***Review Article***

**"Community-Based Ecotourism: A Review of Local Benefits and Challenges in Chhattisgarh”**

**ABSTRACT**

Ecotourism is defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. Community-based ecotourism (CBE), on the other hand, is a very specific form of ecotourism which is used to describe ecotourism ventures that are characterized by high environmental considerations, increased control and involvement of the local residents, as well as significant benefits accruing for the host community.The study examined various regions of the Chhattisgarh state, with a particular emphasis on the Bastar region, the Bhoramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary, Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary, Udanti wildlife sanctuary and Jashpur district .The objective of this review paper was to investigate the challenges and opportunities associated with the development of Community-Based Ecotourism in Chhattisgarh. Through its methodological framework, this review is categorized as a narrative analysis, as the reviewer has synthesized the findings from empirical research conducted across various regions of Chhattisgarh, alongside an evaluation of the research outcomes. The results from these studies illuminated several significant obstacles impeding the flourishing of community-based ecotourism in Chhattisgarh, including inadequate infrastructure and facilities—such as trekking permits, parking amenities, all-weather roads, camping sites, potable water, electricity, and health services—alongside conflicts of interest regarding resource utilization and a pronounced deficiency of trained personnel.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism , Community- Based Ecotourism, Resources , Trekking , Obstacles.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is one of the most important economic, social, cultural and political phenomena of the twentieth century (Ceballos-Lascurian 1996 ; Kumar& Barua, 2020). The International Ecotourism Society (2010) has described Ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that protect the environment and enhance the welfare of local communities. Moreover, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) defined the term ecotourism in 1996 as an environmentally accountable travel and visitation to natural places, to experience and admire nature (and any related cultural features, both ancient and contemporary) which encourage conservation, and which invariably also have a minimal visitor impact and provide for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples, leading to their regional sustainability enhancement. (Tesfaye, 2017).

Community-based ecotourism (CBET) means different things to different people. (Kiss,2004) or Community-based ecotourism (CBE), on the other hand, is a very specific form of ecotourism which is used to describe ecotourism ventures that are characterized by high environmental considerations, increased control and involvement of the local residents, as well as significant benefits accruing for the host community.(Tesfaye, 2017). According to Li (2006), many researchers believe that when local communities are involved in decision making, then they can derive benefits and the traditional lifestyles and values of the communities can be respected (Li, 2006; Mensah,2017) Community-based ecotourism (CBET) is fundamentally grounded in the three principal tenets of sustainable development: economic viability, social equity, and ecological sustainability (Mbaiwa, 2004 ; Fiorello & Bo, D, 2012)

It is necessary to differentiate between types of tourists to understand their purpose of visit. Today tourism is the largest service industry in India, with a contribution of 9.2% to thenational GDP and 8.1% of the total employment. India witnesses more than 10.56million(2019) annual foreign touris tarrivals and 1854.93 million domestic tourism visits in the year 2018. India is presently ranked 34th in world travel and tourism competitiveness index, supported by rich natural and cultural resources and strong price competitiveness. (wttc. 2019,Tourism M. 2018, ForumTWE2019 ; Shrivastava*et al.,*2020). India has the highest concentration of sacred forests in the world. Estimates suggest that there might be between 100 000 and 150 000 sacred forests around the country (Malhotra et al. 2007). These community-protected forests are often associated with or believed to house a god or gods, and are typically named after deities (Chandrakanth et al. 2004 ; Ormsby& Bhagwat, 2010)

Different ways to attract domestic and foreign tourists need to be understood. Rural tourism has a large market potential, mainly from foreign tourists. Rural tourism has not developed in India due to lack of government initiative. Tourism has gained attention in the last two decades, but rural tourism is not a priority in India. (Manoj, 2015).

