

# The current approaches to ecotourism

[Sport & Tourism](#), [Ecotourism](#)



\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

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1. [Current Approaches to Ecotourism](#) \n \t
2. [Examples of Ecotourism](#) \n \t
3. [Ecotourism – the Ideal versus the Real](#) \n \t
4. [Conclusion](#) \n \t
5. [Reference lists](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Ecotourism has been the fastest growing segment of the global tourism industry and has developed on the tourism market within the core of environmental movement as well as becoming continuously important in the tourism industry (Matei, 2011). However, before ecotourism is emerged, tourism has been rapidly become one of the most important part of economic growth in the world. While tourism has been contributed to the source of economic development, conventional mass tourism growth has resulted in the numerous negative impacts on tourism destination, such as the destruction of ecological systems, loss of cultural heritage, cultural commodification and inter-cultural conflict (Weaver, 2008; Lansing & Vries, 2007). In late 1980s, the realization of these problems has led to the development of sustainable tourism (Hugo, 2010). Sustainable tourism has been on the basis of responsible travel to natural areas that preserve the destination’s environment and has reminded as a type of tourism, which positively contributes to visitor satisfaction, incorporates an element of environmental education, delivers benefit to poor local communities and also assists the local communities to maintain their cultural features (Matei, <https://assignbuster.com/the-current-approaches-to-ecotourism/>

2011). Additionally, sustainable tourism is regarded as the role of marketing tool to promote and advertise any form of tourism associated with nature based and also the money from sustainable tourism is reinvested in order to environmentally protect and preserve tourism destination as well as significantly develop the access of the local people to jobs creation and civilization (Matei, 2011). In addition, these new forms of tourism are proposed to simultaneously fulfill the needs of different parties involved, such as delivering revenues and profits to the tourism industry, responsible travel experiences to the increasingly wealthy tourist and economic growth combined with environmental and socio-cultural protection to host countries and communities (Lansing & Vries, 2007). As a result of this reason, many countries have considered of sustainable tourism, which is meant by a travel to natural destinations (remote areas) under environmental protection at the international, national, regional or private level (Honey, 2008).

## **Current Approaches to Ecotourism**

The core current approaches to ecotourism development are suggested two ideal types of the approaches in relation to the level of sustainability outcomes. Those approaches are “ comprehensive approach and minimalist approach”. The first ideal type of the approaches to ecotourism is “ minimalist approach”. The minimalists approach emphasizes a basic or shallow understanding and learning opportunities based on elemental perspective. An elemental approach is evident at the other end of the continuum when a product focuses on specific non-captive animals or plants that are deemed to be particularly attractive or interesting, such as charismatic megafauna or megafauna (Weaver, 2005). In contrast, the

other ideal type of the approaches to ecotourism is “comprehensive approach” which adopts a holistic perspective on the product that incorporates the ecosystem into associated human influences so that the implication of cultural component is more likely to be integrated into the interpretive experiences than recognized as attraction (Schianetz, Kavanagh & Lockington, 2007). The minimalist approach does not intentionally have desire for transforming values or behavior and its approach to sustainability is associated with site-specific, status quo oriented as well merely as natural environment (Weaver, 2005) whereas the comprehensive approach is purposed to enhance deep understanding and deliberately transform participant attitudes and behavior (Schianetz, Kavanagh & Lockington, 2007).

Furthermore, according to Weaver (2005), it is believed that the implementation of the comprehensive approach utilized by the managers in destinations is more likely to provide the objectives of environmental and sociocultural sustainability to tourism destinations. By fostering a more environmentally aware and activist market, comprehensive approach is conducive to the development of the product that benefits from donations and eagerness to engage in volunteer activity such as research assistance, and informal policing. When the comprehensive approach combines with the emphasis on enhancement based global and environmental and sociocultural enhancement, the volunteer activity for the rehabilitation and reclamation of habitat, which has been considerably transformed by human activity is channeled though the opportunity emerged. By contrast, according to Weaver (2005), the minimalist approach may hinder the attainment of the

sustainability objectives. Therefore, the problems of the minimalist approach is mainly likely to be occurred from the element approach to construct species hierarchies, and thereby charismatic megafauna is more likely to be highly assessed by the managers but is not less ecologically valuable species. However, its attention will be able to ironically become damaging consequences to the charismatic megafauna by encouraging prolonged intrusive contact with humans. Generally, the process of observing wildlife is more likely to result in subtle negative effects by carrying out an inadvertently inappropriate manner. From a sustainability perspective that is global enhancement within a combined environmental, sociocultural and economic that includes local community, both minimalist and comprehensive approach appear to fulfill the imperatives of financial sustainability and high levels of satisfaction (Schianetz, Kavanagh & Lockington, 2007).

