

The Impact of Social Media on Sustainable Development of Ecotourism in Odisha

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Abstract: Sustainable tourism development is attracting more and more attention since it can help the economy grow, protect the environment, and improve people's lives. Policies and innovations that promote eco-tourism are seen as important for long-term tourist growth. Social media is also very important for supporting sustainable tourism because it makes it easier for stakeholders to get involved, share knowledge, and come up with new ideas. This research looks at how eco-friendly product and process innovations, eco-friendly organizational innovations, eco-friendly tourist laws, and social media all affect the long-term growth of tourism in Odisha, India. Odisha is becoming a serious player in the ecotourism market thanks to its many natural resources and strong branding efforts. Questionnaires were used to collect data from a small group of people as part of a quantitative research method. Then, different methods of data analysis were used to find connections between factors and check the study theories. The results show that eco-product innovation, eco-process innovation, eco-organizational innovation, eco-tourism laws, and social media are all linked to long-term growth in tourism in Odisha.

It has been found that social media platforms are very helpful for tourism businesses to connect with stakeholders, get useful information, and share ideas. The study comes to the conclusion that eco-innovation and eco-tourism laws can help Odisha's tourist industry grow in a way that is good for the environment. Social media can also be a strong way to get stakeholders involved, share information, and come up with new ideas. By using eco-innovation and eco-tourism policies, policymakers can use the research's findings to make effective policies that encourage sustainable tourism growth. This will ensure that the tourism industry in Odisha continues to be successful.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism Development, Eco-Innovation, Eco-Tourism Policies, Social Media, Odisha.

Introduction

The development of social media has changed the way people communicate around the world by making it easier for people to see, talk to, and share information with each other. As a new tool, social media has changed how the tourism industry works, which in turn has had a big impact on the long-term success of the tourist business. Many foreign groups, such as the World Wildlife Fund, The foreign Ecotourism Society, and the Eco-Tourism Society of India, In addition to organizing workshops and making out yearly reports, the Rainforest Alliance, Sustainable Travel International, and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council continually strive to market and raise knowledge of sustainable tourism on social media sites. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google++, and Pinterest let travel

providers remain in touch with other important people (Stanciu and Costea, 2012).

Tourists move from where they live to other places and countries to enjoy local foods and treats, entertainment, shopping, recreation, education, business, spirituality, health, and even to see family and friends. Tourism is a cultural, social, and economic activity. It includes getting to the chosen location and a place to stay. There are a lot of different types of tourism, like medical tourism, sports tourism, cultural tourism, country tourism, spiritual tourism, tea tourism, wine tourism, and so on. Also, sustainable travel has become more popular as globalization has spread quickly. Sustainable tourism is when people keep things changing in a way that keeps the environment fair. This means that resources, investments, technology progress, and changes in institutions all work together to meet the wants and goals of people now

and in the future. UNESCO named 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. With this statement at the 70th UN General Assembly, the tourist industry was meant to be known for its role in promoting sustainability in three areas: the economic, social, and environmental. Sustainable tourism supports keeping the environment in balance over the long term, supporting native cultures, and using tourism to create jobs for people in villages and towns. As an example, guests get a great place to relax and enjoy the beautiful scenery and food that is grown naturally on nearby fields. Tourists learn about ecology and see how it can be done. It is important to know that India's travel and tourism business is the seventh biggest in the world and makes up 9.6% of the country's GDP. It's expected to grow by 6.9% a year for the next 10 years, making it the fourth biggest in the world. This is likely to boost India's economic and social growth by building up its facilities, creating jobs, and improving people's skills. Tourism in India that is good for the environment includes village homestays, silk tourism, native tourism, and wildlife ecotourism (Heather Carrerio, 2018). This study intends to find out what part social media sites play in encouraging eco-friendly tourism in the states of Odisha. The study also talks about ecological travel and goods connected to the places listed above that should be driven on social media. The study will provide the government, the people who live in the area, and sustainable tourism providers the knowledge they need to plan their media and come up with good marketing strategies.

