

# ECOTOURISM AND IT'S SUSTAINABILITY IN SHIMLA CITY: AN ASSESSMENT

*Nisha kumari, Mudita Raj*

<sup>1</sup>M.Sc Geography student, <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor,  
<sup>1</sup>Department of Geography, Lovely Professional University  
<sup>2</sup>Department of Geography, Lovely Professional University  
, Phagwara, India

*Abstract* : Tourism is defined as “the activity of person identified as visitors. A visitor is someone who is making a visit to main destination outside his/her usual environment for less than a year for any main purpose [including] holidays, leisure and recreation, business, health, education or other purposes. This scope is much wider than the traditional perception of tourists which included only those travelling for leisure”. [UNWTO Statistics Guidelines: 2010].

But tourism contains in itself the potential to convert into one of the most ecofriendly industries, provided there is a turnabout of perspectives and adoption of conservative strategies. Environmentally responsible tourism is the latest technique adopted by the countries to overcome the negative effects of tourism. Concepts such as sustainable tourism, eco-tourism have been brought up by the countries to raise awareness of environmental values and serve as a tool to finance protection of natural areas and increase their economic importance. The main purpose of this study was to find out the level of awareness among the natives and the tourists about ecotourism in the study area and to identify the major challenges of Shimla in terms of ecotourism.

Hence the government in collaboration with local people can take up several steps so that the whole concept of ecotourism can be efficiently implemented and can contribute to the development of the region. Further additional initiatives can be taken on the part of tourist and local people to create enough economic opportunity for local communities and to protect the environment as well as the socio-cultural fabric of the region.

Key Words: Ecotourism, Awareness, Tourists, Environment, Policies

## I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is defined as “the activity of person identified as visitors. A visitor is someone who is making a visit to main destination outside his/her usual environment for less than a year for any main purpose [including] holidays, leisure and recreation, business, health, education or other purposes. This scope is much wider than the traditional perception of tourists, which included only those travelling for leisure”. [UNWTO Statistics Guidelines: 2010]. Tourism has taken a shape in the recent years with the increasing population as well as the improving standard of living of the people. Tourism has grown up to be an essential industry by contributing to the economic development of the region. India is considered to be one of the best countries for tourism considering its unique combination of diverse culture and climate conditions. Tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner for India. India's rich historical heritage, enchanting backwaters, hill stations and landscapes have been a major attraction for tourism. India offers a wide portfolio of niche tourism products such as cruises, adventure, medical, rural, religious tourism. India has been widely recognized for spiritual tourism for both local and foreign tourists. Further India ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of travel and tourism sector contribution to the country's GDP according to the report of World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (Economic Times, April 04, 2017). The Government of India has taken major steps such as “Atithi Devo Bhava” Campaign that ensures to “honor the guest as he is equivalent to God” and the “Incredible India” Campaign that helped to popularize the hospitality and generosity of the country to the world.

Unlike all the human activities that have positive effects as well as equally influencing negative effects, even tourism has both the effects. The rampant and indiscriminate growth of tourism and allied activities leads to various economic and environmental hazard as well as changes in local cultures. The negative effects especially on environment will directly have far reaching consequences on the economic growth of the region

## RATIONALE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The paper tries to convey that Ecotourism should be adopted as an instrument for growth and conservation. The study tries to identify the status of the concept of Ecotourism from its functional point of view in the study area it tries to extract the challenges and scope of improvement in the implementation of this concept. Further the paper tries to evaluate the level of awareness among the natives and tourists about the concept of Ecotourism in the study area. The study also tries to understand the policies and guidelines related to Ecotourism in the study area.

