

# A Study on Kerala Ecotourism and role of Marketing Strategies in the promotion of Ecotourism sites

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## Abstract

Ecotourism is considered to be an environment friendly tourist practice and this in turn helps the local economy grow without causing any harm to its local culture, just like other tourism products ecotourism destinations needs to be marketed too, because this is relatively a new concept department of Tourism use different marketing strategies to promote it. For promoting eco-tourism various initiative taken by the government but the these not all effective for developing eco-tourism. So, it is the time to lighten the importance of eco-tourism and strategies adopted for development of eco-tourism. The aim of this paper is to understand some of the strategies used by department of Tourism to promote Ecotourism and tourism in general. This paper also looks into the concept of ecotourism in Kerala. The study is descriptive in nature and use only secondary data collected from various books and articles. The study mainly deals with the strategies of developing the eco-tourism and how it is advantageous to tourism in Kerala.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, Ecosystem, Infancy, KTDC, SEO, Wildlife.

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## Introduction

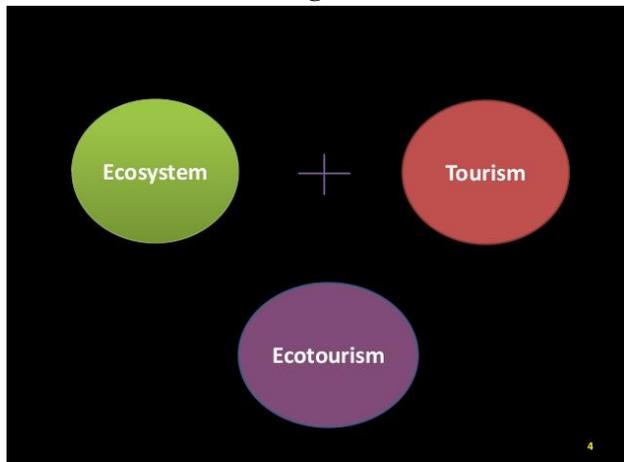
Tourism can be defined as a social phenomenon, involving a temporary break with normal routine to engage with experiences that contrast with everyday life. Tourism is a concept that comprises of different elements, it's one of the biggest industries that has huge impact on the economy of the country, and in fact some of the country's economy is mainly dependent on its tourism industry. According to central statistical organization enterprise under ministry of tourism, Government of India 47.5 percent of jobs come from tourism sector. Tourism can be defined as the movement of people from their normal pace of residence and work for a period of more than 24 hrs and less than 1 year. There are various types of tourism that are practiced across the world, Eco tourism is an important type of tourism.

## Ecotourism

Ecotourism can be defined as the combination of ecosystem and tourism, shown in fig. 01. The ecotourism society defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas of great beauty which conserves the environment and improve the welfare of local people. It is non consumptive, create ecological conscience and helps in holding up eco centric values and ethics in relation to the nature. The main motive of ecotourism is to make tourist understand that it's important to not disturb animal, plants and their habitats. Eco tourism is the combination of conservation, profit and locals. The twin goals of Eco

tourism are bio diversity conservation and sustainable development. India is one of the most popular country which has so many tourist destinations and this is due to varied geography of the country. India is one of the 12 mega bio diverse countries, because it offers rich cultural heritage, in India Thenmala was the first planned ecotourism destination which is located in the state of Kerala.

Fig.01



Source: <https://www.slideshare.net>

**Objectives**

- To understand various strategies used by department of tourism to promote Ecotourism and tourism as a whole.
- To look into the concept of ecotourism in Kerala.
- To find out how eco-tourism advantages to tourism sector and environment

**Research Methodology**

This study is descriptive in nature and only use secondary data. The data were collected from various articles published on various journals and websites and was analysed systematically.

