

Chapter 1: Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the most important segments of the world economy. It is a major economic activity not only for developing countries but also for most developed countries. Tourism has assumed an unprecedented importance in recent years and therefore efforts have been made at the national and international levels to promote it at a faster rate. According to a World Tourism Organisation report, tourism has the unique capacity of generating trade and investment directly at the local level, as tourists and entrepreneurs seek new destinations. It can contribute significantly to rural development, agricultural transformation, community enrichment and social empowerment. But this must be balanced with the tremendous pressure on natural, cultural and socio-economic environments of popular places of tourist interest. Tourism has existed for thousands of years and may be as old as humanity itself. As long as people have been spending their leisure time travelling—to visit friends or perhaps to trade with neighbouring villages—people have been involved in the economic and social exchanges of tourism (Nash, 1989). Tourism has helped many developing economies to flourish, as in the cases of Hong Kong, Bali, and Singapore, among others. As for India in particular, tourism has proved to be successful in some areas of India rather than others, as tourism “affects locations and communities of great diversity, and is a highly variable and dynamic force in itself” (Forsyth, 1995, p.67).

Tourism is one of the world’s largest industries, generating an estimated 11% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employing 200 million people and transporting nearly 700 million international travellers per year. Developing countries currently have only a minority share of the international tourism market (approximately 30%) but this is growing. International tourism arrivals in developing countries have grown by an average of 9.5% per year since 1990, compared to 4.6% worldwide. India itself has witnessed for the third consecutive year, a positive growth in foreign tourist arrivals reaching a level of 3.92 million in 2005, which translates to a growth rate of 13.2%. The tourism industry has been making important contribution to

the economies of developing countries, particularly to foreign exchange earnings, employment, and GDP.

Tourism is considered an ideal industry for developing countries because it is a sort of export industry in which the country does not have to physically export resources. It is also seen as a major source of poverty alleviation in developing countries. The Overseas Development Institute World Bank review identifies three main pathways through which tourism affects poverty reduction:

First are tourism's direct effects, the wages and earnings of those who participate directly in the sector as workers or entrepreneurs. International evidence shows that tourism is more labour-intensive than other non-agricultural sectors. It also uses a relatively high proportion of unskilled or semi-skilled labour. For these reasons, in some countries, tourism is an important source of employment for poor people. Many examples of responsible tourism come from rural areas, where tourism may be the only formal sector employment option. As agrarian systems decline, tourism may also offer rural dwellers an alternative to unemployment or migration to urban areas. Tourism's employment impact can also be highly significant in urban and coastal areas with higher population densities.

Secondly, indirect effects occur through the tourism value chain. Tourism draws on inputs from the food and beverage, construction, transportation, furniture, and many other sectors. Evidence suggests that in developing countries, this inter-sectoral impact adds an extra 60-70% on top of the direct effects of tourism.

Finally, tourism has a wide range of dynamic effects. Tourism development can affect the livelihood strategies of local households, the business climate for small enterprise development, patterns of growth of the local or national economy, and the infrastructure or natural resource base of the destination. Tourism also tends to employ a relatively high proportion of women and to purchase products, such as foods and crafts, produced by women in the informal sector – and as a result, may be able to enhance women's economic positions and help overcome gender barriers. Finally, in certain locations, the tourism sector has a key role to play in planning for and responding to natural disasters, which often have particularly serious effects on poor communities. (Mitchell, et al. , 2007, p.2) (Jonathan and Caroline Ashley 2007 p.2).

It is the major source of foreign exchange in India (Pandey, 1981, p.218), which helps relieve the balance of payments deficit. Plus, tourism yields high tax revenues and aids international trade. When managed properly, tourism can create jobs and infrastructural connections, giving a jumpstart to development. The World Trade and Tourism Council says, “tourism can be treated as ‘economic catalysts’ for emerging economies” (Roy et al., 1992, p.21-22). Though India is well beyond the “emerging” stage of development, tourism can be a good industry for an economy that is under stress from deficits and unemployment. One part of becoming a “tourist town,” disappointingly, is that the local people are encouraged indirectly to change their culture to fit the role of a tourist area. It is the opinion of one of the editors of *Tourism in India* that “to develop a successful tourism industry and to enhance the growth of tourism, a country needs to develop a tourism culture. Peoples’ social customs and traditions may act as a hindrance to the growth of tourism in the country. Therefore, these customs and traditions need to be changed” (Roy et al., 1992, p.6).

In the Tenth Five Year Plan of India, the core sectors of priority were agriculture and infrastructure. Greater synergy among other economic and social sectors to promote coordinated implementation of development programs for the generation of employment opportunities was emphasized. The targeted poverty alleviation programs were to be given greater attention. The tenth plan set the target of reducing poverty from 40% to 15% over five years. Tourism has potential advantages for pro-poor growth as it is a diverse industry and has higher potential for linkage with other local enterprises because customers come to the destination. It is also relatively labour intensive and employs a high proportion of women, thus having great potential in poor countries and areas with few other competitive exports. Tourism is highly dependent upon natural (e.g. wildlife, scenery) and cultural capital which are assets that some of the poor have, even if they have no financial resources.

