

Economics Of Ecotourism: A Study On Orissa

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INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism, responsible tourism, jungle tourism and sustainable development have become prevalent concepts since the late 1980s, and ecotourism has experienced arguably the fastest growth of all sub-sectors in the tourism industry. The popularity represents a change in tourist perceptions, increased environmental awareness, and a desire to explore natural environments. Such changes have become as much a statement affirming one's social identity, educational sophistication, and disposable income.

Eco-tourism is more than a catch phrase for nature loving travel and recreation. Eco-tourism is consecrated for preserving and sustaining the diversity of the world's natural and cultural environments. It accommodates and entertains visitors in a way that is minimally intrusive or destructive to the environment and sustains & supports the native cultures in the locations it is operating in. Responsibility of both travelers and service providers is the genuine meaning for eco-tourism.

According to the definition and principles of ecotourism established by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) in 1990, Ecotourism is, *"Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."* (TIES, 1990) Those who implement and participate in ecotourism activities should follow the following ecotourism principles:

- * Minimize impact on environment;
- * Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect;
- * Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts;
- * Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people;
- * Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.
- * In short, ecotourism can be categorized as a Tourism Programme that is - *"Nature based, ecologically sustainable, where education and interpretation is a major constituent and where local people are benefited."*

Ideally, ecotourism should satisfy several criteria, such as:

- * Conservation of biological diversity and cultural diversity through ecosystem protection;
- * Promotion of sustainable use of biodiversity, by providing jobs to local populations;
- * Sharing of socio-economic benefits with local communities and indigenous people by having their informed consent and participation in the management of ecotourism enterprises;
- * Tourism to unspoiled natural resources, with minimal impact on the environment being a primary concern;
- * Minimization of tourism's own environmental impact;
- * Affordability and lack of waste in the form of luxury;
- * Local culture, flora and fauna being the main attractions;

In the growth of economy, tourism plays a major role. For many countries; ecotourism is not simply a marginal activity to finance protection of the environment, but is a major industry of the national economy. For example, in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Nepal, Kenya, Madagascar, and Antarctica, ecotourism represents a significant portion of the gross domestic product and economic activity.

TOURISM INDUSTRY IN INDIA

The diverse geographical features of India are enriched with hundreds of tourist destinations. No matter which region you explore, almost every part of the country is laden with numerous spots giving tourists wide range of ecotourism places to explore. Ecotourism is entirely a new approach in tourism. Ecotourism is a preserving travel to natural areas to appreciate the cultural and natural history of the environment, taking care not to disturb the integrity of the ecosystem, while creating economic opportunities that make conservation and protection of natural resources

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advantageous to the local people. All this together can be called ecotourism. If a travel does not satisfy any one of these constituents, then it is not called a real ecotourism venture.

In the year 1967, a separate ministry of Tourism and civil aviation was created under a cabinet minister. India, the land of varied geography offers several tourist destinations that not just de-stress but also rejuvenate you. There are several ways to enjoy Mother Nature in its most pristine way. The few places like the Himalayan Region, Kerala, the northeast India, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and the Lakshdweep islands are some of the places where you can enjoy the treasured wealth of the Mother Nature. Thenmala in Kerala is the first planned ecotourism destination in India created to cater to the Eco-tourists and nature lovers.

The Indian topography boasts of an abundance of flora & fauna. India has numerous rare and endangered species in its surroundings. The declaration of several wildlife areas and national parks has encouraged the growth of the wildlife resources, which got reduced due to killing of wildlife hunt by several kings in the past. Today, India has many wildlife sanctuaries and protection laws. Currently, there are about 80 national parks and 441 sanctuaries in India, which works for the protection and conservation of wildlife resources in India.

India's tourism industry is experiencing a strong period of growth, driven by the burgeoning Indian middle class, growth in high spending foreign tourists, and coordinated government campaigns to promote '*Incredible India*'. There are numerous Botanical and Zoological Gardens in India, which are working towards the enhancement of the Ecosystem. Poaching has stopped to large extent. There are severe punishments for poachers, hunters and illegal traders of animals and trees. Tree plantation is taking place in several places. There are several animal & plant rights organizations, which fight for the rights of the animals and plants. Numerous organizations and NGOs are coming forward to provide environmental education to the common people at the grass root level.

ECOTOURISM IN ORISSA

The State of Orissa is situated on the eastern coast of India, on the Bay of Bengal. It is endowed with natural attractions such as beaches, lakes, and forests teeming with wildlife, as well as a rich cultural heritage inclusive of monuments, ethno-handicrafts from the various ethnic groups, colourful fairs and festivals, music and ethnic dances.

