

Sustainability of Ecotourism Related Activities in the Town of Yercaud: A Modeling Study

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Abstract : Tourism related activities are getting popular day by day and tourism has become an integral part of everyone's life. Ecotourism initiatives have grown enormously in the past decade, and the concept of ecotourism has shown to bring great benefits in terms of environment conservation and to improve the livelihood of local people. However, the potential of ecotourism to sustain improving the livelihood of the local population in the remote future is a topic of active debate. A primary challenge that exists in this regard is the enormous costs of limiting the impacts of tourism related activities on the environment. Here we employed systems modeling approach using computer simulations to determine if ecotourism activities in the small hill town of Yercaud (Tamil Nadu, India) can be sustained over years in improving the livelihood of the local population. Increasing damage to the natural environment as a result of tourism-related activities have plagued the pristine hill station of Yercaud. Though ecotourism efforts can help conserve the environment and enrich local population, questions remain if this can be sustained in the distant future. The vital state variables in the model are the existing tourism foundation (labor, services available to tourists, etc.,) in the town of Yercaud and its natural environment (water, flora and fauna). Another state variable is the textile industry that drives the local economy. Our results would help to understand if environment conservation efforts are sustainable in Yercaud and would also offer suggestions to make it sustainable over the course of several years.

Keywords : ecotourism, simulations, modeling, Yercaud

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