Tourism has become the most important civil industry in the world. Its contribution to the Global Gross Domestic Product is about 11% involving nearly 7% of workforce to make it the world’s largest creator of jobs. The total global capital investments (10.7%), worldwide consumer spending (10.9%), and world’s international trade in goods and services (6.8%) make tourism one of the three top categories of trade (WTTC 1995). The international tourist arrival has increased from

1980 onwards at an average rate of 4%. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) estimates that the domestic tourism far exceeds estimates of international tourist movements and expenditure, tenfold in terms of arrivals and seven times in expenditure levels (WTO 1991). Understanding its high multiplier effect, the governments around the world are taking more proactive roles to attract more tourists, recognizing tourism as a tool for economic diversification where traditional industries are failing and as a source of foreign exchange earnings and better employment opportunities.

As a distinct form of tourism differing from traditional nature tourism and adventure travel, ecotourism provides funds for preserving land and water resources and the biodiversity they support. It minimizes environmental impacts, incorporates ecologically sensitive architecture and land use design, and offers local people opportunities for compatible economic development. True ecotourism is a conservation strategy that goes beyond traditional forms of protected area management to secure a healthy future for a variety of natural and cultural assets. One of the basic tenets of ecotourism is to engage local communities so they benefit from conservation, economic development and education. While nearby inhabitants are those most directly affected by the establishment of parks and protected areas, they also stand to profit the most by their conservation through the promotion of ecotourism in these conservation areas. By bringing residents into the business of ecotourism, not only can local people meet their economic needs, but they also can maintain and enhance the “sense of place” that is critical for guaranteeing long-term conservation. Helping communities develop ecotourism businesses is a strong way to develop rural communities as they are often rich with local knowledge and a strong appreciation of their natural and cultural heritage.

Tourism is an industry that currently affects the society and livelihoods of many of the world’s poor, both positively and negatively. Impacts vary between poor people, destinations, and types of tourism. A reduction in world poverty is also an internationally agreed priority and targets have been set to halve poverty by the year 2015. Achieving poverty reduction requires actions on a variety of complementary fronts and scales, but a prerequisite of significant progress is pro-poor growth - growth

which benefits the poor. Tourism is not very different from other productive sectors, but it has potential advantages for pro-poor growth because:

1. It is a diverse industry. This increases the scope for wide participation, including the participation of the informal sector.
2. It has higher potential for linkage with other local enterprises because customers come to the destination;
3. It is relatively labour intensive and employs a high proportion of women;
4. It has potential in poor countries and areas with few other competitive exports;
5. Tourism is highly dependent upon natural capital (e.g. wildlife, scenery) and cultural capital. These are assets that some of the poor have, even if they have no financial resources.
6. Tourism products can be built on natural resources and culture which are assets that some of the poor have.

Many disadvantages of tourism such as leakage and volatility of revenue are common to other economic sectors. But tourism may involve greater trade-offs with local livelihoods through more competition for natural resources. The challenge is to enhance the many positive impacts it can have (Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim, (Sikkim Home stay, 2016).