## **Examples of Ecotourism**

Two-ecotourism case study have been identified and analyzed. The first ecotourism case is Sumba Island in Indonesia. The remote island of Sumba is one of the poorest islands in Indonesia although Sumba Island is culturally one of the richest islands with very strong ancient tradition and strong heritage (The Sumba Foundation, 2012). In Sumba Island, most of the residents live without access to clean water, basic health care and education and also malnutrition is among the highest in the world (The Sumba Foundation, 2012). Nihiwatu has become a major employer of villagers in Sumba Island and the purpose of Nihiwatu is to develop the quality of life for it Sumbanese neighbor throughout responsible tourism (Nihiwatu, 2012). The main stakeholders are eco resort villages that obtain a large amount of

funding from guest vacationing in order to support the local community projects by donating (Nihiwatu, 2012). Nihiwatu as an eco resort has commenced local community development projects and has closely cooperated with The Sumba Foundation to take the projects to a higher level (Nihiwatu, 2012). The projects are in relation to creating sustainable livelihood and jobs, achieving energy efficiency and adequate supply, food and water supply. The project makes peoples' lives clearly visible so health and local welfare has been changed much better and the hygiene conditions of clinics and villages are significantly improved (The Sumba Foundation, 2012). From the project's perspective, Nihiwatu eco resort has importantly taken the concepts of sustainable development. The resort has considered of local residents neighbors by having responsibility so after purchasing land, the landowner has taken not only the land, but also the responsibility of taking care of the land and its society (Nihiwatu, 2012). Moreover, Nihiwatu eco resort has become one of the merely hotels in the world which utilize 100% powered by bio-fuel and renewable energy source as well as recycling everything so that carbon emission which results in climate change has been decreased (Sumba, 2012).

Eco resort village in Sumba Island culturally and socially influences on young generation. The value of frequent informal interaction with tourists is likely to afford the opportunities to practice English skills and also to experience adverse social cultural impacts associated with ecotourism, which is concerned with the impact on young generation conduct between unappreciated sexual conduct and consumption alcohol that is vastly different from their culture (Clifton & Benson, 2006). Furthermore, the

economic benefit associated with eco resort village tourism provides the optimism in regard to income generating opportunities, which derive from direct employment, rental of accommodation for tourists or the sale of handicrafts and food (Clifton & Benson, 2006). It is seen that the rental of accommodation has economically generated the benefits for the wide local communities because the accommodations has been owned and operated by the local residents as well as having been built specifically for the purpose. In addition, the sale of handicrafts and food has provided the opportunity to participation in to a greater variety of individuals and groups, such as women, the young and old members of the local communities (Clifton & Benson, 2006). Consequently, this eco resort village is fundamentally important for residents' life so if the village culture is damaged, the residents will be ruined. This benefits related with village ecotourism is likely to be regard as both reflecting and reinforcing social capital in the local communities (Clifton & Benson, 2006).

The second ecotourism case is Song Saa Private Island in Cambodia. Song Saa Private Island is officially known as Koh Bong and Koh Quen and has renown for the rich and diverse marine life in their surrounding waters (Song Saa, 2012). Song Saa Private Island integrates commercial development with the triple bottom lines of ecological (biophysical), social and economic sustainability by emphasizing on sustainability and high exemplary environmental standards (Song Saa, 2012). The relevance of the triple bottom-line concept and sustainability approach are the central to the purpose and mission statement of Song Saa private Island so as to improve the environment, the condition of local communities and the economy (Song

Saa, 2012). Song Saa Private Island positively or negatively influences on environment in terms of water, energy, solid waste, biodiversity, pollution and contamination. According to the report (Sustainable Management Plan, 2012), Water discharged from Song Saa Private Island, such as grey-water, sewage and storm-water sources results in damage to local wildlife and ecosystems and alteration of water has negative impact on human communities and local ecosystems. The inefficient use of energy has increased carbon in the atmosphere and contributed to global warming (climate change). Solid waste inflows have negative impact on local flora and fauna and associated habitats. Construction and operation of the resort and guest and staff activities have an adverse impact on local biodiversity by destroying, displacing or stressing animals, vegetation or their associated ecosystems. Physical, visual and ambient pollution detracts from amenity, intrinsic and cultural values of the landscape and the environment. Chemicals (cleaning products, insecticides, chlorine & herbicides), guest and staff sunscreens, insect repellants result in damage to reef systems.