**Ecotourism in Kerala**

The state of Kerala also known as god’s own country offers sandy beaches and tropical dense forests which has many animal and plant species, it is also known as green heaven. Thenmala was India’s first planned eco-tourism destination it is in the foothills of western Ghats in Kollam district; it was inaugurated in January 2001. Thenmala has mainly 4 zones cultural zone, leisure zone, adventure zone, ad other attractions. Cultural zone includes musical dancing fountain, cultural program, amphitheatre, shops and food courts. Leisure zone includes a sculpture garden with a theme of man and nature. Adventure zone includes elevated walkway, natural trail, trucking, river crossing rock, mountain climbing and adventure biking. Other zone includes a one-hour boating in the Shenduruneey wildlife sanctuary reservoir and rehabilitation centre with a children’s eco-park.

Other major ecotourism spots identified in the forests of Kerala

Table-1

1. Agastyarvanam	2. Peechi
3. Aralam	4. Peerumedu
5. Athirapally	6. Peppara
7. Kumarakom	8. Ponmudi

9. Kuttikkanam	10. Purakkad
11. Malampuzha	12. Pythalmala
13. Munnar	14. Rajamala/Eravikulam
15. Muruva Islands	16. Ranipuram
17. Muthanga	18. Silent Valley
19. Nelliampathy	20. Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary
21. Neyyar	22. Thekkady
23. Palaruvi	24. Thenmala
25. Parambikulam	26. Thirunelli

*Source: tripoto.com*

The ecotourism contributes to the growth of tourism in Kerala and helps in infusing the sustainability concept to other tourism business outside the circle of ecotourism, it is noted that the western Ghats regions of Kerala can be shown as ecotourism zones. Ecotourism also helps in preserving, enriching and retaining the rich Kerala culture and heritage. Ecotourism also helps in development of the local economy and its people. While implementing Eco tourism the concerned parties should look into the factor that all the development involved should be compactable with the culture and Environment of Kerala. During 1999 the total tourism inflow to Kerala was about 50 lakhs out of which 1.82 lakhs of tourist were foreign and in that year the earnings from tourism industry was around 250 crores. This has changed to foreign tourist arrival has increased to 11 lakhs approximately and domestic tourists up to 1 crore 56 lakhs approximately in 2018 providing a total revenue of 45000 crores approx. This is a huge difference in income through tourism introduction of ecotourism in Kerala in 2001 is one of the factors that lead to this increase.

### **Advantages of Ecotourism**

Advantages of ecotourism involves the following:

- Helps in increasing foreign Exchange- Ecotourism helps in increasing the foreign exchange of the country as it helps in bringing in lot of foreign tourists who love nature. As ecotourism promotes sustainable development nature lovers and environment protection workers who will be more attracted to tourism and will result in increased inflow of foreign tourists.
- Development of infrastructural facilities- Eco tourism will help in bringing more revenue to the country without having much of the infrastructure and this in turn helps the government in reducing the cost of development of the destination, with reduced cost and high revenue government could use the profit for infrastructural development around the site.
- Balanced Regional Development – Eco tourism promotes balanced regional development, regular tourism usually focuses on bringing the tourists to developed parts of the country, but in case of ecotourism tourists visits rural places as most of the ecotourism destinations are away from urban places. This in turn will lead to development on a balanced basis.
- Generating employment-Ecotourism just like any other industry provides huge amount of job opportunities, for every ecotourism destination, sanitation is needed, food is needed, maintenance is needed for all these staff are needed which in turn creates jobs and allied business and sometimes self-employment.
- Maintain peace and goodwill- eco tourism helps in building and maintaining peace and goodwill of the nation as it helps in building the image of the country showing off its natural beauty and how it is preserved to the world.
- Popularise secluded parts of the country-Eco tourism helps in popularising the unpopular or secluded parts of the country by introducing the tourism.
- Helps in rural development- some of the most underdeveloped areas includes the most beautiful natural environment and by introducing ecotourism to that place it helps in developing that particular area.

- Promotes sustainable development- ecotourism promotes sustainable development as the whole concept is based upon it , this will in turn lead to promoting that into various other fields or industries indirectly. This happens because ecotourism sends the message that money can be made without harming the environment.
- Helps in retaining the culture and heritage of the destination-the whole concept of Ecotourism is that it brings more revenue without affecting or destroying the natural environment and culture and heritage of the local destination.
- Helps in preserving the wild life- The revenue coming out from ecotourism to the government is usually used to for the conservation of the wildlife, this is usually seen in case of ecotourism related to wildlife conservation parks.