Figure 1: Map of Sikkim

Reference: <http://maps.newkerala.com/Sikkim-Travel-Map.jpg>

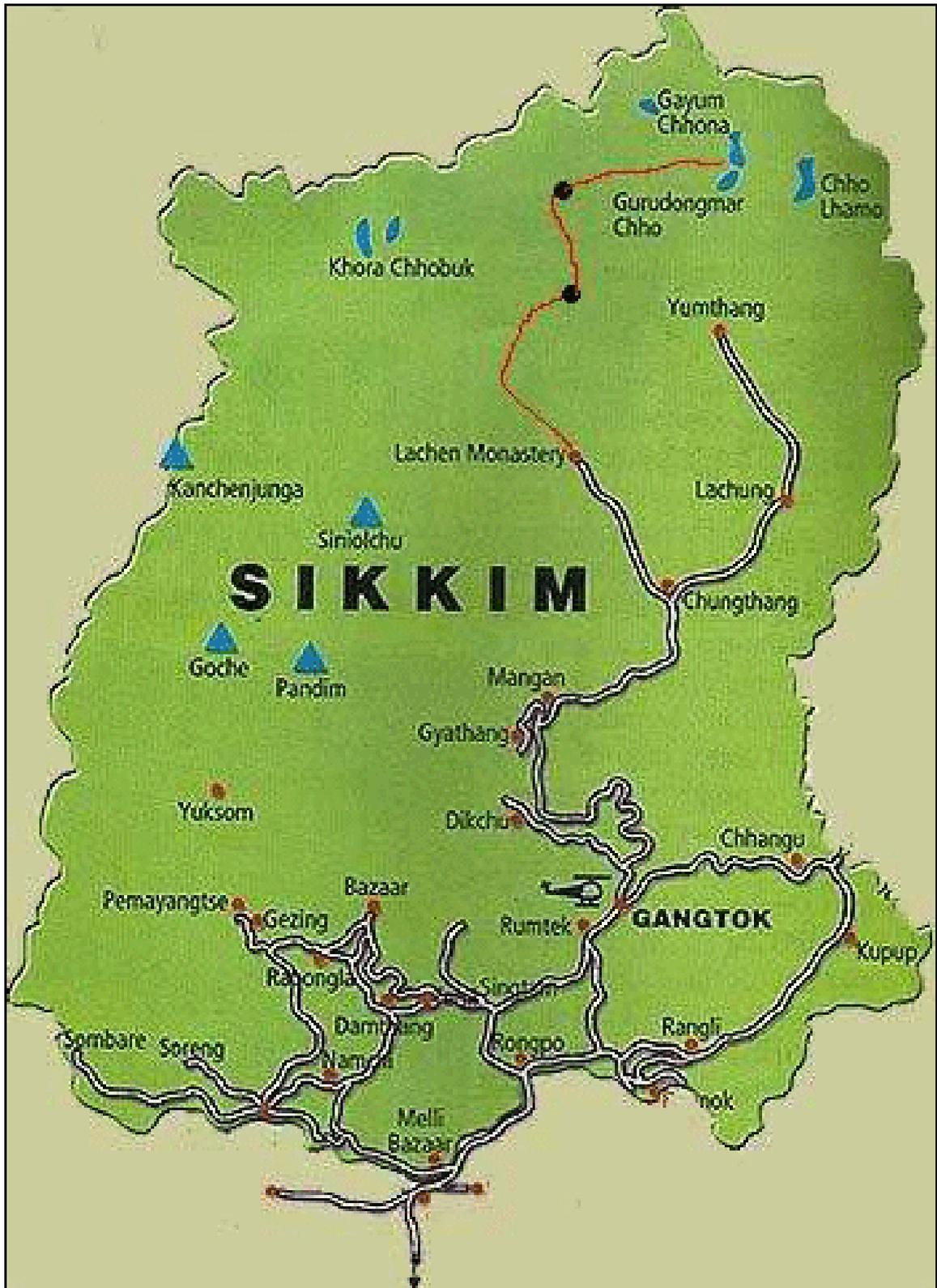


Figure 2: Map of Sikkim Source: http://www.ecoholidays.co.in/skm_map.htm



Figure 3: Map of Gangtok

Source: <http://chittizniwas.com/maps.html>

1.1. The Concept of Ecotourism

Ecotourism has a growing niche market within the larger travel industry with the potential of being an important sustainable development tool. Ecotourism is the symbiotic relationship between tourism and environment which benefits the socio-economic condition of local inhabitants and at the same time promotes tourism and protects the environment. By harbouring environmental awareness both among the local people and visitors and by linking tourism to social and economic development, it is potentially possible to conserve the natural and cultural heritage of an area, and to improve the living standards of host region inhabitants. Tourism supposedly the world's biggest industry is another global focal point. The result is ecotourism which is increasingly introduced in Third World Countries in form of a development package, involving capital, expertise technology and management systems, and is thus becoming something like a new green revolution. However these recent trends in tourism development schemes –projected as sustainable, nature-based, soft and green has generated considerable public debate and concern due to their potential serious implications on nature and society, particularly in southern countries. There are well-founded concerns that ecotourism lacks adequate scientific foundations, and is therefore not well-equipped to arrive at sustainable and practicable solutions to the global social and environmental crises. The World Bank for example has funded a growing number of biodiversity programmes including an ecotourism component, although there is little evidence that it has the in-house expertise and means to develop a concrete policy in that field (Wells and Brandon 1992; UNEP/UNDP/The World Bank 1993). Many of the claims concerning the benefits of ecotourism have been exaggerated, or owe more to labelling and marketing, as such projects are often planned and carried out without local support, and indeed threaten rather than benefit local peoples cultures, their subsistence economies and life sustaining natural resource base. It is because of this that critics regard ecotourism more as an 'eco-façade' and as a tactic to conceal the consumptive and exploitative practices of the mainstream tourism industry – by greening it (Fernandes 1994, Munt 1994, Pholpoke 1994, Pleumarom 1994, Tujan 1995).