Chhattisgarh, a state located in the central region of India, exhibits a remarkable diversity across economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Das, 2014).Chhattisgarh Eco Tourism encompasses a total of eleven wildlife sanctuaries and three national parks.Having a green stretch of forests land of 44% of the total geographical space, Chhattisgarh encourages eco tourism through protection and preservation of near extinct species of animals and their habitat.(Guria,2017) Chhattisgarhcan offer hospitality in almost every kind of tourism, viz. wildlife, and cultural, religious, adventure, educational, heritage, medical and rural. (Dewangan & Tiwari,2023)

Besides being a great repository of biological diversity, forests of Chhattisgarh contain various sites of archeological, cultural and religious importance.Some of these unique combinations of natural and cultural heritage can form nuclei of ecotourism Accordingly three circuits of eco tourism namely Raipur, Barnawapara, Turturia, Sirpur (Raipur District), Achanakmar (Bilaspur District) and Kanger valley (Jagdalpur District) have been started which are controlled and managed by the committee of forest dwellers. All the benefits accrued are passed over to the communities.(Sharma,2005).

1. **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNITY-ORIENTED ECOTOURISM.**

A substantial body of literature on ecotourism’s impacts points to the fact that the development of ecotourism brings about benefits (Belsky, 1999; Jones, 2005; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Stronza & Gordillo, 2008; Weaver, 1998). The benefits which can be simply considered as the positive things that ensue from ecotourism development cut across economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions. CBEs have created employment opportunities for local residents (Ross & Wall, 1999; Wallace & Pierce, 1996; West, 2006), contributed to the conservation and preservation of natural areas (Nature Conservation andResearch Centre, 2006; Rowat & Engelhardt, 2007; Stronza & Pêgas, 2008), and improved upon the quality of social lives of local communities through infrastructural developments (Scheyvens, 1999; Wearing & Larsen, 1996; Weaver, 1998).( Afenyo& Amuquandoh,2014).

1. **CURRENT SCENARIO OF COMMUNITY BASED ECOTOURISM IN INDIA AND CHHATTISGARH**

Community-based ecotourism has gained prominence as a sustainable development strategy, particularly in rural India. (Kumar, 2023).Conservation initiatives that boot out stakeholder communities may preserve natural resources but denying livelihood opportunities. India as a developing nation with huge population cannot promote the scheme of pristine nature preservation initiatives due to the socioeconomic and political reverberations. (Kurian, 2020).Community based tourism plays an important role in empowering local women. It calls for community participation with women‟s active role in decision-making, benefits sharing, pride in traditional skills; environment care, systemic ownership and sustainable management of the process are among the principal intended outcomes. The Government of India-United Nations Development Program‟s Rural Tourism Project aims to empower women in tourism. (Mary, 2019)The global ethno tourism and community-based ecotourism market is projected to reach USD 18.5 billion by 2025 and expand significantly to USD 39.7 billion by 2035. The industry is expected to grow at a CAGR of 8.1% during 2025 to 2035, fueled by rising demand for authentic cultural experiences, sustainable travel options, and local community empowerment. (Ethno Tourism Community Based Eco Tourism Market , 2025)

The green state has launched an eco-tourism project covering three potential tourist tracks - Raipur-Turtiria-Sirpur, Bilaspur-Achanakmar and Jagdalpur-Kanger Valley National Park. With so many initiatives, Chhattisgarh is destined to become the most favourite eco-tourism destinations in India. (Ecotourism Spots in Chhattisgarh, 2013).
The current analysis has pinpointed a few elements that might be viewed as propellants for pushing the tourism sector towards sustainable development. The state contains a wealth of natural places, both studied and unexplored, but due to a lack of basic upkeep and policies, they have lost some of their through social upliftment avoidance of ecological degradation. (Pattanayak et al., 2023).