## STUDY AREA

Himachal Pradesh is a north Indian state in the Himalayas. It's a home to picturesque mountain towns and resorts. The extent of Himachal Pradesh is  $31^{\circ}6'12''\text{N}$  and  $77^{\circ}10'20''\text{E}$  and overall there are 12 districts. Shimla is a district in Himachal Pradesh, Northern India. Shimla is also known as the Queen of hill stations Shimla is the Himalayan hotspot for backpackers. The latitudinal extend is  $30^{\circ}22'40''\text{N}$  to  $33^{\circ}12'40''$  and the Longitudinal extend is  $75^{\circ}45'55''\text{E}$  to  $79^{\circ}04'20''\text{E}$ . Shimla is one of the largest city of Himachal Pradesh and third most populous district of Himachal Pradesh. Income of Himachal Pradesh is dependent upon two factors that is Tourism and Orchids and the economy of the Shimla is dependent upon tourism and because of this it is generating the employment level over there. One of the world heritage site rail route is also connecting Kalka to Shimla and the preserved gauge is 2ft 6 in.

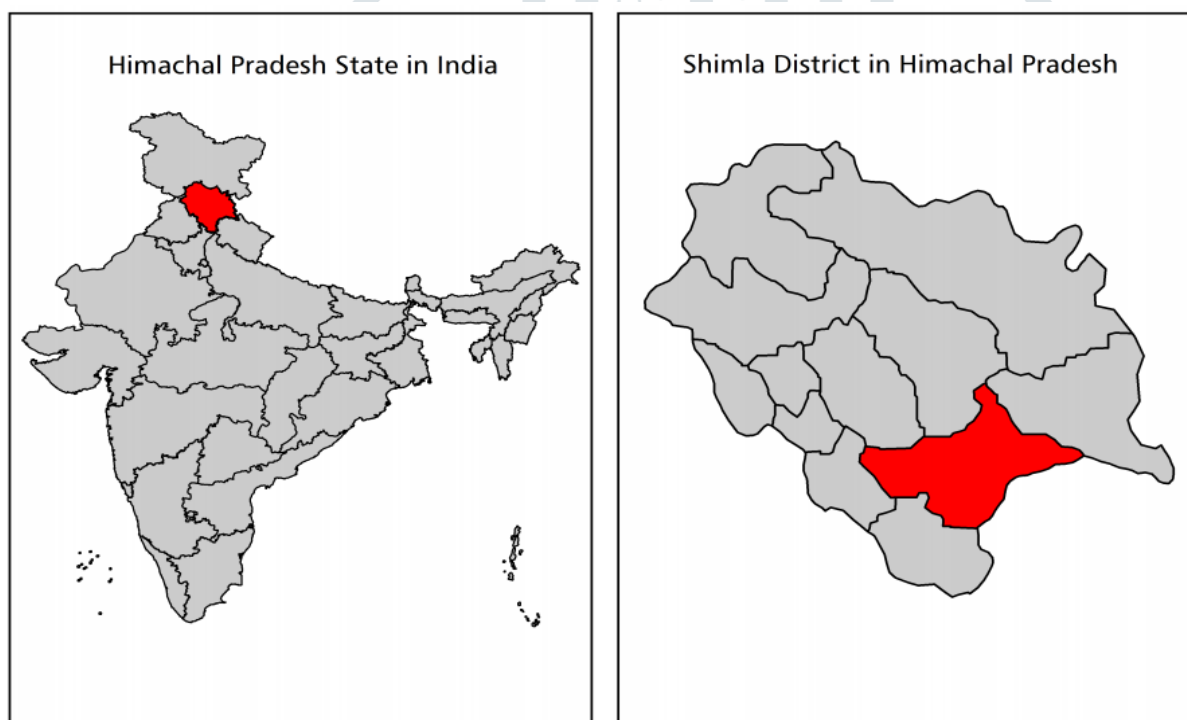


Fig. 1: Locating Map of Shimla District

Source: Himachal Pradesh: District Factbook Shimla District, Datanet India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2018

