

Evaluation of ecotourism in indonesia

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



Tourism is one of the largest and most universal economic pinnacles.

Tourism is described as “ the practice of traveling for recreation” (Dictionary.com, n. d.). With the rising trend of people wanting to travel and explore different cultures and places, tourism has never been a more booming industry. Many people around the world are so dependent on tourism that one of every ten jobs are supported by tourism. Economically, global tourism is said to be the largest industry in the world with its global economic contribution of over \$7. 6 billion (Shaulova et. al. Biagi, 2018). What is it that makes tourism so appealing? Aside from the Instagram posts showing your friends that you can take a basic selfie in an international city, tourism allows people to experience at first-hand what being a local a non-native city is like for a short time. While there are many different types of tourism, one has seen a rise in popularity in the past decade.

Ecotourism is one of the most progressive styles of tourism in recent time. The term is defined by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) as “ responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improves the well-being of local people” (What is Ecotourism?, n. d.). While the description may be broad, ecotourism goes beyond the moderately sustainable practices of other tourism types to focus on the sustainability of the environment and culture. According to the webpage The International Ecotourism Society for something to be classified as ecotourism, parties have to follow specific criterion. The first criteria is that the practice must minimize impact meaning that there can't be a high environmental cost or deterioration that follows. The next criteria is that the practice must build environmental and cultural awareness and respect. Another principle is that

the practice must provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts meaning that both parties but be mutually respectable to each other's cultural differences and lifestyles. The fourth criteria is that the practice must provide direct financial benefits for conservations in the way that profits are donated towards local and national environmental preservation. Another criteria is that it also must provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people including offering employment, supporting the local economy, and preserving historically sacred land. The last criteria states that there should to be raised awareness to the host countries' political, environmental, and social climate to educate outsiders and focus attention on issues in need of change (What is Ecotourism?, n. d.). In full circle, these six criterion must be met in order for a practice to be considered ecotourism.

The movement became recognized in 1990 and has since extended to over 190 different countries (TIES Overview, n. d.). Southeast Asia is an area that has seen significant benefits from the rise of ecotourism. Southeast Asia is comprised of many developing countries with political unrest. The ecotourism movement has been gaining tractions in countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam but there are obstacles blocking them from reaching their full potential in the ecotourism realm. Ecotourism relies on the cooperation of the government to set guidelines and regulations to companies and local communities to ensure that lands are protected, just practices are maintained, and proper funding is provided (Boo, 1990). Many of these countries have unjust government systems which is a sufficient barrier for enacting the greatest possible means of ecotourism as possible (Ecotourism in Southeast Asia, n. d.). For protecting certain areas of the

country for tourism, the lack of communication between the policymakers and tourism companies makes it difficult and slow to make progress on designating of land for tourism services. Government funding is also helpful in building the infrastructure of the tourism companies structures and building. Government in many of these countries have recognized the potential economic gain but have taken little action to implement the service (Boo, 1990) To uphold the label of being environmentally sustainable the companies need to use sustainable and environmentally friendly practices. A failure to provide proper funding may result in companies using less sustainable or efficient practices to afford to build infrastructure. The funding would be recouped by the economical increase to both the local community and ultimately the government (Scheynvens, 1999). While there is a lack of government cooperation, there are many countries who have succeeded in ecotourism immersion given these circumstances.

Ecotourism thrives in areas that have beautiful and well-maintained natural attractions for tourists to indulge about. Southeast Asia is known for having some of the most exotic and breathtaking natural landscapes in the world. The vastness of the natural beauty gives Southeast Asia leverage for ecotourism to grow and flourish. The combination of superior sights to see and inexpensive resources and labor makes Southeast Asia one the potential to be the most influential areas for ecotourism in the world.

Indonesia is a country on the southern tip of Southeast Asia and is one of the most glorious places in the world. The country is comprised of over 17, 500 different islands and is known for its vast biodiversity (The Rich Biodiversity

in Indonesia, n. d.). In fact, the country is the second most biodiverse country in the world behind Brazil (The Rich Biodiversity in Indonesia, n. d.).

Indonesia has a more cohesive government which enables ecotourism to be supported and grow at a faster rate than other Southeast Asian countries.

The landscape of the country supports a diverse array of different flora and fauna species. Indonesia holds over 10% of the world's flora species, 12% of the world's mammal species, 16% of the world's reptile species, and 17% of the world's bird species (Biodiversity Conservation in Indonesia, n. d.).

Considering the fact that Indonesia only occupies 1.3% of the world's land surface, the amount of species inhabited in the country is highly proportionate to the land area. The country is also known for its immense presence of different cultures and tribes. The country has over 300 different ethnic groups. Between the islands of Papua and West Papua, there are over 250 different languages spoken (About West Papua, n. d.). The distance between the two places is 395 miles away providing the incredible diversity within the country. All these factors allow Indonesia to be one of the most opportunistic countries for ecotourism.