In addition, Song Saa Private Island also has negative or positive effects on social cultural and economic based on the local communities. Song Saa Private Island provides the opportunities throughout the local community program and conservation program to weave together the needs of local peoples (Sustainable Management Plan, 2012). These programs focuses on the support communities throughout activities that promote sustainable livelihoods and the process which create enabling conditions that generate local welfare. This development of the projects is fundamentally based on working with government and community institutions, networks and norms



to achieve tangible and positive outcomes (Sustainable Management Plan, 2012). Song Saa' community and conservation program provides the development of educational opportunities for the local villagers so that local people increase their awareness and understanding of environmental issue and opportunities; increasing the knowledge and understanding of marine conservation among the inhabitants of local fishing village (Song Saa Conservation and Community Program, 2012). Furthermore, the conservation and community projects efficiently manage the flow of solid waste from the villages. This management provides an income stream through the provision of incentive payments to the village waste collectors and an additional income stream through the sale of recyclable materials for the local community when the solid waste and recycle management contributes to the health of the village (Song Saa Conservation and Community Program, 2012). Song Saa Private Island has participated in the water system, which is established for local community health as a core component of sustainable livelihood maintenance throughout the provision of safe domestic water supply and the protection of water supply from contamination. The water system works with the local community and local providers to improve environmentally sensitive water treatment and waste reticulation system so as a result of the water systems, local community is given an effective water management and unique livelihood activities such as snail and frog rearing (Song Saa Conservation and Community Program, 2012).

## **Ecotourism – the Ideal versus the Real**

In order to establish sustainable tourism development, the strong interaction between environment and human must need. However, it is not easy to fulfill and assess the sustainability of tourism destination because of the complex conduct and the use of the variety approaches, which are in possession of different strengths and weaknesses depending on the characteristics of the tourism destinations. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the available approaches and use its correct usage in order to develop sustainable tourism. The possible approach to develop sustainable tourism development needs to be carefully considered of the positive impact on the relationship between economic, social cultural and environment component within the triple bottom line approach. The triple bottom line approach requires the balance of three components (ecological, economic and social) in order to generate sustainability to the tourism development.

As described two ecotourism cases, the triple bottom line is basically associated with sustainability so if the ecotourism development and products do not carefully consider of three components, one of components will gain damage by unbalancing three components. For example, if tourism development is more likely to provide the benefit to the tourists without any concern about environment in the destinations, the environment in the destinations will suffer from tourists' activity. In addition, local community and culture will be also damaged by visiting tourists if not considered of local environment and culture when the tourism develops. The local culture may be probably changed by direct or indirect impact from tourist' behavior and attitude toward local community. Although by contacting with tourists, the

positive or negative different culture is likely to come into local community, the problem is that the local community will not be able to conserve.

Therefore, in order to protect and prevent these potential problems in the tourism destinations, comprehensive approach is more likely to be appropriate for the current sustainable tourism development than minimalist approach because comprehensive ecotourism considers nature-based and cultural as the attractions as well as global, environmental and sociocultural enhancement for sustainability. For example, minimalist ecotourism focuses on particular species so this approach is easy to provide the greater tourist satisfaction but the approach is less likely to contribute to the development of local community and culture without changes. However, comprehensive approach tends to have the more positive impacts on both environmental and local community in terms of economic, social culture and ecological because of the broader attractions (including nature-based and culture), deep understanding and learning of the tourism destinations. So, this approach will be reasonably utilized as an appreciate approach according to the characteristic of the tourism destinations and the needs of environment and local community in regard of ecological, social cultural and economic.

## **Conclusion**

Ecotourism is the biggest movement among tourism industry and also has been rapidly growing up in global tourism industry. Sustainable tourism development associated with ecotourism is regarded as the important tourism approach to tourism destinations in the world. With sustainability approach, the tourism destinations have been significantly considering of

environmental and socio cultural protection. This big movement directly or indirectly influences on environment and local community and culture in the tourism destination. Consequently, the accurate approaches toward the tourism development and products are considerably required according to the characteristic of the tourism destinations in order to sustain the tourism development.

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