Ecotourism has been defined as a form of nature-based tourism in the marketplace, but it has also been formulated and studied as a sustainable development

tool by NGOs, development experts and academics since 1990. The term ecotourism, therefore, refers on one hand to a concept under a set of principles, and on the other hand to specific market segment. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) in 1991 produced one of the earliest definitions: “Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people.” IUCN (now called the World Conservation Union) stated in 1996 that “ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations.” In other words, ecotourism is the symbiotic relationship between tourism and environment which benefits the socio-economic condition of local inhabitants and at the same time promotes tourism and protects the environment. By harbouring environmental awareness both among local people and visitors, and by linking tourism to social and economic development, it is potentially possible to conserve the natural and cultural heritage of an area, and to improve the living standards of host region inhabitants. Ecotourism, if developed responsibly and managed properly, can become a powerful instrument/strategy for the biodiversity conservation. It is a form of tourism that promotes positive tourism-environment linkages, and at the same time, the host regions can take pride in what they have to offer for their people and the tourists.

With billions of dollars in annual sales, ecotourism is a real industry that seeks to take advantage of market trends. At the same time, it frequently operates quite differently than other segments of the tourism industry, because ecotourism is defined by its sustainable development results: conserving natural areas, educating visitors about sustainability, and benefiting local people. Ecotourism is a small but rapidly growing industry working within a niche market that is governed by market forces and regulations. Ecotourism is primarily advertised as being equivalent to nature tourism in the market place. Some countries, companies and destinations have social and environmental policies and programs, which others do not. This has led to confusion worldwide about the meaning of the tourism as it is applied in the marketplace. In ecotourism the prime motivation is the observation and appreciation of natural features

and related cultural assets, whereas in adventure tourism it is rather the physical exercise and challenging situations in natural environments. The concept of ecotourism has been defined differently by the various national and international agencies. Conceptually, ecotourism encapsulates a type of "tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery, wild plants and animals, as well as the existing cultural aspects, found in those areas. Ecological tourism implies a scientific, aesthetic philosophical approach, although the ecological tourists are not required to be a professional scientist, artist or philosopher.

Other scholars have used the term 'nature tourism' (Ceballos-Lascurain 1987) which is not necessarily ecologically sound; while Cohen (1984) raised the issue of neglect of development in and around protected areas. The definition of ecotourism has changed considerably from a descriptive concept in which there is no difference between nature-tourism and ecotourism to today's usage: that is, the 'desired state' of development in reaching a balance between 'nature conservation', 'sustainable socio-economic development', and 'nature tourism' (Boo 1992b; Ziffer 1989). Most have emphasised the management of tourism and conservation of nature so as to maintain a balance between tourism and ecology on the one hand, and the requirements of local communities in terms of generating employment, enhancing their earning skill, and improving the status of women.

The UN International Year of Ecotourism during 2002 reviewed ecotourism experiences worldwide, highlighting three significant aspects: 1) nature, 2) tourism, and 3) local communities. Most of the studies relating to tourism emphasise the economic dimensions at international and national levels (Gray 1970; EIU 1973; Thuens 1976; Mathieson and Wall 1982), while very few have investigated local levels (Henderson 1975; Vaughan 1977; Singh 1981; Dube 1985; Chopra 1991; Srivastava 1992 and Singh 1992; further elaborated below). Likewise, there have been proposals to link cultural and ecotourism into a more sustainable perspective which is able to acknowledge the natural environment, built environment, icons, and attractions of destinations as part of the cultural package' (Greathouse Amador 1997).

1.2. Potential of Ecotourism to foster local-level economic development

Ceballos-Lascurain (1996:46-48) estimated the potential number of ecotourists globally at between 157 to 236 million, capable of generating expenditures of up to US\$1.2 trillion, while Honey (1999) calculated it at US\$30 billion per year. In view of these estimations, it is understandable that the United Nations should have declared 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism. Ecotourism and ecotourists are clearly significant to the tourism economy and the environment. In contrast to conventional tourists (Gossling 1999:309; Koch 1997:218) eco-tourists stay in facilities that are likely to be owned and managed by local people rather than multinational corporations, and often eat local food and consume local services (West and Carrier, 2004, 483-498). Honey (2003) thus defines ecotourism as aimed to protect and benefit conservation; benefit, respect and help empower local communities; and educate as well as entertain tourists.

Different studies have highlighted various aspects of ecotourism. Some have focused on the industry aspects, such as the nature and quality of provision and environmental attraction that ecotourists expect (e.g. Khan 2003, Rudd Tupper 2002), while few have studied the relationship between ecotourism and the local people's conventional livelihoods and forms of social organisations (e.g. Akram, Lant, and Burnett 1996; Belsky 1999; Medina 2003) and others have analysed the motivation of the eco-tourists (e.g. Duffy 2002; Munt 1994). Only over the last decade have serious efforts been made to establish strategies that link ecotourism and cultural tourism into sustainable 'pro-poor' tourism approaches (Poyya 2003).

A review of the Indian case reveals that tourism has helped in maximising economic benefits rather than ensuring social benefits. Ecotourism as a concept centres on the nature of the tourism and with regard to local communities emphasises conservation, sustainability and biological diversities. In the Indian context all the Five Year Plans have built up infrastructure, including tourist circuits and centres, diversified tourism from the traditional sight-seeing tour, to non-traditional areas such as trekking, winter sports, beach resorts; restored and balanced development of national heritage of cultural, historical and tourist importance.