In retrospect, ecotourism appears to be ultimately beneficial for a nation's environment and population but there are many threats that accompany the practice as well. Ecotourism aims to improve the efficiency and conditions of the country's environmental, economic, and political systems but with lack of regulation and oversight the tourism style could potentially do more harm than good. In fact, tourism garnered a whopping \$10 billion in Indonesia in 2013, making up 9.1 percent of the country's GDP (Chen, 2014). The benefits to ecotourism include increasing natural resources and historical

heritage, establishing community involvement, increasing awareness and appreciation for nature and the culture, growing the market at an international and national level, and being a means to achieve sustainable economy (Agustina, 2018). Given that rules and regulations are followed, these benefits could significantly improve the environmental maintenance and well-being of the local population. If the guidelines are not followed or are overlooked, then there are many costs to both the ecosystem and inhabitants. Some common risks of ecotourism include maintaining ecosystem and cultural integrity, consequences of wildlife theft, damage of flora species, increased pollution and waste, and reduction of wildlife reproduction (Agustina, 2018).

The potential risks are results of unregulated practices that tourism companies take in order to expedite operations or minimize costs to manipulate travelers. There are many instances where companies have greenwashed their packages to appear as if they are benefitting the environment or local communities when in reality they are causing more harm. With the rise of ecotourism, many companies are tapping into the practice as more and more travelers environmentally-friendly tourism and are willing to pay a premium for it. Some companies are falsely-promoting their services and misleading tourists to support their unethical and non-sustainable practices. Companies will include common environmental jargon to sway tourists into tapping into their business when in reality they are supporting environmental and cultural destruction (Foster, 2016). Many tourists and analysts are recognizing this trend and now know how to question the validity of the company.

In Indonesia, there are many hindrances on the environment that are compromising the sustainability of the future. Deforestation has become a problematic threat to the environments and organisms inhabiting the forests. In the early 1900's it was reported that there were over 170 millions hectares of rainforests dispersed across the country while today there are only 98 million hectares of rainforests decreasing the number by almost 50% (Squire, 2012). The rapid destruction of natural forests has prompted governments to impose many regulations to combat deforestation. Despite the enactment of these procedures, annual primary forest loss continues to rise as 80% of the forests that are removed are done illegally. In 2012, there was a loss of nearly 850, 000 hectares of land (Butler, 2014). That number is tripled from the nearly 270, 000 hectares that were lost in 2002 (Butler, 2014). Deforestation threatened the biodiversity of Indonesia as these forests provided habitats, nourishment and protection for many species. Progress was made in 2017 when the deforestation rate was reduced by 60% from the year prior due to the enactment of a restoration plan to restore 2. 4 million hectares of land (Hamzah et. al. Juliane et. al. Samadhi et. al. Wijaya, 2018). The restoration plan includes ensuring there to be a suitable water level and banning of all new land clearing. As there was growth, there are still threats of deforestation in the future due to many pulpwood and palm oil companies purchasing concession permits prior to the protection efforts (Hamzah et. al. Juliane et. al. Samadhi et. al. Wijaya, 2018). This progressive movement is evident that government involvement does result in improvements on environmental measures and if more action was taken then environmental conditions would improve.

When forests are destroyed, it clears areas up for poachers to have a clear shot at their desired species. The clearance of land takes away protection that many prey species depend on to protect themselves against predators or poachers. There are many times when the two practices of deforestation and poaching go hand-and-hand as poachers burn down terrain and the forests in order to make poaching easier. Due to the poor economic stability of Indonesia and low per-capita income, many citizens have become dependent on the poaching practice in order to maintain a stable lifestyle for their families and themselves. The native Sumatran Tiger has been a controversial species who are commonly poached and was put on the list of endangered species in 2008 as a result (Sumatran Tiger: An Endangered Species, n. d.). Poaching have primarily targeted this species due to the high monetary gain they receive from selling the dead animals. The Sumatran Tiger can sell for up to 5, 000 USD which is nearly double the average annual income for a person in Indonesia (Squire, 2012). This incentive is enough to overlook the fact that these species are now endangered and there's an estimated 500 tigers left. This number is reduced by one half from the reported 1, 000 tigers observed in 1978 (Sumatran Tiger: An Endangered Species, n. d.). Poaching has also instigated many other indigenous species to join the list of endangered animals.

The island of Sumatra has also significantly become victim to the threats of deforestation and poaching. Sumatra is the largest island in western Indonesia and is home to some of the most biodiverse array of species throughout Southeast Asia. Deforestation has been significantly detrimental to the islands inhabitants' as many of the native species have become

endangered. Over 50% of the rainforests have decreased over the past 35 years (Aldred, 2008). The Sumatran ground cuckoo, tiger, elephant, rhinoceros, and orangutan have all been placed on the endangered species list in the past 35 years due to the lack of regulation and environmental integrity by both the government and the citizens alike (Aldred, 2008). The method commonly used is the slash-and-burn method which involves clear-cutting a forest land and burning the vegetation that remains. This method has caused international conflict between Indonesia and neighboring countries. Malaysia and Singapore are both very close in proximity to Sumatra and have consequently receive the smoke resulting from the slashing and burning, (BBC, 2013). Although the smoke from this method does not negatively impact ones health, it leaves a haze in the atmosphere that makes the air quality appear poor. At the rapid rate that the ecosystem is deteriorating, Indonesia will be a barren country in the next century.