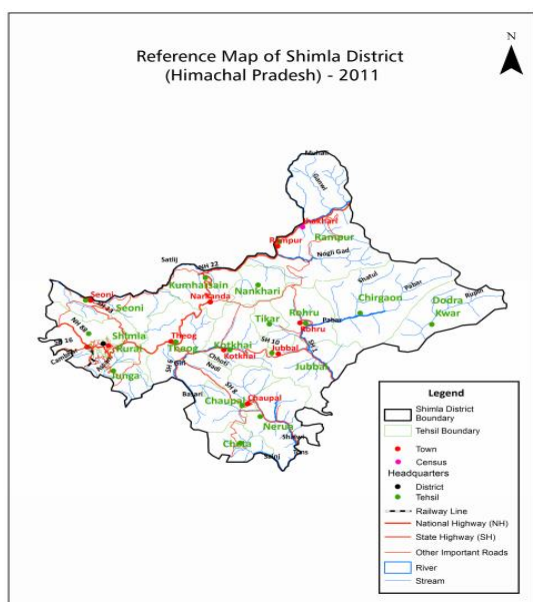


Fig. 2: Locating of Surveyed Towns, Shimla District

Source: Himachal Pradesh: District Factbook Shimla District, Datanet India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2018.

### OBJECTIVE

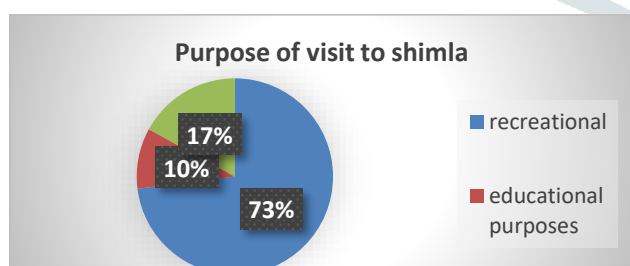
- 1- To find out the level of awareness among the natives and the tourists about ecotourism in the study area.
- 2- To identify the major challenges of Shimla in terms of ecotourism
- 3- To understand the policies and guideline related to ecotourism.
- 4- To give suggestion for sustainable Ecotourism activities.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

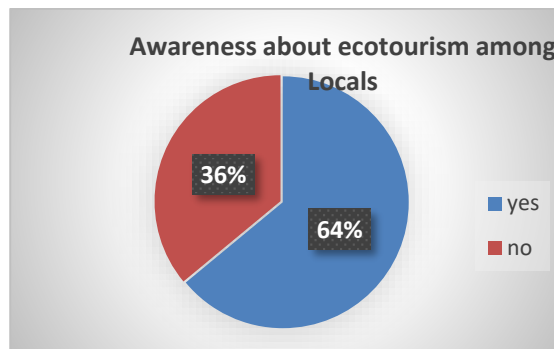
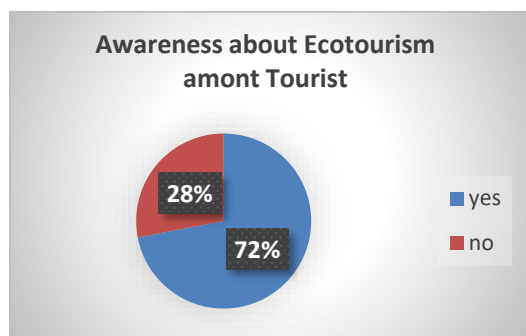
Study area of Shimla has been selected to conduct the research. The study is based on both Preliminary and Secondary source of data. The primary data has been collected through questionnaires. The sample population was collected by convenient sampling to assess the level of awareness about Ecotourism in Shimla. A total of 100 samples were collected out of which 50 were filled by native and 50 were filled by tourist.

The secondary data has been collected from different sources such as website of Government of Himachal Pradesh Department of Forest. To represent the data different types of data representation techniques such as tables, pie chart etc.