Definition

Ecotourism is now defined as a group of low-impact tourism activities that focus on nature and help the local community directly. Based on our study, we know that the current idea of developing ecotourism has gone through several steps, which are shown below:



Fig.No.1.1 Various stages of eco-tourism

Elements:

One major objective of ecotourism is to protect the natural features of a place by making sure that it grows in a way that doesn't harm them. As a rule of thumb for ecotourism, the three parts of sustainable growth should be followed:

Economy: giving people in the community ways to make a living.

Social: without changing their social and cultural weave.

Environment: by making the best use of resources.



Fig.No.1.2 Element of sustainable development eco-tourism

Visitation:

Bain & Co.'s "How India Travels, 2023" study shows that modern travelers are interested in exploring less-visited places rather than the ones that have already been visited many times.. In addition, a new group of Indian travelers called "experiential travelers" is better for the economy because they interact more with the locals at these locations.

Table1.1Bain & Company Research on "How India Travels, 2023

Trend	Key Findings	Opportunities
Rising disposable incomes and growing middle class	Number of Indian travellers exceeded 1.2 billion in 2022	Expand reach of tourism to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities
Discerning travellers seeking unique and authentic experiences	Travellers are increasingly interested in sustainable travel	Develop and promote sustainable tourism products and services

Digital technology playing a major role	Travellers are using online platforms to research, book, and plan their trips	Invest in digital infrastructure and marketing to reach travellers more effectively
Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities emerging as new travel hubs	Travellers from these cities are increasingly venturing out to explore other parts of India and the world	Create a more seamless and user-friendly travel experience

Table 1.2: States known for effective ecotourism policies

Sl No	Regions-India	States	Domestic Tourists 2019- Lakh	International Tourists 2019- Lakh	Forest Cover	Total Area Sq. Km.
1	North	Himachal Pradesh	168	3.8	27%	44,212
2	West	Goa	71	9.4	80%	3,702
3	South	Kerala	184	11.9	54%	38,852
4	Central	Madhya Pradesh	887	3.3	25%	308,252
5	Northeast	Sikkim	14	1.3	47%	7,006
6	East	Odisha	153	1.2	33%	155,707

Source: National Tourism Statistics 2019, State of Forest Report 2019

Ecotourism in Odisha :



Figure 1.3: Eco tour Nature Camps in Odisha

The ecotourism offerings and products are studied by reviewing existing policy and regulations, evaluating key initiatives and interventions, analysing key trends in ecotourism and identifying major challenges.

Literature Review:

Sustainable Development and Ecotourism:

A large number of nature based activities comes under the spectrum of Ecotourism which are economically, ecologically and socially sustainable. Tourist visits these destinations to get diverse kind of experience and to know the natural and cultural

riches of that particular area. The definition of sustainable development has been defined as follows by David A. Fennell (2020): It is a method of tourism that develops and maintains a tourism site in a way that, while maintaining the earth's vital life support system, ensures its viability over an infinite period of time and does not adversely affect the welfare of future generations. Elena Mondino & Thomas Beery (2020) in their paper stated “the ecotourism could be framed as a leaning tool for sustainable development”. That’s why we can put ecotourism as an alternate type of sustainable development. A paper by D V Dayneko (2019) presents the importance of maintaining nature and developing ecological tourism for the Baikal region, as well as presenting the best possible way for tourism to be developed and rooted in the local economic activity, which will create new jobs and sustainably generate income that will help support local nature and communities.

In their paper, P Wahono (2018) points out that Banyuwangi Regency (Indonesia) has chosen a strategy to develop sustainable ecotourism because it allows the locals to benefit from their natural resources at the same time as maintaining the sustainability of their cultural and natural resources as well. In their study, Devkant Kala and S. C. Bagri (2018) argue that community participation must be increased, better coordination must be made among the concerned government authorities, education and training needs to be addressed for the locals, and that particular strategies should be designed in order to encourage local participation which are tailored to the evolving destination context in order to achieve this.”

Arvind Kumar (2017) stated that the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand has many opportunities that are still not explored and solution is only purposeful sustainable development of destination, growth & marketing. It is the responsibility of Tourism Department of Uttarakhand to provide latest promotional tools and Infrastructure facilities for this. A study done by Ulrich Guntera (2016) to access the Contribution of international ecotourism to Comprehensive economic development and convergence in the Central American and Caribbean region states that Ecotourism plays a very important role in driving economic convergence. So we can take example of tourist destinations of other countries who are benefitted

by the practice of Ecotourism in their area and follow the same practices in the state of Odisha.

