

Linking Eco-Tourism Practices with Tourist's Perception: A Case Study of Uttar Pradesh

Supriya Shukla¹, Dr. Jyoti Shukla²

Research Scholar, Awadhesh Pratap Singh University, Rewa, India, Email: supriyashukla30@gmail.com

Assistant Professor, Swami Karpatri Ji Maharaj P.G. College Raniganj, Pratapgarh, India Email: priyashukla3088@gmail.com

Abstract

India can develop tourism in a sustainable way by embracing ecotourism. However, as interest in ecotourism grows, tourism operators are confronted with the challenge of controlling visitor demands while simultaneously reducing the environmental impact on the location. Studies on visitor impact and perception are essential for developing future management strategies, and visitor management is seen as essential to the destination's sustainable growth. The purpose of the study was to look into how tourists of Uttar Pradesh perceive the area. A self-administered questionnaire, a descriptive research method, was employed in the current study to collect visitor information at the location. The demographic characteristics of tourists were investigated, and travelers' perceptions of how tourism activities affect the destination's environment were assessed. The assessment was used to investigate how a visitor's perception of tourist destination is influenced by eco-tourism practices by the professionals and agencies. According to research findings, there are significant differences in tourists' attitudes based on factors such as perceived value of site managed sustainably. The outcome suggests a favorable relationship between tourist perception and destination-related eco-friendly practices that affect tourists' perceptions.

Key Words: Eco-Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Tourist Perception.

1. INTRODUCTION

Among the industries in the world with the fastest growth is tourism. As the travel industry becomes more conscious of its effects, more eco-friendly travel strategies and alternative forms of tourism are being adopted (Dahal et al., 2020). When the natural environment and the delicate ecology are heavily exploited as tourist attractions, ecotourism's genuine essence has positive effects but also some detrimental effects as well (Ardiantiono et al., 2018). However, the location and unique terrain of the destination determine the precise form of the environmental influence (Chandra & Bhattacharya, 2019). Overconsumption of resources, deforestation, emissions, disturbance of wildlife, etc. is some ecological challenges (Haarhoff, 2018).

Nevertheless, numerous factors may influence the level of patronage and frequency of visits to a specific destination and ecotourism site during a specified timeframe. The sensitivity of visitors to factors such as climate, language hurdles, accessibility to the ecotourism site, availability of housing, cuisine, and other perceptual components can be important factors in determining their experience. Perception can be defined as the comprehensive environment that is cognitively perceived, experienced, and serves as the foundation for decision-making (Morin et al., 2009).

As a result, the routine monitoring system and environmental protection component must be integrated in the design and execution of tourism. Research on the environmental challenges resulting from tourism and how tourists perceive the effects they generate have expanded as a result of the growing awareness of these issues (Shashni & Sundriyal, 2017). The way that tourists behave is a major factor in escalating the impact on the environment. In order to maintain the sustainability of natural resources, eco tourists are concerned with preserving and protecting the environment (Poudel & Nyaupane, 2017). The way that tourists view a tourism destination can differ significantly depending on their demographics (Junus et al., 2020). For informed management and the provision of high-quality recreational options, objective knowledge about the variables influencing visitor experiences, such as visitor behaviors, aspirations, and

expectations, is a crucial need (Souza et al., 2021). To make it easier to implement tourism management plans, motivation and happiness of tourists—which take into account their socio-demographic and visitation characteristics—are crucial (Lyngdoh et al., 2017; Lee & Abrahams, 2018).

The socio-demographic characteristics of tourists are indicators of their motivation (Adam et al., 2019) and show the kinds of activities they want to do, the places they wish to see, and the possible impacts these destinations and activities may have on them. Therefore, understanding tourist experience might be crucial for choosing social impact instruments and metrics as well as when establishing the standards of quality for these indicators (Dangi & Gribb, 2021). In light of this, the purpose of this study was to determine how well-informed tourists were on how ecotourism affects the sustainability of the local environment.

The development of an ecotourism destination may face delays if guests perceive that resources are being mismanaged. The expectation must be fulfilled while improving the visitor's experience. According to (Ukabuilu et al., 2018), the presence of non-native species, the security of tourists, the quality of accommodations and services, the friendliness of the local population, transportation options, and access to banking facilities are factors that enhance tourist satisfaction and shape visitors' opinion of a place. It is important to consider the potential bad or positive word-of-mouth that may arise from the impression made at a destination after a visit.