Chhattisgarh being an Empowered Action Group (EAG) state is slow in the economic and demographic transition. The geography and demography of Chhattisgarh account for its limited progress that reflects in its 14th position out of 17 Indian states as per the hunger index ( Menon*et al*., 2009). Almost 77% of the total Chhattisgarh population lives in rural areas and 10% of the total Indian tribal population resides in Chhattisgarh.(Census of India. Provisional Population Totals, 2011).(Jeyakumar*et al*., 2022)

1. **OBJECTIVE OF THE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY**

As previously articulated, the primary aim of this review paper was to investigate the Community-Based Ecotourism in Chhattisgarh. Employing a narrative review methodology, the author synthesized findings from empirical research conducted across various regions of Chhattisgarh pertaining to the challenges and opportunities inherent in Community-Based Ecotourism. The studies reviewed comprised an array of published research works. These scholarly articles were sourced from the internet using search terms and phrases such as ‘Ecotourism in Chhattisgarh,’ ‘Challenges of Community-Based Ecotourism in Chhattisgarh,’ and ‘Opportunities for Ecotourism Development in Chhattisgarh’ within Google and other relevant platforms.

1. **FINDINGS**

In this section, the findings from reviewed studies regarding constraints and opportunities of Community based ecotourism in Chhattisgarh are briefly discussed.

1. **BASTAR**:The Bastar district in Chhattisgarh has historical and cultural significance. It has dense forests, hills, waterfalls, caves, and diverse wildlife, making it scenic. Approximately 70% of the tribal population, including Gond, Maria, Muriya, Bhatra, Halba, and Dhruva communities, live in Bastar. The region has emerged as a prominent tourist destination, celebrated for its rich biodiversity of flora and fauna (Yash et al., 2024). Although ecotourism is valuable for Bastar's development, challenges must be overcome. Infrastructure constraints in remote areas can hinder tourism growth. Lack of awareness and training among local communities is a barrier. Balancing tourism with tribal culture is crucial. Marketing and promotion efforts are needed to attract the right visitors. Increased tourism can impact local prices. ( Thakur & Tiwari, 2024)

Bastar Tourism organized various promotional events with the help of the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board and district administration of Bastar and Dantewada & and other local partners for the change of thoughts of tourists that the Bastar is a dispute zone. Bastar tourism provides for staying tourists at their homes and the local communities get real services for innovation like selling their handicraft products to tourists. The activities are done in special Chitrakote, tirtha, Dantewada, plantar, Phoolpad, dholki bars, etc.(Kishan& Goyal,2024).

Table 1: An Overall Scenario of Community-Based Ecotourism in Chhattisgarh

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Total Self-Help Group (SHG) |  30+ |
| Total Homestays  | 25+ |
| Total locations  | 35+ |
| Total People Directly and Indirectly Involved  | 3000+ |
| Gender Distribution  | 70% Male, 30% Female |
| Number of client hosts in Tirtha campsite for FY 2023-24  | 1100+ |
| Total Earnings for Other Campsites and People Directly and Indirectly Involved  | 1Cr+ |
| Earnings  | 20L+ (including boat services, trekking, homestays, etc.) |

(Nema,2025)

The impact of ecotourism on rural communities and the environment was explored in Bastar district waterfall regions, involving discussions with villagers and tourists. Sustainable ecotourism in Bastar requires multifaceted developments focused on nature, minimal impact management, and environmental education, while also supporting conservation efforts and benefiting the local community. Ecotourism could create employment opportunities for locals through entrepreneurial initiatives. (Kumar& Barua,2020) Fig1.Tourist opinions and infrastructure improvement satTirathgarh water fall in Kanger Valley National Park. (Kumar and Padmawati , 2023). Fig2.Tourist opinions and in frastructure improvement satChitrakote waterfall at Lohandiguda. (Kumar and Padmawati , 2023).