Role of Social Media in Ecotourism Development

Pejman Ebrahimi, et.al. (2019) stated that social media can be used to promote pro environmental behaviours in tourists. In so Neeraj Sharma (2019) in his studies stated that local community plays a very unique role in consumer engagement process and future intentions of a customer to visit that location again depends on it. Bindu (2018) stated that Web based promoting is acquiring changes ecotourism industry in a positive manner yet at the same time, there is need of introducing ecotourism data online successfully. Sudipta Kiran Sarkar (2018) in his paper stated the Interpersonal organizations give chances to saddle assets to advancement – assets that would have in any case stayed scattered and awkward. The travel industry firms should grasp and standardize the open doors for imaginative supportability rehearses opened up by the web-based social networking advancements – as opposed to utilizing online life as simply one more limited time apparatus. Sudipta Kiran Sarkar (2018) in his paper stated the Interpersonal organizations give chances to saddle assets to advancement – assets that would have in any case stayed scattered and awkward. The travel industry firms should grasp and standardize the open doors for imaginative supportability rehearses opened up by the web-based social networking advancements – as opposed to utilizing online life as simply one more limited time apparatus. Mingming Cheng (2017) in his study stated that it is essential to do the content examination on a consistent basis and on focus should be on two way communication. A study by Orasa et al. (2017) identifies a model utilizing social media to promote tourism and a prototype marketing system that uses social media to promote tourism and it has been concluded that social media has a positive effect on the popularity of ecotourism destinations. In a report published a few years ago, the author Marrios D. Sotiriadis (2017) noted that social media platforms were fundamentally altering the way tourists search, find, read, trust, co-produce, and distribute information about tourism providers and the destinations that they visit in fundamental ways. For tourism providers to be successful in the future, social media will have to be incorporated into their marketing and management strategies. This will

ensure that their business becomes successful. M. Angele Oviedo et al(2016) stated that media plays a very important role regarding building a perception in target customer minds so role of media is very crucial in success of ecotourism destinations. S.K. Gupta, et.al (2016) stated that media plays a very important role in consumer engagement process by managing its value chain. Mkono, M (2016) in a paper discuss about level of engagement of Indigenous analyzing. Tour-Operators with tourists and stated the importance of customer engagement in marketing of ecotourism in Auatralia. He further illustrated that while advertising on Internet care should be taken in the matter of content because both National and International tourists visit a site. So content should be such that both type of tourists feel comfortable. Mahesh Puja (2016) in his research paper that in order to promote their brand promotions should be aggressive and Sikkim Government Official Tourism Website should have a link for social network. Nichapat Fongsmut(2016) gave recommendations to develop the use of marketing mix and Internet adoption for successful marketing of Ecotourism. The need to provide platforms by which ecotourists can co-create with businesses, tour operators, etc., has been noted by Laura Hernández-López (2015). She suggests promoting an environment where ecotourism has a number of options and offering tailored offerings to eco-tourists. Despite its volume, a recent state-of-the-art literature review (Pourfakhimi et al., 2020) found that academic research on the impact of electronic WOM on tourism and hospitality consumer behaviour was fragmented and largely limited to investigating a small scope of its impact. It is evident from the literature that the role of social media in promoting awareness in sustainable tourism is quite a new concept. Furthermore, there is a paucity of the literature in the Indian context. Few studies to date have been conducted on the role of promoting awareness in sustainable development through social media. Therefore, the present study is aimed at reducing this research gap by throwing light on the role of promoting awareness in sustainable tourism through social media in the tourist states of Assam and Odisha. More importantly, the study identifies significant socio-economic and cultural factors that play an important role in promoting sustainable tourism and enhancing the destination's reputation.

Research objectives :

- To identify significant socio-economic factors that play an important role in promoting sustainable tourism in the states of Odisha.
- To identify cultural factors that play an important role in sustainable development.
- To comprehend the role of social media in spreading awareness and promoting sustainable tourist destinations.
- To identify sustainable tourism products in Odisha.