Wildlife and adventure tourism is well known in Orissa. The dense forests and hilly areas encourage the adventure lovers to visit these places for trekking and rock climbing. Moreover, the rich wildlife sanctuaries like the Similipal Tiger Reserve, the Bhitarkanika Sanctuary, and the Nandankanan wildlife sanctuary also attracts many nature lovers to pay a worthy visit to these travel spots of Orissa.

MAJOR ECOTOURISM SPOTS IN ORISSA

1. Ambapani : Ambapani is famous for the deity of Budharaja. The picturesque Ambapani hills present a panoramic view of nature. The whole area abounds in Spotted Deer, Sambar and Black Panthers, which can be seen at the Behera reservoir

2. Badarama : Its prominent and attractive location in western Orissa with hilly undulating areas and rich dry deciduous mixed forests and wide variety of fauna including tiger, leopard, elephant, hyena, wild-boar, spotted deer, sambar, bear, porcupine and a number of birds and reptiles etc. make it very beautiful.

3. Balukhand : The flora of the area includes casuarinas, anacardium, neem, tamarind, karanja, etc. The prominent fauna include blackbuck, spotted deer, monkey, squirrel, jungle cat, hyena, jackal, mongoose and variety of birds and reptiles.

4. Bhitarkanika : It is one of the very few evergreen repositories of most luxuriant mangrove vegetation in the world. More than sixty varieties of mangrove plants are found here, which provide home to a variety of rare and endangered species. The pneumatophores, better known as breathing roots, stand like sentries of the land.

5. Chandaka : In addition to elephants, the Reserve boasts of cheetal, bears, pea-fowl, sambhar, and various other species. The Forest officials have also spotted pug marks of cheetahs within the forest.

6. Chilika : Chilika Lake, the largest brackish water lake in Asia encloses an immense area of marshes lowlands and islands. There are more than 160 varieties of fish, and, in the winter season (from November through March), the area is home to hundreds of thousands of migratory birds as well.

7. Debrigarh : The combination of dry deciduous mixed forests with rich wildlife, Hirakud reservoir, and attractive

topographical features are the important features of Debrigarh wildlife sanctuary. The Hirakud reservoir attracts large number of migratory birds during winter. The forest area is an ideal habitat for Chousingha. Other prominent fauna includes tiger, leopard, gaur, sambar, spotted deer, sloth bear, resident and migratory birds, monitor lizards, chameleon etc.

8. Karlapat : About 35 kms from Bhawanipatna, the district headquarters of Kalahandi, on the Bhawanipatna-Thuamula-Rampur road is Karlapat, famous for its enchanting wildlife. Tigers, leopards, sambars, gaur and cheetal have a rich presence in these forest tracts.

9. Kotagarh : Kotagarh wildlife sanctuary located in the Baliguda subdivision of Kandhamal district is rich in biodiversity. Major wildlife species are tiger, elephant, gaur, sambar, spotted deer, peafowl, red jungle fowl and a variety of reptiles.

10. Kuldiha : This sanctuary is located in the district of Balasore and is blessed with a charming forest and a variety of wildlife such as tiger, leopard, elephant, gaur, sambar, giant squirrel, a number of bird species like hill myna, peafowl, hornbills and various reptiles.

11. Nandan Kanan : Nandan Kanan means "*A garden of pleasure*", and this combination of zoo, botanical garden and sanctuary 10 km from Bhubaneswar, in the splendid environs of the Chandaka Forest, along the rippling waters of the Kanjia lake, fits the description.

12. Satkosia : The major attraction of the area is 22 km. long gorge (known as Satkosia gorge) of the river Mahanadi which divides the area into a two distinct parts accessible respectively from Angul and Nayagarh or Boudh. The area supports moist deciduous forest, dry deciduous forests and moist peninsular sal forests and is stronghold of tiger, leopard, elephant, gaur, sambar, spotted deer, mouse deer, nilgai, chousingha, sloth bear, wild dog etc., varieties of resident and migratory birds and reptilian species (gharial, mugger crocodile, fresh water turtle, poisonous and non-poisonous snakes etc.

13. Simlipal : The park was specially chosen by Project Tiger for continuing the onerous task of conserving the country's depleting tiger population. This tiger reserve has over 95 Royal Bengal Tigers within its lavish bounds. Leopards, elephants, mugger crocodiles and numerous reptiles abound here. Over 230 species of birds people the forest and waterways in the park.