### AWARENESS AMONG TOURISTS AND LOCALS FOR ECOTOURISM: AN ANALYSIS



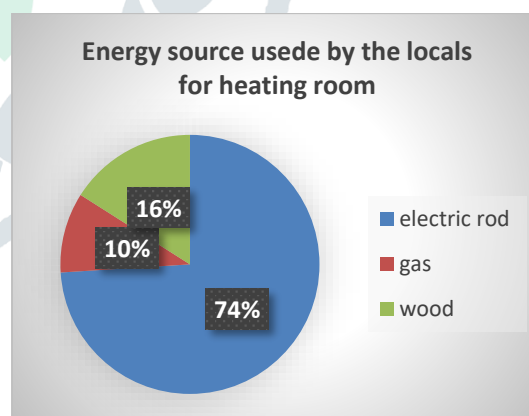
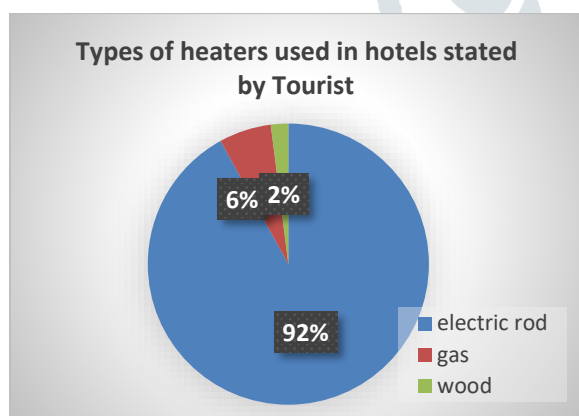
The above figure is showing that why people is visiting to Shimla and according to the figure (73%) of the respondent visit to Shimla for recreational activity and 10% of the respondent visit for educational purpose and rest of the 17% visit for other activities which is not confined.



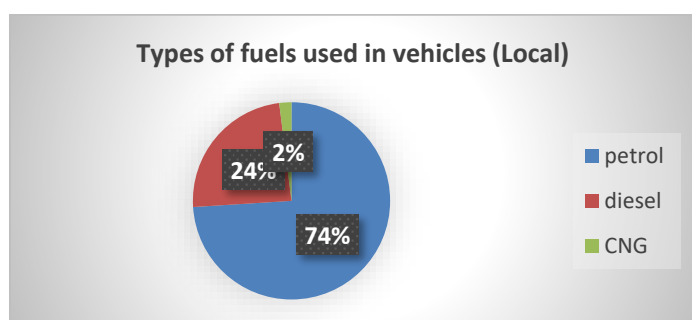
According to the tourist respondents more than two third of them were aware about ecotourism while 28% did not have any idea about the concept. Similarly, among local respondent more than 60 % knew about ecotourism while 36% of them had no knowledge about the same.

Ratings about the usage of plastic bags	Ratings by tourist respondents (percentage)	Ratings by local respondents (percentage)
1	32	62
2	18	12
3	36	20
4	8	4
5	6	2

Above table is showing the ratings of usage of plastic bags among my respondents. 1 depicts low usage of plastic bags whereas 5 depicts high use of plastic bags. According to tourists respondents 32% of people who are tourist are saying that the usage of plastic bags in Shimla is very low where as 54% have given ratings of 2 and 3 which is showing that the usage of Plastic bags in Shimla is moderate and 14% of people are saying that the usage of plastic bags is high and very high. Similarly, according to local respondents 62% of local are saying that the usage of Plastic bags in Shimla is very low where as 32% of people are saying that the usage of plastic bags in Shimla is moderate and 6% of local are saying that the usage of plastic bags in Shimla is very high.



According to tourist respondents it is clear that 92% of the hotels are using electric rod and 6% stated that gas was used in heating the room and left 2% said that wood was used to heat the room. Among local respondent it is seen that 74% of Local used electric rod to heat the room and 16% of local use wood to heat the room and left 10% use gas to heat the room.



According to the local respondent 74% of them said that petrol is used in most of the vehicles and 24% said that diesel is used as fuel and only 2% said that CNG is used in vehicles.