Consequently, the link between eco-tourism practices and tourist's perception has become a subject of significant interest among researchers and tourism industry. In the tourism industry, managing tourist experience and long-run business performance in this era of competition is critical for profitable survival of the organization which includes addressing the concerns of the tourist and coming up with some sort of solution. This study aims towards testing the effect of eco-tourism practices of tourism professionals on the perception of tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Tourists Perception

According to (Proshansky et al., 1976), perception is "the reception and processing of information from the environment." According to Haarhoff (2018), people view their surroundings in light of their requirements and favor those that enable them to function more effectively. Visitor views are influenced by a variety of factors, including visitor history, the activities that tourists partake in, the leisure objectives of distinct visitor groups, and environmental literacy and education (Pham & Khanh, 2020). The primary determinants of tourists' perceptions are gender, social class, economic standing, and education (Junus et al., 2020). Furthermore, a number of earlier researches have demonstrated that management and visitor groups in different occupations have differing understandings of environmental implications (Farrell & Marion, 2001). Prior research on how tourists affect the environment has revealed that most of the time, tourists are more concerned with the direct consequences of other tourists, such as trash, air pollution, noise, and vandalism, than they are with the problems they themselves cause (Manning, 2022).

(Ayeni and Ebohon, 2012) determined that the manner in which tourists move between locations, engage in activities, and navigate within a particular region, as well as the establishment of accommodations, provision of food and beverages, water and energy, and consumption habits, all have consequences at both global and local scales that can undermine tourism destinations from socio-cultural and environmental perspectives.

Eco-Friendly Tourism Practices

The least developed countries seem to focus more on outdoor activities when it comes to tourism. Natural resource conservation is necessary since attractive and conserved environments are the main draws for the ecotourism sector. Many regulations, including visitor impact management (Dangi & Gribb, 2021), and the boundaries of allowable alterations (Komsary et al., 2018), have been researched and implemented in nature-based tourist locations. Many studies emphasize how crucial it is to gauge the extent of the environmental impact that tourists comprehend and are aware of before departing (Dahal et al., 2020). In addition to researching outdoor recreation habits and satisfaction with outdoor recreation experiences, initial studies have looked into visitor behaviors, preferences, and expectations.

Recognized as social activity, recreational activities logically imply that information on tourists' preferences and attitudes toward facilities and services would be ideal for improved destination management (Junus et al., 2020). (Lucas, 1979) found that the body of early studies on tourists' perceptions of environmental damage was often small. While the body of research on tourists' attitudes toward environmental consequences is limited but rising, there is still a dearth of high-quality studies on this subject, which presents difficulties for researchers (Dahal et al., 2020; KC et al., 2021).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following objective was framed;

1. To analyse the impact of Eco-tourism practices on tourists perception among the visitors and tourism professionals in Uttar Pradesh.

Proposed model: On the basis of cited theoretical framework, following model is hypothesized:

Fig.1 Conceptual Design of the Study



H01: Eco-Tourism Practices will be positively related to Tourist Perception.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Sampling Procedure

We gathered survey information from 182 professionals in Uttar Pradesh who are with the firms promoting eco-tourism practices along with 194 tourists who visited Uttar Pradesh to test the concept. Data were gathered for each of the metrics using a single questionnaire that was partly mailed and partly physically surveyed by going to tourism services providing firms with references who informed potential participants about the study's purpose. Individuals were initially questioned about their demographics, their experiences with ostracism at work, and their level of job performance. A questionnaire detailing the specifics of the study, requesting voluntary participation, and guaranteeing anonymity was mailed to the participant. Questionnaires were sent through the mail as well as filled in by face-to-face interaction. We collected the data over the course of around two months, and we had 150 viable responses from professionals and 162 from the tourists finally retained for analysis.

Table-1

Demographic Profile of the respondents

ITEMS		FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Age	25 to 34	124	39.74
	35 to 44	94	30.12
	45 to 54	70	22.43
	55 to Above	24	07.69
Total		312	100
Gender	Male	187	59.93
	Female	125	40.06
Total		312	100
Education	Senior Secondary	37	11.85
	Graduate	112	35.89
	Post Graduate	138	44.23
	Doctoral	06	1.92
	Others	19	06.08
Total		312	100

3.2. Measures

Tourist Perception: Tourist perception was measured using a fourteen-item scale developed by the author and inculcated via 5 point Likert scale. Strongly disagree to strongly agree was the range of responses (1–5). Sample questions included such as “The staff and facilities at the eco-tourism site were well-organized and efficient,” “The eco-tourism site followed sustainable practices in its operations.” Cronbach’s alpha value for this sample was 0.78.

Eco-Tourism Practices: The eco-tourism practices of the professionals was assessed using a fourteen-item scale developed by the author, considering all the dimensions of eco-tourism practices and utilized in the study. A 5 point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (1-5) was inculcated to gather the responses. Sample questions included such as “Eco-tourism sites in Uttar Pradesh provide unique and valuable experiences,” “The operational processes of eco-tourism sites in Uttar Pradesh are well-managed and sustained.” Cronbach’s alpha value for this sample was 0.83.

A description of the Scales used along with their Authors, Dimensions and Total Items of the Scales are presented in **Table -2**. All the scales used in the analysis are having reliability coefficient value above 0.7 which is a measure of sound and reliable scale fit for conducting further analysis.