Tourism has been recognized as an industry in Orissa and sizeable revenue is earned for the State from domestic as well as foreign tourists. The idea of tourism was first mooted by the Government during the 3rd Five Year Plan. It was revamped during the 5th Five Year Plan. The creation of Department of Tourism, Govt. of Orissa dates back to 1973. There have been modifications from time to time as regards to the sphere of function of the Department. The Department of Tourism and Culture has been functioning in the present shape since 1995. The Orissa Tourism Development Corporation was created in March 1979 and it was incorporated under Companies Act in September 1979.

Form both the sides, Government as well as Corporation, the thrust was given to the modernization of the sight seeing spots of Orissa. The spots are generally Konark, Puri, Nandankanan, Chandipur and other tourist spots having a close proximity with the capital city. At the initial stage, with a meager budget, the Department could not cope with the pressing demands of tourists. Later, the Government decided to streamline and spread its activities not only to coastal districts, but also to Western Orissa where tourist spots are also attractive.

Places of natural beauty are in abundance in Orissa. The natural stream and forest resources at Harisankar in Bolangir moves the heart of the tourists. Equally, Nrusinghanath presents a panoramic view. The deity of Nrusinghanath sitting in the shape of a half-human and half-lion form tearing apart Hiranyakashipu against the backdrop of a stream is a scene to witness. Of course, now-a-days, both the Department and Corporation have swung into action to create infrastructural facilities for the tourists. Apart from those two natural spots, Kalahandi district is endowed with the wealth of forests with rare species of black tigers, a natural water fall at Rabandar and a host of temples situated at the peak of mountain hills at Bhawanipatna. These are also places of tourists' importance. The Patala Ganga spot at Nawapara District is also a place of attraction for tourists. Ushakothi, Hirakud and Budrama in Sambalpur district attract the attention of tourists. Similarly, the Khandadhar Waterfall in Sundargarh district is also a tourist spot. The Mahanadi and the Tel River in Suvarnapur district present beautiful natural scenes and the confluence of the two rivers present a memorable sight.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ECO-TOURISM

Ecotourism is an increasingly attractive and sustainable local economic development option. It brings economic diversity to communities and helps to avoid single-sector dependence. The tourism industry plays a significantly larger part in employment in Orissa. Eco-tourism represents a small, but growing market place for the tourism business. It is a viable means for communities and individuals to earn their livelihoods. But the growth of this market should in no way cause destruction of wildlife.

Table 1: India's Share In World Tourist Arrival

YEAR	WORLD (In Millions)	INDIA (In Millions.)	Share
2003	692.2	2.7	0.39
2004	761.4	3.5	0.46
2005	803.0	3.9	0.49
2006	846.0	4.4	0.52
2007	-	5.0	-

Source: Govt. of Orissa, Dept. of Tourism and Culture, Bhubaneswar. (The latest data available)

From the Table 1, it is evident that the share of the India in world tourism is constantly increasing.

Table 2: Orissa's Share In India Tourist Arrival (P:-Provisional)

YEAR	INDIA (In Nos.)	ORISSA (In Nos.)	Share (In %)
2003	27,26,214	25,020	0.92
2004	34,57,477	28,817	0.83
2005	39,18,610	33,310	0.85
2006	44,47,167	39,141	0.88
2007	49,77,193(P)	41,880	0.84

Source: Govt. of Orissa, Dept. of Tourism and Culture, Bhubaneswar. (The latest data available)

Table no-1 depicts the share of India out of the total world tourist population and Table no-2 shows Orissa's share in India's total tourist population. Ecotourism is a contemporary tool to attract maximum number of tourists to the state. Though the share of India in world tourist population has been increasing (though not satisfactorily), but the share of Orissa in India's share is going down (or fluctuating). This shows the stagnant Orissa tourist industry. In the year 2003, the share of Orissa in India's total tourist arrival was 0.92% which went down to only 0.84% by the year 2007.