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Table 2: Number of Tourists Staying in Hotel/Motel at Chitrakote, Chhattisgarh, between 2014 to 2023

|  |
| --- |
| **District Bastar:Number of TouristsStayin****Hotel/Motel,Chitrakote(2014-2023)** |
| year | DomesticTourist | Foreigner Tourists | Total Tourist |
| 2014 | 11490 | 254 | 11744 |
| 2015 | 11472 | 309 | 11781 |
| 2016 | 18394 | 162 | 18556 |
| 2017 | 8361 | 152 | 8513 |
| 2018 | 22257 | 216 | 22473 |
| 2019 | 22377 | 246 | 22623 |
| 2020 | 3240 | 448 | 3688 |
| 2021 | 9348 | 0 | 9348 |
| 2022 | 29303 | 36 | 29339 |
| 2023 | 33228 | 54 | 33282 |
| **Source:**TourismDepartment,Govt.of C.G.,2023. |

1. **BHORAMDEO WILDLIFE SANCTUARY**

The state of Chhattisgarh is known for 3 its ecological richness, cultural heritage, and natural diversity. The Bhoramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary in Kabirdham district is ideal for ecotourism. This sanctuary, with its natural beauty and Baiga community, has great potential for eco-tourism.( Navin. & Dutta, 2023).

Plant play a vital role in the daily life of local people for nutrition, income, and health care. The Bhoramdeo Wild life Sanctuary relies on wild plant resources and traditional knowledge. Promote these species for cultivation and marketing to benefit local tribes. Encourage domestication with sustainable utilization and conservation measures to preserve the gene pool. (Chandravanshi,2019).

Tourist route of Bar measures about 115 km and forest route of kothari measures about 60 km. The total tourist route of barnawapara wild sanctuary measures about 175 km.( Sao*et al* ., 2018).

A few villages in and around the Bhoramdeo tiger reserve have not given theirconsent even as they tried to convince the villagers that if Bhoramdeo becomes a tiger reserve, there will be a lot of livelihood opportunities for locals. (Niyogi, 2021).

The initiative undertaken by the forest division of Kabirdham to create the Bhoramdeo sanctuary for the safeguarding and preservation of wildlife serves as an exemplary paradigm. This commendable effort is anticipated to produce remarkably advantageous results as the tourism industry is fostered, leveraging the stunning natural landscapes of the forest, complemented by the exhilarating experience of witnessing wildlife in their authentic environments. (Thiske*et al* ., 2024).

1. **BARNAWAPARA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY**

The ecotourism potential of the Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary in Chhattisgarh is noteworthy, especially for indigenous tribes. The sanctuary in the eastern part of the state has diverse flora and fauna, historical temples (Sirpur, Turturiya, Matagarh, Shivrinarayana, Giroudhpuri, Chatapahaad), waterfalls (Siddhkhol), hill resorts (Dev Hills Darshan), and picnic spots. Chhattisgarh is an essential destination for tourism enthusiasts. (Pandey *et al*., 2021).

 The plan advocates for region-wise eco-circuits, community-based tourism models, improved accessibility, environmental education, and international branding. By aligning ground realities with forward-thinking policy, Chhattisgarh can emerge not only as a sustainable tourism destination but also as a model for eco-driven prosperity and inclusive development.(Pushpender&Rajshekha, 2024).

Man-animal conflict has been observed to be quite prevalent, particularly involving the Sloth Bear and Leopard. Given that the location serves as a significant attraction for both tourists and pilgrims, its natural habitat has been found to be deteriorating progressively. (Bhattacharyya& Murmu,2007).

Carrying capacity of tourists should be controlled with limited entry passes. Educate guides and caretakers for international tourists. Upgrade facilities for international tourists. Develop habitats for more wildlife sightings. Plan Interpretation Center and Natures Trail. Market local handicrafts more. Improve facilities like post office, health center, bus service, educational institutions. Plan studies on habitat and waterhole utilization. Limit unproductive cattle and immunize all cattle to reduce grazing pressure. Provide alternatives to forest fuel wood for villages. Train villagers and forest staff for successful conservation strategy.(Singh S. K. I.F.S. , 2003).