Level of satisfaction regarding the waste management system in Shimla	Among tourists (percentage)	Among Locals (percentage)
1	4	14
2	18	18
3	54	44
4	16	6
5	8	18

As per Table more than 50% of the people said that the waste management system in Shimla is moderate so they give 3 rating and 4% give 1 rating according to this they are not satisfied with the waste management system in Shimla and 18% give 2 rating and rest of the 8% tourist stated that they are fully satisfied with the waste management system of Shimla. Maximum percentage of local were not completely with the waste management system of the Shimla and 14% were not satisfied with the waste management system of the Shimla and 24% of the Local were satisfied with the waste management system of Shimla.

### STUDY OF POLICIES AND GUIDELINE FOR ECOTOURISM

According to Ministry of Environment and Forest (Government of India) the following policies and guidelines for the conservation of environment and boost Ecotourism has been made.

#### Status of existing policy initiatives in the Ecotourism Sector, India and Himachal Pradesh.

	INDIA	HIMACHAL PRADESH
	Ecotourism in India: Policy and Guidelines 1998	Policy on development of Ecotourism 2001
<b>objectives</b>	Same as general tourism; to be a unifying force, preserving natural and cultural heritage	Opening up of forest area for community-based ecotourism.
<b>strengths</b>	Identified key players in Ecotourism	Community involvement, well detailed institutional set up.
<b>Weakness</b>	: No situational set-up, fiscal incentives or community ownership.	Too much stress on trekking and less on other ecotourism activities.

(Source: Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment)

### CONCLUSION

Ecotourism majorly focuses on regional customs, lifestyles, volunteering, adventure tourism, personal growth and new ways of living. As part of ecotourism the primary attraction, has always been travelling to destination where flora, fauna and cultural heritage hold great importance. Efficient and responsible ecotourism comprises activities that minimize destructive and untoward effects of conventional tourism on natural environment and amplifies the cultural cohesion of local people. The conclusion drawn from the above study specifies that Shimla has tremendous probability to progress as a model ecotourism spot.

This can only be possible with support and cooperation of local people as well as tourist visiting the place. As per the study conducted it can be supposed that more than two third of the respondents who were tourists had an awareness about ecotourism.. This kind of awareness among the people can prove to be a major advantage in the developmental process of the region.

One of the best policies implemented by the government as part of an ecotourism initiative is to ban the usage of plastic by both local people as well tourist visiting the place. This was clearly observed in the data obtained by the survey conducted. Ratings of usage of plastic bags among my respondents.

Different sources of energy can be used for heating such as Electric rod, Gas and Wood. Usage of highly efficient electric rod is highly advisable since combustion of wood causes release of potent greenhouse gases such as nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide while usage of natural gas is restricted since it is nonrenewable resource. People in Shimla have hence shifted to less polluting and renewable sources of energy. More than three fourth (92%) of the hotels are using electric rod stated by Tourist and 6% stated that gas was used in heating the room and left 2% said that wood was used to heat the room. Similarly, it is seen that 74% of Local used electric rod to heat the room and 16% of local use wood to heat the room and left 10% use gas to heat the room.

With an increasing population, there has been an increase in demand for enough transportation facilities to cater to the raising demand. This has increased the pressure on the limited fuel resources such as petroleum, diesel etc. Hence there has been a gradual shift in the usage of fuels from non-renewable to renewable sources such as CNG vehicles, electric batteries etc. 74% of respondent who were local said that petrol is used in most of the vehicles and 24% said that diesel is used as fuel and only 2% said that CNG is used in vehicles.

Waste management is the process of treating solid waste and provides different solution for recycling items that can be further reused. More than 50% of the people said that the waste management system in Shimla is moderate so they give 3 rating and 4% give 1 rating according to this they are not satisfied with the waste management system in Shimla and 18% give 2 rating and rest of the 8% tourist stated that they are fully satisfied with the waste management system of Shimla. Maximum percentage of local were not completely with the waste management system of the Shimla and 14% were not satisfied with the waste management system of the Shimla and 24% of the Local were satisfied with the waste management system of Shimla. Hence the government in collaboration with local people can take up several steps so that the whole concept of ecotourism can be efficiently implemented and can contribute to the development of the region. Further additional in initiatives can be taken on the part of tourist and local people to create enough economic opportunity for local communities and to protect the environment as well as the socio-cultural fabric of the region.