International tourism in India increased during the decade of 1981 to 1990 and generated foreign exchange and employment, both direct and indirect (Mary and Chung, 1996). However, the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1984), the crash of Airbus (1990), the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (1991), the brutal killing of Graham Stains and his two children (1999), caste conflicts, the occurrence of Kargil war with Pakistan (1999), reoccurrence of terrorism, communal riots, etc. have affected the growth of tourism in India. However this is offset by networks of 572 nature-endowed areas, 89 national parks, and 483 wildlife sanctuaries and 3,606 protected monuments under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains regulations that mobilise tourists from within and outside of the nation.

1.3. Conceptual Framework

In every society, some people have a greater share of valued resources - money, property, education, health and power – than others. These social resources can be divided into three forms of capital – economic capital in the form of material assets and income; cultural capital such as educational qualification and status; and social capital in the form of networks of contacts and social association (Bourdieu 1986). The diachronic approach is concerned with broadly separated time phases in a society. It is this approach which helps the study of social change, namely the change in social structure (Radcliffe–Brown 1957). However the recent trends in tourism development schemes – projected as sustainable, nature based, soft, green and ecotourism ventures have generated considerable public debate and concern due to their potential serious implications on nature and society, particularly in developing countries.

At a social level, balanced tourism favours contacts between holiday makers and local population. As a result, encouragement of cultural exchanges and ethnic relations take place between two countries (Chettri 2007). If planned in this way tourism undoubtedly provides positive socio-cultural advantages (Bisht 1994). Tourism can play a key role in the development of the remote mountain areas. Development of tourism activities may help in the diversification of the mountain economy, and provide viable alternative livelihood opportunities for the mountain people. In view of

limited industrial growth in Sikkim, tourism can become a potential source of income generation in the remote hilly regions and generate employment opportunities to the local community. Over recent years this area has experienced significant changes as a result of tourism growth. Since 1990, there has been a tremendous growth in visitation number (Rai & Sundriyal 1997).

Over the last three decades, there has been growing debate on the magnitude of tourism in developing countries, and its impacts and implications in the host regions are enormous. Due to tremendous growth and its adverse consequences in the host region, the concept of tourism has now changed from mass tourism to ecotourism/responsible tourism/nature oriented tourism. The concept is now gaining overwhelming response (Rai, Lepcha, and Sharma 1998). Ecotourism is an exciting new venture, which combines the pleasure of discovering spectacular flora and fauna, and understanding their values with an opportunity to contribute to their protection. By harbouring environmental, both among local people and visitors, and by linking tourism to social and economic development, it is possible to conserve the natural and cultural heritage of an area, and to improve the living standards of host region inhabitants. Ecotourism is the largest growing sector with an estimated annual growth rate of 10-15%. Amongst all international visitors (528 million), nature tourists comprise 40-60% (211-317 million, contributing an international direct economic impact of US\$ 166-250 billion), and that of 20-40% are wildlife related tourists (106-211 million, contributing an international direct economic impact of US\$ 83-166 billion, according to TES 1995). It is an alternative form of tourism that promotes positive tourism-environment linkages, and at the same time, the host regions can take pride in what they have to offer for their people and the tourists.

For a number of developing countries, their natural environments continue to be a source of significant economic benefits, attracting international and domestic visitors often in search of an authentic natural and, to a lesser degree, cultural experience. Tourism associated with natural and protected areas has been and continues to be a growing sector in the global tourism industry (Whelan 1991; Brandson 1996). Of the estimated \$55 billion in tourism receipts in the Third World, a significant portion of this in the early 1990s was the result of nature tourism activities (Whelan 1991). Although not always concerned with protected areas, it is estimated

that annual global expenditure on adventure-related travel amounts to \$110 billion (Adventure Travel Society 1998). Conservative estimates of the growth in demand for nature-related tourism range from 10 to 15 per cent while more optimistic forecasts go up to 30 per cent (Brandon 1996), the variation due primarily to differences in the definition of the types of tourism included. Although difficult to generalize, for many developing countries, their natural heritage is a primary attraction for international visitors and the increasing number of domestic tourists.

The number of tourists visiting the Himalayan region is growing very fast during the recent years. The data on tourists' flow in the Himalayan region is not properly recorded and maintained; though its implications and contribution in mountain economy are quite significant. The share of domestic tourism in the economy of the region is overwhelming. The western, central, and eastern Himalayan regions host about 96% domestic tourists of the total visitors' flow (AME 1995a, 1995b; Rai and Sundriyal 1997). The concept of domestic tourism is not properly accounted. The magnitude of tourist flow may testify to the increasing economic importance of tourism. The sector contributed about Rs 200 to 250 crores annually to the state economy (AME 1995a, 1995b; Rai and Sundriyal, 1997). Of late ecotourism has emerged as an important activity in the Himalayan region which includes trekking, mountaineering river rafting and other nature oriented activities and attracts both domestic and foreign tourists.