### Marketing Strategies Used to Promote Ecotourism by Department of tourism government of Kerala

Department of Tourism has adopted various marketing strategies based on geographical location of their potential customers:

- Print, Airport and TV Campaign for the Middle East Market- Print campaign involves print media such as newspapers, journals etc. Marketing in airports usually involves Advertising Gods Own Country digitally using kiosk and with advertisement in the books provided by airlines. TV campaign as everyone knows is a channel for mass communication and is used by Department of Tourism to send out the message to the general public in UAE and Middle East in general. The figure below shows a print media ad that came out on UAE.

**Fig.03**



*Source: <https://www.keralatourism.org/>*

- Print, Digital, Outdoor Campaign in the South East Asian Markets- print media as said earlier is used by Department of Tourism for promoting ecotourism throughout the world, south east Asia is a very good market for potential tourists so here print, digital media such as tv, radio etc are used for marketing. Outdoor campaign such as travel mart, seminars and banner ads are also used for promoting ecotourism in these markets.
- Digital marketing Campaign for the US Market- US market is full of tech savvy people so in this case Department of Tourism uses digital marketing which is more focused, precise and cost efficient. Digital marketing initiatives involves social media marketing, SEO, SMS marketing etc. Us market is very important to Kerala tourism as US tourist will contribute to foreign exchange in form of dollar which is the highest demanded currency all over the world.
- Outdoor campaigns in the Europe Market (Theatre Advt).-European market is another important market and Department of Tourism use another marketing strategy for this market that is unique and go in with their culture that is showing advertisements on movie and drama theatre , as both of these are part of their culture , advertising here would be more effective.

- London Bus Branding Campaign- This is one of the main methods of advertising in London, that is branding buses in London with the logo of gods own country, this picture will show the natural beauty of Kerala which is the key ingredient of eco-tourism. Fig.04 below shows the bus branding technique implemented by Department of Tourism.

Fig.04



Source: <https://www.keralatourism.org/>

- 6th edition of Kerala Blog Express- It is another form of marketing done by Department of Tourism here , 26 travel bloggers from 21 countries are invited to Kerala and are shown the whole state the trip includes top tourist destination in Kerala and the medium of transportation is via bus , the result of these program is that the bloggers from these countries write about their experience in Kerala which will in turn act as a promotion to Kerala tourism industry .The figure below shows the bloggers that came to Kerala .

Fig.05



Source: <https://newstodaynet.com/>

- Off-season Promotion Campaign in National Markets – In India Kerala tourism does is promotion in order to attract local tourists from other state this is done by giving them off season offers and discounts.
- Print, TV, Outdoor, Digital Campaign in National Markets- Department of Tourism does its marketing through all channels and mediums throughout India its tourism products and services.
- Houseboat Installation & Virtual Reality in Delhi & Mumbai Airports- this is another form of unique marketing technique used by Department of Tourism where they create a house boat model and virtual reality in airports in

order to attract travellers All these marketing efforts are undertaken for marketing all the tourist destinations in the state including ecotourism destination.

### Conclusion

Ecotourism can be defined as the combination of ecosystem and tourism and it is said to be one of the most efficient type of tourism that generates more revenue with less cost , it comes with so many advantages such as creating foreign exchange, promoting sustainability, balancing development, valuing culture, retaining heritage , generating employment and helps in entrepreneurship development . Various marketing strategies are used by Department of Tourism to promote Kerala tourism and ecotourism across the world such as, print media, digital marketing, TV, Radio, Outdoor campaigns and travel marts. In Conclusion we can say that Promoting Ecotourism in Kerala is highly cost effective. Eco tourism is sustainable in nature and hence it is highly ethical and a green business practice, so promoting such a practice will not only earn money for the government but also helps the future generation and will inspire other industries to follow green business practices.

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