How does this play into ecotourism? While many poorer and developing countries like Indonesia would typically have their whole economy dependent on their landscape and natural resources. These resources are oversaturated and exhausted out of desperate need for economic gain which results in deteriorating forests, minerals and land that has the potential for agricultural use, (Green, 2018). With the integration of ecotourism, Indonesia can significantly reverse their harmful eco-footprint. In cooperation with the government, ecotourism companies can afford to buy the land of natural ecosystems and assure it's sustainably preserved and maintained for the travelers experience. While there are some consequences of anthropogenic impacts to natural ecosystems, there are more benefits to ecotourism. There

have been multiple instances where the introduction of ecotourism has resulted in protected land and sustainable practices for the environment and community.

The unsustainable and destructive practices aren't exclusive to land. After taking note of the information presented in the YouTube video "Can ecotourism help save the ocean?", on the coast of Indonesia the increase in destructive fishing practicing and poaching of species has become detrimental to the marine ecosystem and species living within. There are many factors that progressed this damage such as little oversight and control of the issue and desperate need for economic income. Corals and fish stocks have been damaged due to these anthropogenic and illegal activities (Economist, 2018). An Australian couple vacationing in Indonesia were traumatized when they encountered the mass marine mortality and unregulated harm that was continuously happening on the coast (Economist, 2018). They made it their life mission to create an ecotourism community in efforts to save the marine ecosystem and aid the local community (Economist, 2018). They partnered with a local resort and invested to lease of the coastline area to make sure the area was restored and maintained the ecosystem in the future (Economist, 2018). While at first there was difficulties in inhibiting illegal fishing activities, they soon established themselves in the community and drove to give the local community who rely on the ocean alternative methods of making money (Economist, 2018). They designated positions for locals to become marine rangers to protect the ocean against illegal fisherman and also merchants for the growing inflow of ecotourism (Economist, 2018). The success of this model was due to the buy

in from the local community and government. Tourists are recognizing the benefits of paying an ecotourism company verses mass tourism and deciding to give their business to an environmentally sustainable enterprise.

Ecotourism has proven to be successful in other countries and a means of restoring and repairing the environment. In Costa Rica, the rise of ecotourism has overtaken mass tourism and become one of the most profitable and advantageous industries in the country. Because of ecotourism, over 21% and rising of the country has been designated as national-protected land, (Weaver, 2003). In the past, Costa Rica had a deforestation problem like Indonesia's. The national protected land has progressively decreased the amount of deforestation. As of the beginning of the century, nearly half a million miles of land are protected by companies in cooperation with the government, (Yurtoglu, 1998). Simultaneously as more land was protected, more tourists flocked to the country to experience and witness the natural beauty for themselves. Ecotourism now occupies 16% of the countries economy and is continuing to rise, (TCRN, 2017). This is mutually beneficial to the local community as there is less of a necessity for money to be allocated to environmental protection causes and more on poverty and energy, (Roeseh, 2018). My family and I travelled to Costa Rica in 2013 and went on ecotourism expeditions through the jungle and on the coast. We hiked up beautiful, untouched mountains, zip-lines and explored the local culture. The experience was unforgettable and far exceeded a typical mass tourism vacation.

Indonesia would benefit greatly from assimilating and accepting ecotourism into their economy and society. There are an array of positive outcomes that could result from traction gained from ecotourism. A result of ecotourism is a rise of awareness for environmental and societal issues which could act as a call to action for many tourists to make “ green” investments to help the ecosystem and community in protecting new land and aiding new environmental regulations. Without direct “ green” investments, investing in ecotourism simply by preferring and supporting ecotourism creates more jobs and decreases poverty levels in communities. With more money inflow into the economy it equates to more protected land as companies have the assets to lease land and governments comply when they are benefitting as well. If Indonesia could adapt to ecotourism there would be a restoration of destroyed land and reef areas which in turn could revive dying species.

Overall, ecotourism has the potential to change the course of both flora and fauna species in an ecosystem. For many developing countries and even some developed countries, anthropogenic activity is rapidly damaging natural biomes. Species are facing the consequences of the greedy arrogance of humans and are becoming closer and closer to extinction. Ecotourism’s beneficial interests for the environment, economy, and local community could surely save the country’s natural habitats. If the government becomes more cooperative and involved in regulating environmental conservation and would grant the proper funding towards ecotourism, then Indonesia could have a green and flourishing future.

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