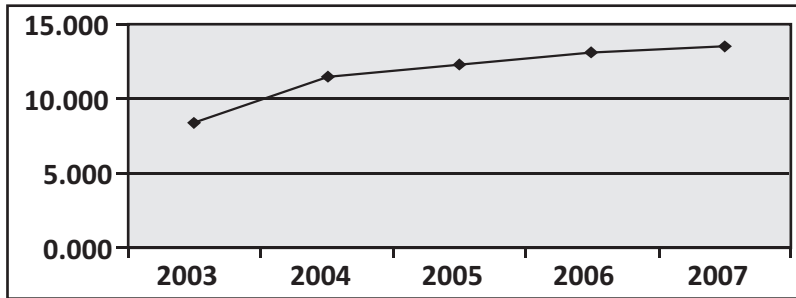
Table 3: Tourist Visit In Orissa

Year	Domestic	% Change	Foreign	%Change	Total	% Change
2003	37,01,250	8.400	25,020	8.600	37,26,270	8.400
2004	41,25,536	11.463	28,817	15.175	41,54,353	11.488
2005	46,32,976	12.299	33,310	15.591	46,66,286	12.322
2006	52,39,896	13.100	39,141	17.505	52,79,037	13.131
2007	59,44,890	13.454	41,880	6.997	59,86,770	13.406

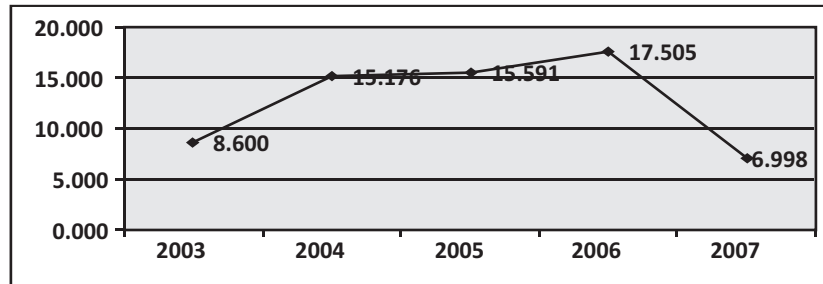
Source: Govt. of Orissa, Dept. of Tourism and Culture, Bhubaneswar. (The latest data available)

If we look at the Table no-3 and Graph no-1, the percentage change in total domestic tourist arrival in Orissa gradually increases from the year 2003 to 2007, but that happens at a decreasing rate. Govt. of Orissa and OTDC must engage in more developmental works to attract tourists. National advertisements and promotions are required with greater intensity.

Graph 1: Year Wise Domestic Tourist Arrival In Orissa



Graph 2: Year Wise Foreign Tourist Arrival In Orissa



The graph no- 2 drawn from table no-3 depict the percentage growth of foreign tourist arrival in Orissa which shows an up and down movement though number of tourists increases from year 2003 to year 2007. The recent abrupt decrease in percentage of foreign tourist arrival is a major concern in the industry.

Table 4: Domestic Tourist Visit In Orissa

Year	Tourists of Orissa	Tourists of other States / UTs in India	Total
2003	18,76,571	18,24,679	37,01,250
2004	21,56,986	19,68,550	41,25,536
2005	22,93,865	23,39,111	46,32,976
2006	26,99,654	25,40,242	52,39,896
2007	32,52,380	26,92,510	59,44,890

Source: Govt. of Orissa, Dept. of Tourism and Culture, Bhubaneswar

Graph 3: Comparison: Tourists of Other States / UTs in India & Tourists of Orissa

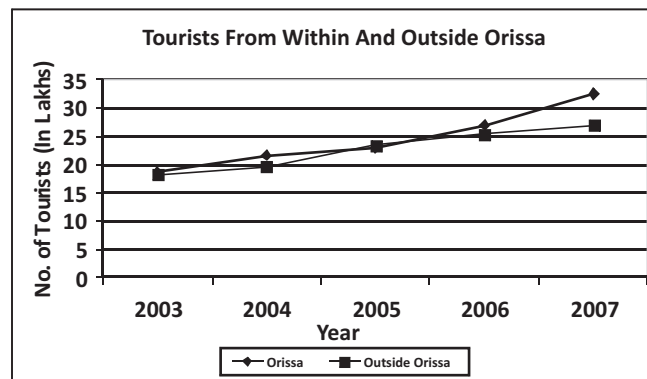


Table 4 shows the total no of tourist arrivals from different parts of India. About 50% of tourists are from Orissa itself, which is even less than 10% of the total population of Orissa. The graph 3 shows number of tourists from within Orissaa was increasing from the year 2003 to the year 2007. Number of tourists from different parts of India other than Orissa is also very few. Graph 3 and table 4 shows clearly that total numbers of tourists arriving from within Orissa were increasing from 2003 to 2007, whereas, tourists from outside Orissa i.e. from other parts of India were increasing, but in a diminishing rate, which must be a major concern for Orissa tourism industry and OTDC. In fact the abundant scenic places of Orissa have a much higher potential to attract both national and international tourists than its current status.