### **SUGGESTION**

Various human activities have set of an increase in inhabitation of trespassing species which makes the sustenance of other species tough. This hampers the free flow of food chain and steers towards endangered existences in the ecosystem humans are solitarily responsible for making the mother earth shriek for protection. Since it is rightly said it is better late than never, humans still have time to put a dead stop to this destruction by mending their ways to utilize the resources offered by the nature in an efficient manner. One such step from the human side is Ecotourism. Simply put, ecotourism is a tourism with an ecological and environmental ethics and moral sense. Though it is often done on small scale and is a significant replacement to the conventional commercial tourism from the study conducted it can be inferred that Shimla has immense potential to set an example as a progressed ecotourism spot.

Though Shimla had made essential changes in order to accommodate with large growing tourism and impact on environment, certain suggestion was given by the tourist in order to further improve the local conditions, during the survey. The tourist has reported that though enough efforts were made by government and local people in the area, it is the tourist or the outsider who have increased problem in the area. For this, the tourist suggested to spread awareness on responsible tourism among the tourist. They have further suggested on putting up certain visual shows or plays in the crowded area such as malls, in order to spread the message. Increase in tourists in the region has also led to congestion and traffic problem the need to be managed, by encouraging tourists to use public transport instead of individual or personal vehicles.

In the same manner, even local people of the area have given certain suggestion in this light. The local people have suggested on creating awareness among the locals with regard to the ideas of ecotourism. They even suggested that the government should implement strict policy in the region in order to reduce and overcrowding and excess construction activities in the region and also have assured assistance and cooperation in order to avoid any kind of hazards in the future. They have also suggested on promoting and popularizing ecotourism activities on various platforms of social media.

Hence it can be concluded that natural as well as cultural heritage hold great importance for both local people as well as tourist. Hence their management and preservation should be done properly and techniques such as ecotourism play an important role in the regard. Thus with the help of local people as well as tourist, the government can ensure proper implementation of ecotourism and related ideologies.

#### REFERENCES

- P.K Manoj (2017) Impact of Ecotourism: Evidence from Thenmala Ecotourism Destination in Kollam District, Kerala. *Asian Academic Research Associates*, volume 4, issue 1, pp. 42-53.
- M Priya, Kh Dhiren (2016), An Analytical study of Ecotourism And its Prospects in Manipur, *Indian Journal of Research*, volume 5, issue 3, pp 448-450.
- Correya Titus and Jacob Robins (2011) Practice of Ecotourism in Kerala's Tourism Destinations: Some Emerging Concerns, *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism System*, volume 4, issue 1, pp 112-134.
- P. Rajnani and P. Vasanthakumari (2005 to 2013) have done study on the topic Ecotourism: Challenges and Opportunities, Kerala, *Contemporary Research in India*, volume 5, issue 4, pp 48-54.
- Okench and Bob Urmilla (2009) have done a study on Sustainable Ecotourism Management in Kenya, *Ethopian journal of Environmental Studies and Management*, volume 2, issue 1, pp 57-65.
- Chauhan Vidit and Verma Rajeev (2016) Practices and Applications of Sustainable Tourism in Himachal Pradesh. *AGU International Journal of Professional Studies & Research*, Volume 2, pp. 7-15.
- Gupta Jeena (2015) Tourism in Himachal Pradesh: A study of Kullu Manali. *International Journal of Engineering Research & Management Technology*. Volume 2, Issue 3, pp. 183-191.
- N Shisabudheen (2012) Problems and Prospects of Ecotourism in Kerala: Some Empirical Evidence from 'Kumbalangi' Panchayat in Ernakulam District (India). *Journal of Global Economy*, Volume 8, pp. 293-311.
- Nag Ashish (2013) A Study of Tourism Industry of Himachal Pradesh with Special reference to Ecotourism. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Management Review*, volume 2, issue 4, pp. 89-106.
- Sharma Pankaj and Parkash Ravi (2014) Eco-Tourism and its Development in Tribal Region of Himachal Pradesh. *International Journal on Arts, Management and Humanities*, Volume 3, issue 1, pp. 24-29.
- <https://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/etour-define.html> (Hector Ceballos-Lascurain in 1983).
- [http://www.hpforest.nic.in/files/Ecotourism%20policy\\_1.pdf](http://www.hpforest.nic.in/files/Ecotourism%20policy_1.pdf) (Ministry of Environment and Forest, government of India, 2011.)
- <http://hpforest.nic.in/files/Ecotourism%20policy.pdf>
- <http://www.moef.nic.in/downloads/publicinformation/Draft%20Ecotourism%20Guidelines%20%20June.pdf>
- [http://www.sikkimforest.gov.in/docs/eco\\_tourism\\_white\\_paper.pdf](http://www.sikkimforest.gov.in/docs/eco_tourism_white_paper.pdf) (Source: Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment)
- [https://www.datanetindia-ebooks.com/pdf\\_Samples/district\\_factbook/Himachal\\_Pradesh/Shimla.pdf](https://www.datanetindia-ebooks.com/pdf_Samples/district_factbook/Himachal_Pradesh/Shimla.pdf) : Himachal Pradesh: District Factbook Shimla District, Datanet India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2018

