of green tourism initiatives depends on cooperation between a variety of stakeholders, including governments, tourism operators, indigenous groups, and environmental organisations. Collective efforts can result in the creation and adoption of sustainable laws, regulations, and procedures that are advantageous to both the environment and the travel and tourism sector. Lastly, to guarantee the long-term effectiveness of green tourism, ongoing monitoring and evaluation are crucial. Environmental indicators and performance measurements should be regularly evaluated to help spot new trends, potential problems, and innovative opportunities.

7. Conclusion

This study employed a conceptual approach to assess the impact of green tourism on environmental sustainability. Through an examination of the available literature and theoretical frameworks, a number of

significant components and practices were studied to evaluate the environmental sustainability of green tourism initiatives. The findings demonstrated that green tourism can have significant beneficial effects on environmental sustainability since it promotes sustainable practices, utilises fewer resources, and supports local environments. The study highlighted the complex connections between green tourism and environmental sustainability in order to underscore the need for a thorough and integrated approach to evaluation. It stressed how important it is to consider political, social and economic factors in addition to environmental factors in order to conduct an in-depth analysis of sustainability. Additionally, case studies and best practices from various nations illustrated the many approaches and lessons learned in putting green tourism efforts into practice. This study advances our knowledge of how green tourism affects environmental sustainability and provides scholars, decision-makers, and tourism stakeholders with useful data. It highlights the importance of integrating sustainable practices into the tourism industry as well as the ongoing assessment, monitoring, and improvement needed to ensure the sustainability and positive environmental benefits of green tourism efforts. Implementing the strategies and recommendations outlined in this study would enable stakeholders to make educated decisions and strive towards a more sustainable and accountable tourist business.

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