Research Methodology:

The study area comprises of the Indian states of Odisha. Ecotourism is a form of tourism that is focused on experiencing natural attractions in a responsible and sustainable way. Odisha, a state in eastern India, is a popular ecotourism destination due to its rich natural and cultural heritage. The state is home to a variety of ecosystems, including forests, mountains, rivers, and coastline. It is also home to a number of indigenous communities who have preserved their traditional cultures and crafts.

The research consists of two stages to collect responses for the analysis. A pilot study was carried out during the first stage. Because the researchers had accessibility to these locations, a convenient sampling strategy was adopted for data collection. A convenient sample of 25 responders was chosen for this purpose. The primary sample contains interviewees who were ready to involve and dedicate personal time to the interview session with the researchers. The finalized records became received with inside the 2nd level from 232 traveller respondents who had been traveling Odisha from different states. As a result, a dependent questionnaire became created and despatched thru Google Forms. It is really well worth noting that the survey became pretested and up to date previous to distribution to guarantee its reliability. The questionnaire used a 5-factor Likert scale with one for "Strongly disagree," for "Disagree," 3 for "Undecided," 4 for "Agree," and 5 for "Strongly Agree." An overall of a hundred and eighty usable responses had been obtained

from the 230 questionnaires distributed. The responders visiting odisha were from the following states: New Delhi, Kerala, West Bengal , Rajasthan

The questionnaire was pre-tested for its reliability in getting responses from the respondents. It was put to the test on 25 samples gathered from tourists. The Cronbach's alpha method was used to test the questionnaire's reliability, and the questionnaire was determined to be reliable with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.870, which is regarded well. As a result, the questionnaire was deemed to be trustworthy. The table no.1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents used for analytical purpose.

Table 2: Demographic profile of the respondents

Particular	Variable	N	Particulars (%)
Age	18-28	38	17.6
	29-38	31	16.7
	39-48	45	28.2
	49-58	36	22.1
	Above 58	30	14
Gender	Male	10	62.2
	Female	80	37.8
Marital status	Married	95	52
	Single	78	45.2
	Other	6	6.2
Qualification	Primary	13	3.6
	Secondary	1	7.8
	Intermediate	21	12.1
	Graduate	13	74.3
Occupation	Agriculture	18	12.2
	Govt. job	45	23.3
	Business/Self-employed	53	28.8
	Private job	40	20.5
	Student	25	15
Monthly income	INR 20000-30000	16	8.3
	INR 31000-45000	28	15
	INR 46000-70000	65	35.5
	INR 71000-100000	44	23.8
	Above INR 100000	35	17.2

Table 3: Preferred source of information % of respondents

Sources	Number(N)	Percentage(%)
Google search	30	15.79
Blogs	20	10.53
Newspaper	7	3.68
Travel magazine	9	4.74
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube)	65	34.21
Online word of mouth (WOM)	22	11.58
Website of tour provider	25	13.16
Others	12	6.32

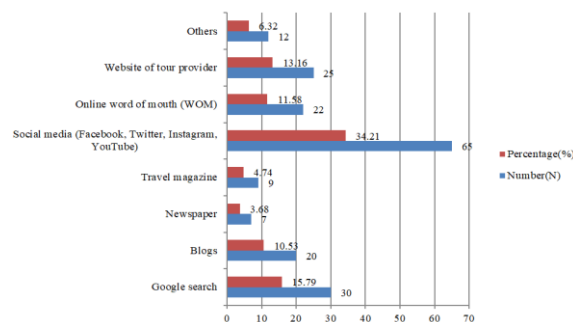


Figure 1: Preferred source of information for respondents

Table 4: Social media in order of preference

Social media platform	Respondents ratings*	% of respondents
Twitter	5	41%
Instagram	4	33%
Facebook	3	17%
Pinterest	2	7%
Others	1	2%

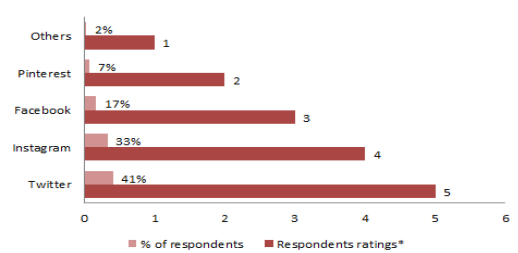


Figure 1: Social media influencer in order of preference

Scope of Sustainable Tourism in Odisha:

