

Chapter 2

Analyzing Socio–Economic Impact of Adventure Tourism in the Mountain State: Sikkim, India

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on adventure-based tourism development in popular chapter station of Sikkim that affects tourist movement and socio-economic life of the local communities. This chapter begins with the meaning and importance of adventure tourism and its impact on the tourism business, local societies, and environment of the tourism destination of Sikkim. Qualitative interviews were conducted with tourists, tourism operators and local communities. Findings of this study reveal that regulation of protected areas, legislation, and government programs play an important part in the development of sustainable adventure-based tourism in the study area. Nature education, development of business concepts, and safety of the tourists are the important points of findings. The role of the government and local communities are also highlighted here. These findings are used to suggest implications for policymakers and practitioners.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sikkim is a remote Indian state located in the lap of Himalayan Mountains. The state is bordered by Nepal to the west, Tibet to the north and east, Bhutan to the east and West Bengal to the south. Sikkim is the least populous state in India and the second-smallest state after Goa in total area, covering approximately 7,096 km². The climate of Sikkim ranges from subtropical to high alpine, and the world's third-highest peak 'Kanchenjunga', is located on Sikkim's border with Nepal. Due to its location in the Himalayas, Sikkim is blessed with varieties of flora and fauna. Sikkim is a popular tourist destination,

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due to its geography, landforms, biodiversity, scenery and culture. Sikkim's capital and largest city is Gangtok. There are four districts in Sikkim.

Sikkim is the paradise for nature lovers, botanist & plant lovers. For adventure sports, the state provides trekking trails, hiking path and offers dense forest with rhododendron, ethnic monasteries, glaciers, splendid mountain views, high passes and historical silk routes. The Kanchendzonga, the third highest mountain in the world is in this state. Trekking and hiking in Sikkim offers a great opportunity to the adventure tourists to get variety of hill based adventure sports.

This paper examines various types of adventure sports available and their effect on Tourism Business in Sikkim that affects tourist movement and socio-economic life of the local communities. This article highlights the meaning and importance of adventure tourism and its impact on the Tourism business and local economy in the state. Adventure tourism can be beneficial in terms of conservation and economic benefit to the local people. On the other hand, lack of proper planning can be detrimental to the environment, flora, fauna and local people. Nature education, awareness, impact analysis and measuring carrying capacity, visitor management etc. are essential to reduce negative impact on the socio-economic life of the local people, Responsibility of the local bodies; local communities and tourism service providers are also discussed here.

2. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the Research paper include the following: -

Figure 1. Sikkim political map

Source: Sikkim political map (www.maps of India.com)



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