Sikkim Himalaya is a site of high biodiversity value, and one that is facing growing threats from a variety of sources including commercial logging, farming practices and tourism. As concern grows over the loss of both natural and cultural heritage in this region, attention is turning to strategies, which seek to link conservation with tourism development and generate incentives to conserve the resources on which economic benefits depend. Sikkim is growing in popularity, and likely to attract increasing number of tourists in the visiting area's cultural sites and protected areas of high biodiversity value. The economic significance of tourism industry is multifarious. Tourism development has a great deal of appeal for its role in the economic development of remote mountain regions and its impact on local society, economy, and the environment.

The tourist arrivals in Sikkim have increased by 176% between 1990 and 2003. No doubt, tourism has contributed to a fast rise in State Domestic Product (SDP) and employment in Sikkim. However, the benefits have not reached most of the poor who continue to lag behind due to lack of opportunities and unsupportive tourism legislations/regulations. The present pattern of tourism in Sikkim is Gangtok-centric and holiday motivated. There is also an imbalance in the distribution of income between rural and urban areas necessitating an imperative need for more integration of tourism in the rural economy.

The problems facing the region call for the promotion of activities that are based on the region's comparative advantage, which help in the diversification of the mountain economy, provide alternative livelihood opportunities for the local people and at the same time actively promote environmental care so that the twin issues of economic development and environmental degradation can be simultaneously addressed. Tourism in the mountains has the potential of addressing all these concerns and providing alternative and environment friendly income and employment opportunities across the region.

As concern grows over the loss of natural heritage in the area, it appears that this is the ideal time to facilitate ecologically and socially responsible tourism at key destinations to conserve the biological diversity of the area. Therefore, the present study has been undertaken to provide empirical evidence on the environmental, economic and social impacts of ecotourism in Sikkim.

1.4. Significance of the Study

In Sikkim, tourism has been the main occupation other than agriculture for more than a decade now. It is the main occupation of the educated younger generation some of who have been trained in various aspects of the hospitality industry. While general hill tourism used to be the main form of tourism in the 1990s and 2000s, ecotourism and village tourism is now assuming importance with many tourists now preferring this form of tourism rather than staying in cities and bigger towns. Ecotourism being eco-friendly, villager-friendly and rural self-employment generating, the State Government has been promoting it by providing assistance and incentives both directly to rural people. This study will not only assess the impact of

this thrust of the Government in popular eco-tourist areas and evaluate the possibility of ecotourism being adopted by rural people as a means of permanent employment but also examine the impact of ecotourism on the natural and social environment in Sikkim. This is intended to provide inputs for policy formulation or modification. The study will also point out shortcomings in the conduct of ecotourism at the selected research sites and areas where there is a scope for improvement to make ecotourism more attractive especially for foreigners.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

The increasing economic importance of tourism has captured the attention of most countries. However, the global growth of tourism poses a significant threat to cultural and biological diversity. Ecotourism in Sikkim, which has a forest cover of more than 46% of the geographical area with its exquisite flora and fauna apart from scenic values of its landscapes, must therefore impact on the village economy, as villagers provide the support mechanisms for ecotourism. It must also have impact on the indigenous social elements in so much as there will be a socio-cultural invasion and therefore infusion of an alien culture into the local settings. In this context the present study has the following objectives:

1. To understand the importance of ecotourism as an alternative livelihood in rural Sikkim.
2. To gauge the impact of ecotourism on village economy.
3. To measure the extent of the impact of ecotourism on village society.
4. To understand the role of ecotourism in the conservation of environment.

1.6. Research Questions

1. Is the impact more or less on different ethnic groups or is it evenly spread across all sections of the village community?
2. Is ecotourism a sustainable venture for the village and if so, what are the conditions that need to be sustained for ecotourism to sustain itself?
3. Has there been a cultural invasion as a result of the ecotourism?

4. If so, is the Govt./PRI/CBO/local society/Non-government agency doing anything to preserve the indigenous culture?

1.7. Research Hypothesis

Mass tourism may have an adverse effect on social behaviour, attitudes, and religious sentiments, traditional as well as on the economy. Among some of the adverse impacts of tourism in Sikkim there is evidence of changes in socio-cultural outlook. However, the employment generated through tourism, especially ecotourism, has resulted in providing means of sustenance to those who are living near the forested areas and are no longer dependent on the sale (illegal or legal) of forest products. This has led to biodiversity conservation which in turn provided pleasant landscapes for ecotourism.