S.No.	Scales	Source	Dimension	Variable / Items	Reliability of the tool
1	Tourists Perception	Author	Tourists Experiences and related dimensions.	14	0.78
2	Eco-Tourism Practices	Author	Sustainability related Dimensions.	14	0.83

3.3. Data analysis

Since the study was conducted on the basis of 312 respondents from various service sector organizations, based on the responses available, we checked the relationships linking Eco-Tourism Practices and Tourists Perception via correlation and regression analysis using SPSS 23 software.

4. RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 presents correlations within the studied variables. As shown in the table, the correlations of variables are in the expected direction. It was found that Eco-Tourism Practices was positively linked with Tourists Perception ($r = .631$) that means positive relationship exist between Eco-tourism practices and Tourists Perception, the statistical relevance of the analysis has not been impacted by multi-connectivity, according to the lowest tolerance of 0.729.

Table3. Results of Correlation and Regression Analysis.

	Tourists Perception
Eco-Tourism Practices	0.631**
Adj. R2	0.369
F/df	57.684/1
Correlation	0.631
Note(s): *p<0.05 **p<0.01	

Impact of Eco-Tourism Practices on Tourists Perception was studied via regression analysis. Results of Regression analysis reflected that eco-friendly practices of the tourism professionals ($\beta=0.631$, $p<0.01$, $F=57.684/1$, $Adj.R^2=.369$) was positively relating to tourists perception, i.e., as tourists experience more eco-friendly practices at sites, the more likely it was that they would produce positive perception towards the sites and professionals in managing the sites sustainably. The ($Adj.R^2=.369$) values confirm eco-friendly tourism practices significantly predicts variation in the perception of the tourists visiting the sites.

5. DISCUSSION

This study employed a longitudinal design of research to look at how eco-friendly tourism practices influence perception of the visitors. The impact of eco-friendly tourism practices on outcomes in various laboratory settings has been extensively studied in the literature, but only few ground level studies have been conducted in India regarding tourist perception in real-world contexts. Our model investigated the relationship between eco-friendly practices and its effects on tourist's experiences among the visitors in Uttar Pradesh. Visitors always look for better experiences and a minimum harm to the existing eco-system at the destinations, and whenever these demands are compromised, their attraction to the site is threatened. The findings of the study are in accordance with the belief that professionals working towards sustainable tourism development significantly impairs tourists attitude and enhances their experiences. As a result, organizations in tourism sector should be observant for any possibility of eco-friendly practices at the sites, as doing so not only add value to tourists perception but also helps in sustaining overall environment, which can be crucial for the conservation of site but also sets the bar for others to carry forward eco-friendly practices in their operations for continued existence.

5.1. Managerial Implications

Eco-tourism practices at sites in India, especially in Uttar Pradesh, have not received much empirical attention. This is despite the fact that tourism-related activities play a vital role in the state's economy. The findings suggest that Eco-tourism can have important impacts on service businesses. It is necessary to take action to promote sustainable tourism practices and achieve a balance between nature and human activities, especially given the increasing rivalry among tourist-oriented service organizations. This is particularly crucial for service-oriented enterprises that depend on robust interactions and strong relationships with tourists and other stakeholders. Several strategies for promoting sustainable tourism have been examined, including the establishment of resilient communities. Professionals can utilize positive institutional resources to address the potential negative impacts of humanization at tourist destinations. This can be achieved by creating a supportive environment with a strong focus on service quality and a shared belief and coordination among staff, in order to enhance the tourist experience and achieve the best possible business results.

Nevertheless, an optimal and supportive setting would provide a mechanism for implementing corrective measures in the event that visitors became increasingly vigilant about the adverse impacts of tourism practices that lack sustainability principles. Implementing eco-tourism friendly efforts can effectively shape the perception of tourists and the general public towards certain locations. Managers and experts should analyze how to address unfavorable impressions of tourism locations and adjust their strategies accordingly to attract more guests and enhance the entire tourism business.

6. CONCLUSION

According to the research, most passengers recognized that tourism had a clearly negative impact on the ecosystem of the region. The socio-economic position of the tourist will greatly influence their perception of the environmental state. Travelers assume that building tourism, and other infrastructure development activities have a huge effect on the environment. Tourists to Uttar Pradesh claimed noise pollution, crowding, rubbish and litter, and other difficulties. This indicates how concerned and aware tourists are about the harmful environmental implications of tourism. This means that future visitor impact actions will rise in parallel with an increase in visitor numbers. In order to better manage the natural environment, it is vital that tourists are informed about its importance and the necessity for conservation.

