

ABSTRACT

The present study seeks to address the understanding of community-based ecotourism projects in Sikkim associated with how community-based ecotourism has been able to promote sustainable tourism and at the same time understand what has been the nature of interlinkages between the state, NGOs, and the local community in the promotion of sustainable ecotourism in the region under focus. The study also seeks to look into the degree of freedom given to the communities in planning and managing ecotourism in the context of hegemonic state-market relations in the area under focus.

The present study focused on the Ecotourism Policy and the nature of the linkage between the government of Sikkim, the local NGOs, and the local community of the Ecotourism destination. We would probe the successes as well as the weaknesses of the projects and in the process address the question of how to promote and sustain community-based ecotourism. A major success has been the emergence of a community-based Non-Government Organization. NGOs have a potentially valuable role in supporting and building the capacity of local communities to participate in ecotourism programs, especially in defining the zoning and designing interpretation materials and facilities. Many NGOs have been participating in the tourism industry based on their different aims, but their major involvement has occurred within the area where tourism is linked with the local Community and environment; "community-based ecotourism". Field trips were undertaken to study the ET projects in Sikkim. No study has focused on the conditions of the operation as well as the outcome of these projects.

The present study seeks to examine Sikkim's Ecotourism Policy establishing the state as an ultimate and unique ecotourism destination offering memorable and high-quality learning experiences to visitors while contributing towards poverty alleviation and promotion of nature conservation. In Sikkim, though ecotourism projects are in operation, studies have focused on community participation and promoting conservation and sustainable development