1.8. Methodology

The present study was conducted in the four villages of Sikkim state. The four villages were selected based on their popularity as tourism spots as indicated by Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation in their information on their website. The sample for the study was selected randomly from the four villages. The primary data was collected from the respondents using questionnaire survey. Group discussions were also conducted to collect the primary data about the socio economic condition of the people. Apart from these methods, in depth case studies were also conducted as a supplement to find out the condition of the people living in these villages who are involved in the ecotourism activities. The secondary data for the present study was collected from books, journals, government reports and internet sources. The collected primary data was coded and turned into tables using the SPSS programme. The table generated from the primary data was analysed using the deductive reasoning technique. The findings are represented in the forms of table analysis along with column, line, bar graphs and pie charts.

1.9. Research Methodology

A descriptive research methodology was used for this study. A survey was administered to a selected sample from a specific population. The term 'survey' is commonly applied to a research methodology designed to collect data from a specific population, or a sample from that population, and typically utilizes a questionnaire or

an interview as the survey instrument. Surveys are used to obtain data from individuals about themselves, their households, or about larger social institutions (e.g. school boards). Sample surveys are an important tool for collecting and analysing information from selected individuals. They are widely accepted as a key tool for conducting and applying basic social science research methodology (Rossi, Wright, and Anderson, 1983). Such sample surveys comprise of standardized methodologies designed to gather information by examining systematically identified population samples. Social scientists rarely draw conclusions without disaggregating the sample population into various sub-groups. According to Leary (1995), there are distinct advantages in using a questionnaire vs. an interview methodology: questionnaires are less expensive and easier to administer than personal interviews; they lend themselves to group administration; and, they allow confidentiality to be assured.

1.10. Data collection methods

Choice of data collection methods depends on the degree of accuracy needed, expertise of the researcher, time span, costs and facilities available to the researcher (Sekaran, 2003). Methods of data collection include questionnaires, or interviews. Questionnaires are personally administered,. Interviews can be face-to-face, by telephone, computer assisted or through electronic media. Interviews, questionnaires and observations are the most commonly used data collection methods in survey research. Although interviews are more flexible in terms of adapting the questions as the researcher proceeds, questionnaires save time, energy and costs. Modern technology is playing an important role in data collection as both questionnaires and interviews can now be done electronically.

1.11. Questionnaire Survey

Questionnaire surveys are the best methods for obtaining secondary data efficiently and accurately within a short period of time. It is also less expensive than qualitative methods. Questionnaire makes it possible to contact many people who could not otherwise be reached. It can cover a large group at the same time. Goode and Hatt say that when the researcher has to cover the group of respondents who are widely scattered, they can use the questionnaire in order to minimize the cost. Replies may be received very quickly in questionnaire method. In this case there is no need to visit the respondent personally or continue the study over a long period. Questionnaire is

comparatively an easier method to plan, construct and administer. It does not require much technical skill or knowledge. Questionnaire has some unique merits as regards validity of information. In methods like interview and observation, the reliability of responses depends on the way the investigator has recorded them. Here they may present biased or prejudiced information of their own. But in questionnaire method, the responses given by the subjects are available in their own language and version. Therefore, it cannot be wrongly interpreted by the researcher.

1.12. Interviews

Quantitative research utilises structured or standardised forms of interviews. That means each respondent receives exactly the same questions in identical format. This makes it easy to aggregate answers for processing, and reduces error due to interviewer variability (Sekaran, 2003). Structured interviews are conducted when it is known from the beginning what information is needed. The researcher has a list of predetermined questions that everybody will be asked in the same manner. The information is then tabulated and analysed (Mason, 2002). Interviews, according to Sekaran (2003) may be conducted either face to face or by telephone. Telephone interviews are conducted when the respondents are spread over a large geographical area, the information is needed quickly and the duration of each interview is very short such as marker surveys. Face to face interviews have the advantage that the researcher can adapt the questions as necessary, clarify doubts and ensure that questions are clearly understood. It is also possible to pick up non-verbal cues, which are not possible to pick up on the telephone. Face to face interviews have a geographical limitation and may require vast resources. There may also be interviewer bias in interpretation of responses, and the respondents may feel uneasy about anonymity when they meet the researcher face to face. It is therefore important to establish a level of trust with interviewees in order to get accurate and honest information.