Therefore, it is crucial to provide the guest with essential information and instructions. Tourists now have limited knowledge and understanding of the norms and laws in Uttar Pradesh. The tourist operators in Uttar Pradesh should provide more explicit information to educate tourists in the specific region about unacceptable behavior, enabling them to fully comprehend the data and its instructional significance. Preserving the ecology and environment of the destination should be the first concern in tourist management, even if it means not compromising the core principles of sustainability due to the impact of tourism growth.

References:

Ardiantiono, Jessop, T. S., Purwandana, D., Ciofi, C., Jeri Imansyah, M., Panggur, M. R., & Ariefiandy, A. (2018). Effects of human activities on Komodo dragons in Komodo National Park. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 27(13), 3329-3347.

Ayeni, D. A., & Ebohon, O. J. (2012). Exploring sustainable tourism in Nigeria for developmental growth. *European Scientific Journal*, 8(20).

Chandra, R., Bhattacharya, U., Bera, A., & Manocha, D. (2019). Traffic: Trajectory prediction in dense and heterogeneous traffic using weighted interactions. In *Proceedings of the IEEE/CVF Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition* (pp. 8483-8492).

- Dahal, B., Anup, K. C., & Sapkota, R. P. (2020). Environmental impacts of community-based home stay ecotourism in Nepal. *The Gaze: Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*, 11(1), 60-80.
- Dangi, T. B., & Gribb, W. J. (2021). Sustainable ecotourism management and visitor experiences: Managing conflicting perspectives in Rocky Mountain National Park, USA. In *Stakeholders Management and Ecotourism* (pp. 136-156). Routledge.
- de Souza, R. C., Ramos, M. A., de Albuquerque, U. P., Souto, A., & Schiel, N. (2022). Visitors' perception when participating in a poorly planned ecotourism activity: the case of dolphin watching in Northeastern Brazil. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 21(3), 197-209.
- Farrell, T. A., & Marion, J. L. (2001). Identifying and assessing ecotourism visitor impacts at eight protected areas in Costa Rica and Belize. *Environmental conservation*, 28(3), 215-225.
- Haarhoff, R. (2018). Tourist perceptions of factors influencing destination image: A case study of selected Kimberley resorts. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 7(4), 1-21.
- KC, A., Ghimire, S., & Dhakal, A. (2021). Ecotourism and its impact on indigenous people and their local environment: case of Ghalegaun and Golaghat of Nepal. *GeoJournal*, 86, 2747-2765.
- Junus, S. Z., Hambali, K. A., Iman, A. H. M., Abas, M. A., & Hassin, N. H. (2020, August). Visitor's perception and attitude toward the ecotourism resources at Taman Negara Kuala Koh, Kelantan. In *IOP conference series: Earth and Environmental Science* (Vol. 549, No. 1, p. 012088). IOP Publishing.
- Komsary, K. C., Tarigan, W. P., & Wiyana, T. (2018, March). Limits of acceptable change as tool for tourism development sustainability in Pangandaran West Java. In *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* (Vol. 126, No. 1, p. 012129). IOP Publishing.
- Lee, A. K. Y., & Abrahams, R. A. (2018). Naturalizing people, ethnicizing landscape: Promoting tourism in China's rural periphery. *Asian Geographer*, 35(2), 177-196.
- Lyngdoh, S., Mathur, V. B., & Sinha, B. C. (2017). Tigers, tourists and wildlife: visitor demographics and experience in three Indian Tiger Reserves. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 26, 2187-2204.
- Morin, C. M., Vallières, A., Guay, B., Ivers, H., Savard, J., Mérette, C., & Baillargeon, L. (2009). Cognitive behavioral therapy, singly and combined with medication, for persistent insomnia: a randomized controlled trial. *Jama*, 301(19), 2005-2015.
- Poudel, S., & Nyaupane, G. P. (2017). Understanding environmentally responsible behaviour of ecotourists: The reasoned action approach. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 14(3), 337-352.
- Proshansky, H. M., Ittelson, W. H., & Rivlin, L. G. (1976). *Environmental psychology: People and their physical settings*. Holt.
- Shashni, S., & Sundriyal, R. C. (2017). Assessment of ecotourism activities and its future potential in Corbett Tiger Reserve India. *International Journal of Environmental Sciences*, 7(1), 37-42.
- Shechter, M., & Lucas, R. C. (1979). A park visitor travel simulation model as a management tool. In *Tourism marketing and management issues. (The International Symposium on Tourism and the Next Decade)* (pp. 11-15).
- Ukabuilu, E. N., Nwokorie, E. C., & Ezeibe, N. (2018). Empirical investigation of problems of inbound tourism in South-eastern Nigeria: Catalyst for regional development. *HATMAN Journal of Hospitality & Tourism*, 8(1), 29-35.
- Pham, H. S. T., & Khanh, C. N. T. (2021). Ecotourism intention: the roles of environmental concern, time perspective and destination image. *Tourism Review*, 76(5), 1141-1153.