Ecotourism provides an up-and-coming economic development opportunity for areas with natural beauty and cultural uniqueness. By its nature, ecotourism maintains intact ecosystems and as a result, may provide long lasting economic opportunities. Tourism has become a major economic force in the contemporary world. Being a major element of many countries' service exports, it has the power to deliver significant international earnings that can be utilized for alleviating poverty.

Table 5: Inflow Of Money Through Tourist Expenditure In Orissa (₹ in Crores)

Year	Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total
2003	1239.47	29.68	1269.15
2004	1381.56	34.18	1415.74
2005	2303.75	82.24	2385.99
2006	2605.54	96.63	2702.17
2007	2956.09	103.39	3059.48

Source: Govt. of Orissa, Dept. of Tourism and Culture, Bhubaneswar

Graph 4: Inflow Of Money Though Tourist Expenditure In Orissa

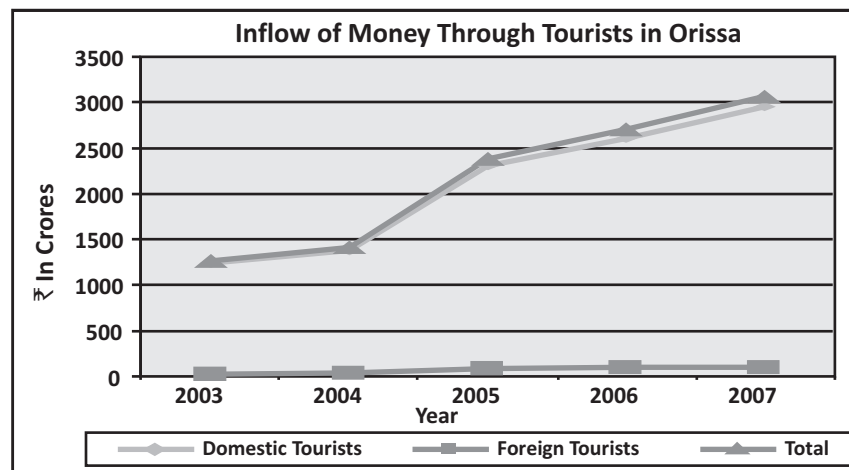


Table 5 explains the total inflow of money in crores through tourist expenditure in Orissa. From the year 2003 to 2007, number of domestic tourists visiting different spots of Orissa increased from 37 lakhs to 59.5 lakhs (see Table 3) where as, domestic tourist expenditure increased from 1239 crores to 2956 crore (see Table 5). Earning from foreign tourist expenditure almost became 3.5 times (29.6 crore to 103.4 crore) from the year 2003 to year 2007. Whereas, the number of tourists increased only from 25020 to 41880 (see table 3). Hence, attracting foreign tourists is more beneficial and more contributing to the economic development.

CONCLUSION

Tourism can become Orissa's core competency sector, creating employment, enhancing production, productivity and contributing significantly towards development of the state. But to encash the opportunity and to reap the benefits, a

favorable social atmosphere may be created to develop tourism as viable sector which has greater potential for generating employment and alleviating poverty. Orissa Tourism is the most profitable business sector of the state of Orissa in India. The state is known for the lovely sandy beaches, wildlife sanctuaries, exquisite temples, tribal culture, and colorful fairs and festivals. However, Orissa Tourism still has a lot of potential to develop further and earn a lot of revenue for the state of Orissa. The tourism of Orissa generates employment opportunities for nearly 92,206 persons directly and 2,76,618 persons indirectly. In the last FY 2006-07, there were in total 54,16,530 tourists who came to Orissa of which 53,77,123 were domestic and 39,407 were foreign tourists.

Orissa tourism also gets a boost from the numerous fairs and festivals that takes place in Orissa every year. All these also attract many tourists from different parts of the world. Some of the unique festivals of Orissa are like Raja-Sankranti or Raja Parva, Garbhana-Sankranti, Kumarotsava or the festival of youth, and the most popular of all the Rath Yatra of the Jagannath at Puri. The Orissa Tourism Development Corporation Limited plays a very significant and encouraging role in conducting these occasions. The ancient adage: “*Athithi Devo Bhava*” gives new opportunity to the state to enhance economic prosperity in the changing world scenario. In order to realize the economic benefits in a concrete way, we have to change our social mindset so as to enable us to create a better atmosphere to pave the way for the development of this novel and humane industry for the betterment of our state and the people.

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