1. **UDANTI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY:**

Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary was established in the year 1983. The sanctuary lies in a total area of 237.28 sq km. The sanctuary situated on Raipur-Deobhog state highway of Chhattisgarh-Orissa border at a distance of 162 km away from Raipur. Udanti wildlife sanctuary derives its name from the river flowing from west to east throughout the sanctuary. The river divides the sanctuary into almost equal halves of a well forested area of South-Eastern Raipur district. The forest types of the area represent tropical deciduous forest. The sanctuary was notified as Wildlife Sanctuary in the year 1985. More than 80% of the area is covered by different forest types. ( Singh,& vishwavidyalaya, I. G. K, 2008).

The sanctuary underscores the importance of advocating for sustainable tourism practices and nurturing constructive relationships with local communities through:

1. Eco-Development Initiatives: Facilitating local livelihoods and educational programs.
2. Livelihood Support: Collaborating with local communities to promote indigenous products and services.
3. Community Engagement: Actively involving local populations in conservation endeavors and the decision-making processes. (Chhattisgarh Tourism Board. (n.d.), 2025 ) (Government of Chhattisgarh. (n.d.), 2025 )

In the context of the Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary, community-based ecotourism (CBET) not only fosters economic development but also enhances local conservation efforts by engaging residents in sustainable practices. As local communities become stakeholders in tourism, they are more likely to advocate for the protection of their natural resources, thereby creating a symbiotic relationship between conservation and economic gain. Moreover, studies have shown that CBET can significantly raise awareness among locals regarding the ecological importance of their surroundings, leading to a more informed populace that values biodiversity and sustainability . (Mohanty*et al*., 2024)

1. **JASHPUR DISTRICT**

Jashpur has untapped tourism potential with natural and cultural resources. Positioning it as a prime ecotourism destination while preserving its environment and heritage is key. The unique blend of beauty and richness offers a chance to develop a distinctive ecotourism brand. Sustainable practices and community involvement can attract responsible travelers. Ecotourism initiatives could boost the economy, aid conservation, and preserve culture.. (Xaxa&Tiwari, 2024).

1. **Tourist Places In jashpur District**

Jashpur district is said to be rich in the area of natural eco-tourism, there are dozens of waterfalls, Caves and sanctuary are found there. Hilly region of Saarudih in Jashpur,favorable for the growth of tea. Cultivation and production of tea in Saarudih tea garden is fully operated by tribal women; this is a good example of women empowerment especially in backward tribal area. These tea gardens create a new identity of Chhattisgarh as a tea cultivator and tea producer state in India’s map. (Patel, 2021).-

1. **Concerns about Resource Management:**There's a need for better management of natural resources, including biodiversity, and for ensuring fair benefit-sharing with local communities, particularly traditional healers. (Bio-Diversity Conservation Work Group, Jashpur).
2. **Cultural Sensitivity and Respect:**Failing to incorporate community practices and values can lead to cultural insensitivity and alienation. [(Thi Duong](https://www.tandfonline.com/author/Duong%2C%2BMinh-Phuong%2BThi) *et al* ., 2024).
3. **CONCLUSION**