Odisha has a vast scope for sustainable ecotourism, given its rich natural and cultural heritage. The state is home to a variety of ecosystems, including forests, mountains, rivers, and coastline. It is also home to a number of indigenous communities who have preserved their traditional cultures and crafts. **Ecotourism camps in Similipal National Park, Satapada, Bitarakanika:** These camps offer visitors the opportunity to experience the park's unique biodiversity and culture. **Community-based tourism in the villages of the Niyamgiri Hills:** These villages offer visitors a chance to experience the traditional culture and lifestyle of the Dongria Kondh tribe. Visitors can stay in homestays, participate in cultural activities, and learn about the tribe's unique knowledge of the local environment. **Eco-friendly hotels and resorts on the beaches of Puri, Konark:** These hotels and resorts use sustainable practices, such as solar energy and rainwater harvesting. These are just a few examples of the many ways that sustainable ecotourism is being developed in Odisha. With its rich natural and cultural heritage, Odisha has the potential to become a leading destination for sustainable ecotourism.

Notes: S.A–Strongly Agree; A–Agree; N–Neither Agree nor Disagree; b–Disagree; S.D–Strongly Disagree Source:

From the Table No.3 The respondents rated 1 as the lowest and 5 as the highest influencer. It is pertinent to note that the analysis revealed that 41% of respondents surveyed rated Twitter as the most important influencer, followed by 33% Instagram, 17% Facebook, 7% Pinterest and the remaining 2% others. The aforesaid analysis is illustrated in Table 8. The results suggest that online conversations were taking place predominantly on social networking sites like Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest, whereas the "Others" category included travel sites such as Make my Trip, Trip Advisor and OTDC.

From the table No.4 Overall, the survey results suggest that social media plays a significant role in tourism. The mean score for all statements was 3.78, which indicates a moderate level of agreement with the statements. The statements with the highest mean scores relate to the role of social media in travel planning and decision-making. For

example, the statement "My trips can be planned more efficiently with the help of social media platforms" received a mean score of 3.43, and the statement "Social media platforms make my travel planning easier" received a mean score of 3.63. This suggests that social media is a valuable tool for travellers who are planning their trips. Social media is also seen as an important source of information about travel destinations and activities. The statement "Reviews are important for me mentioned in social media" received a mean score of 3.42, and the statement "Tourists might get important information through social media" received a mean score of 4.26. This suggests that travellers rely on social media to learn about different destinations and activities, and to read reviews from other travellers. Social media is also seen as a way to boost tourism and support local businesses. The statement "Tourism contributes to the economic improvement" received a mean score of 4.29, and the statement "Social media tourism marketing boosts the government's income" received a mean score of 4.25. This suggests that people see social media as a positive force for tourism, and that they believe it can help to improve the economy and support local businesses.

Conclusion:

The internet's growth over the years has caused a big change in how people around the world buy things. Tourism is an important business that brings in money and helps the local people be more independent and sustainable. Because of this, it needs an easy-to-reach strategic media tool for marketing. We can draw the conclusion from the study that actively promoting sustainable tourist sites on social media would make them more visible and easier for guests to get to. This study has taught us a lot about how to make tourism more sustainable in the chosen areas. The most important thing I learned was how social media use is connected to socially beneficial travel in economically poor areas. The two most important findings about views towards social goals were reducing poverty and giving women more power. It's also important to note that sustainable travel might not be the first choice for people who have never been on a trip before. So, if the idea of healthy tourism is promoted, it would work better to target people from the top and middle classes. In contrast to what was known before, the study suggests that older people use social media and the

internet a lot. But this connection needs to be looked into more. The study found a number of different sustainable tourist goods that can be promoted and seen by as many people as possible on social media sites. Odisha tourism had a big presence on social media and websites marketing its different tourist goods, which is why it was picked for this study. As we've talked about, both old and new media are used to market sustainable tourism goods in Odisha, such as temple tourism, handicrafts, sand art, and silver jewellery. The above tourist goods have a huge chance to help make tourism in Odisha sustainable.

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