The qualitative interview: Qualitative interviewing is used to refer to in-depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing (Mason, 2002). This kind of interview is flexible since the order and wording of questions varies. New questions can follow up replies with the respondent free to answer in any way. The result is richer more detailed answers from the perspective of the interviewee. It can also be done more

than once (Bryman, 2004). According to Mason (2002), the qualitative interview is an interactional exchange of dialogue done in a relatively informal style with a narrative approach, and operates from the perspective that knowledge is situated and contextual. Qualitative interviews are done without a planned sequence of questions, the main objective being to determine which variables need further in depth investigation. Broad open-ended questions are used, while the type and nature of questions vary according to the respondent. Based on the answers, other relevant questions may issue from a respondent's answer, resulting in a better understanding. This is what Hollway and Jefferson (2000) refer to as free association, "...a kind of narrative that is not structured according to conscious logic but according to unconscious logic, that is associations follow pathways defined by emotional motivations" (pp. 37). By eliciting a narrative structured according to the principles of free association, we secure access to a person's concerns, which would otherwise not be visible. Interviews have certain disadvantages. The respondents can be biased if they do not want to express their true opinions, or when they do not understand the questions. They may also dislike the interviewer and if a rapport is not established they may be unwilling to express themselves. It is therefore important to establish a level of trust with interviewees in order to get accurate and honest information (Sekaran, 2003). Semi-structured interviewing is appropriate if bias can be controlled, and if a stimulus- response model is used, any variations in responses should be a true measure rather than a product of method (Mason 2002).

1.13. Universe of the study

The universe of the study is Sikkim, a small eastern Himalayan State. This State has abundant natural resources and offers excellent ecotourism prospects on account of its rich biodiversity and extensive forest cover apart from verdant alpine meadows and crystal-clear glacial lakes. The State has four districts and a population of around Rs.6.25 lakhs of multi-ethnic communities whose main occupation is farming but of late tourism has picked up. The State has one national park and seven wildlife sanctuaries. Khangchendzonga National Park is set to be nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Besides this, in line with the environment friendly development model adopted by the State Government, it has been declared a 100% organic farming State. The research sites were selected from West, East and South districts of the State to provide a comparison of locational advantages and disadvantages of ecotourism. The

sites selected for case study are Darap and Yuksom in West district, Aritar in East district, and Kewzing in South district. The sites were selected so as to cover a range of new to well-established ecotourism villages. Darap is a relatively new location and Aritar, Kewzing and Yuksom in that order are progressively older locations.

1.14. Sample Survey

A descriptive cross sectional Research Design was used for the study comprising of questionnaire schedules and group discussions with the different ecotourism providers at the study sites. As the population consists of numerous and scattered small units, normally no up-to-date lists exist which can be used as the sampling frame. Consequently, a multistage, area-based design is required, just as in typical household surveys (Verma 1992). The sample design considerations for informal sector survey comprise sample size, stratification, selection of area units and listing.

Survey with question schedules was conducted with ecotourism service providers (like guides, animal operators, trek cook and porters), hotel and lodge operators and tea shopkeepers. Semi structured informal interviews were also used to obtain appropriate information. Apart from the above, the methodology was based on the final destination level Criteria and Indicators (C&I). Informal interactions were conducted with the 'home stay' representatives and the village youth. Transect walks were conducted at the ecotourism sites for gauging the level of impact of ecotourism in these areas.

Criteria and indicators were developed in order to construct an appropriate questionnaire to find answers to the research questions e.g. for the criterion "economic improvement", the indicator "increase in annual income" was developed. Questions in the schedule relating to these C&I had helped to answer the questions relating to impact of ecotourism on economic condition of ecotourism providers in villages of Sikkim. For developing C&I, participants from different parts of Sikkim representing community based NGOs working in the field of ecotourism development and conservation, students, forest department personnel, JFM and EDC members and local community members from the nearby villages were interviewed.

In order to determine the impacts of ecotourism on the village communities and to determine whether it was a viable and sustainable activity in the village a questionnaire was prepared (sample at Annexure). The questionnaire was so designed as to elicit information on the economic benefits of nature-based tourism in the selected tourist spots when compared to normal agricultural or other rural-based activities. The questions were related mainly to usual occupation of stakeholders and type of ecotourism activity conducted, average income from ecotourism and other activities, quality of life being led by stakeholders before and after conducting ecotourism and relevant socioeconomic statistics. The data were analysed using regression techniques to obtain results relevant to the objectives of the research.

The present study has its limitations in the sense that the findings from this case study may not be applicable in other parts of the globe as the socio-cultural situation in the state of Sikkim of India is rather unique to the region and may find its replicability within India or in other part of the world a non-feasible proposition. Despite its limitations the study has provided some useful insights about community opinions towards ecotourism. There is need to develop an applied tool to measure threshold of tourism impacts and change in socio-economic and environmental status of the site through Criteria and Indicator (C&I) under the framework of sustainability.

1.15. Chapterization

- *Chapter 1 - Introduction: Design of The Thesis*
- *Chapter 2 - Review of Literature*
- *Chapter 3 - Ecotourism in Sikkim: Initiation, Growth and Marketing of Ecotourism In Sikkim*
- *Chapter 4 - Case Study: Ecotourism in Select Villages*
- *Chapter 5 - Socio-Economic Characteristics: Indicators of Economic Development*
- *Chapter 6 - Impact of Ecotourism: Impact on Village Economy and Society.*
- *Chapter 7 - Summary And Conclusions: Suggestion of Future Management of Tourism*

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