The review of various studies highlighted significant obstacles to the development of community-based ecotourism, including inadequate infrastructure and facilities, competing interests in resource utilization, and a shortage of skilled personnel. While ecotourism in Bastar holds immense potential for economic and environmental benefits, its success hinges on overcoming key challenges. Infrastructure improvements, community involvement, sustainable tourism practices, and strategic promotion are vital to ensuring that tourism development remains both responsible and equitable. Striking a balance between economic growth and cultural preservation is crucial for long-term sustainability. The ecotourism sector in Bhoramdeo holds great promise, but several structural and social challenges must be addressed to ensure its sustainability and inclusivity. Strengthening infrastructure, promoting cultural sensitivity, and fostering local community engagement are critical for creating a balanced ecotourism model that benefits both visitors and indigenous residents. Without strategic interventions, ecotourism could inadvertently exacerbate existing disparities rather than serve as a tool for sustainable development. Ecotourism in Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary presents both opportunities and challenges for local communities and environmental sustainability. While it provides economic benefits such as employment for residents and avenues for cultural exchange, it also raises concerns regarding environmental degradation, improper waste disposal, and insufficient infrastructure. Ensuring a balanced ecotourism model that uplifts local livelihoods without compromising ecological integrity is essential. Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary stands as a vital ecological zone with rich biodiversity and significant forest cover. Its strategic location and natural beauty offer strong potential for ecotourism. Implementing community-based ecotourism (CBET) in this region not only contributes to economic upliftment of local communities through eco-development and livelihood support but also strengthens conservation efforts by making locals active stakeholders. By integrating sustainable tourism with community engagement, Udanti can achieve a balanced approach where environmental preservation and socio-economic development go hand in hand. This model fosters environmental stewardship, promotes indigenous culture, and ensures long-term sustainability of both nature and local livelihoods. Jashpur district holds immense untapped potential to emerge as a leading ecotourism destination, owing to its rich natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique resources like waterfalls, caves, wildlife sanctuaries, and tribal-led tea gardens. The integration of sustainable ecotourism practices can offer multifaceted benefits—including economic development, biodiversity conservation, and cultural preservation. However, to ensure long-term success, it is essential to address key concerns such as responsible resource management, equitable benefit-sharing with local communities, and deep cultural sensitivity. Community involvement, especially of tribal groups and women, must be central to these efforts to create an inclusive and respectful ecotourism model that benefits both people and the plane.

1. **RECOMMENDATION**

To harness the full potential of ecotourism across regions such as Jashpur, Bastar, Bhoramdeo, Barnawapara, and Udanti, a comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable ecotourism policy must be meticulously developed and implemented, incorporating the following pivotal recommendations:

1. Invest in Infrastructure and Fundamental Facilities - Enhance accessibility, eco-friendly accommodations, sanitation, waste management systems, and interpretive centers, all while preserving ecological integrity. Special emphasis should be placed on remote tribal areas endowed with abundant tourism assets yet suffering from inadequate connectivity.
2. Empower and Engage Local Communities - Ensure the meaningful involvement of local residents—particularly tribal groups, women, and youth—in the planning, management, and benefits derived from ecotourism initiatives. Prioritizing training programs, capacity-building workshops, and the establishment of community cooperatives is essential.
3. Promote Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET) - Encourage the adoption of CBET models that harmoniously integrate conservation with livelihood enhancement. This includes fostering homestays, local handicrafts, traditional gastronomy, and guided nature and culture-based experiences led by local inhabitants.
4. Enhance Skill Development and Capacity Building - Initiate dedicated skill development programs in hospitality, eco-guiding, environmental education, language proficiency, and entrepreneurship to address the existing gap in trained personnel.
5. Establish a Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Framework - Formulate guidelines for the regular assessment of environmental impact, visitor conduct, benefit-sharing mechanisms, and cultural integrity to ensure that tourism development remains ethical, sustainable, and minimally invasive.
6. Promote Cultural Sensitivity and Respect - All tourism initiatives must encompass cultural orientation for visitors, an appreciation for local customs, and platforms to celebrate and preserve indigenous traditions and knowledge systems.
7. Develop Strategic Promotion and Marketing - Construct a formidable ecotourism brand for each region—highlighting its distinctive attributes—and promote it through digital platforms, ecotourism circuits, and responsible travel networks.
8. Encourage Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration - Facilitate partnerships among government entities, NGOs, local bodies, research institutions, and tourism operators to cultivate a well-coordinated and holistic ecotourism ecosystem.

By embracing these recommendations, Chhattisgarh can forge a resilient ecotourism model that not only amplifies economic opportunities for its populace but also safeguards its remarkable natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

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