## ANNEXURE

## Ecotourism- Sustainability and Challenges (A case study on Shimla)

## Questionnaire (tourist)

- 1- Name:
- 2- Age:
- 3- Sex:  Male  Female  Other
- 4- Country:  India  Other
- 5- Occupation:  Private sector  Government sector  Unorganized Sector  student
- 6- Knowledge about ecotourism:  Yes  No
- 7- What is ecotourism:

- Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities and sustainable development.
- The commercial organization and operation of holiday and visiting to places of interest.
- Tourism done for economic activity.

## 8- Reason to visit Shimla?

- Recreation
- Educational purpose
- Other

## 9- Rate the use of plastic bags in Shimla from 1(low) to 5(high):

- 1     2     3     4     5

## 10- Are you satisfied with the waste management system in Shimla? [Rate from 1(low) to 5(high)]

- 1     2     3     4     5

## 11- Which of the following is used by the shopkeeper to provide the goods?

- Eco bags or linen bags
- Plastic bags

## 12- What kind of heaters do you find at the hotels you stay in?

- Electric rod
- Gas
- Wood

## 13- Which of the following would you prefer the most as a tourist activity?

- Trekking
- Ice skating
- Other

## 14- Have you visited Shimla before?

- Yes
- No

## 15- If this is your second time at Shimla then do you think human interference has increased than before?

- Yes



No

16- Did you find local authority to be vigilant to all such activity which may hamper the environment?

Yes

No

17- Do you think that local authority should do something to improve ecological awareness?

Yes

No

18- Any Suggestions

### Ecotourism- Sustainability and Challenges (A case study on Shimla)

#### Questionnaire (Local)

1- Name:

2- Age:

3- Sex:  Male  Female  Other

4- Occupation:  Private sector  Government sector  Unorganized Sector  student

5- How long have you been living in Shimla?

6- Knowledge about ecotourism:  Yes  No

7- What is ecotourism:

Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities and sustainable development.

The commercial organization and operation of holiday and visiting to places of interest.

Tourism done for economic activity.

8- If participated in any activity:

Community Participation

Personal Practices

Awareness Programs

9- According to you, what are the challenges in achieving the objectives of ecotourism at its maximum:

Tourist activity

Improper implementation of policies

Other

10- Do you think, that the nature is being exploited for the economic growth?

Yes

No

11- Due to rapid urbanization, the environment is getting degraded at a very fast pace

Agree

Disagree

strongly agree

strongly disagree

12- Do you know about the policies on ecotourism?

Yes

No

13- Rate the use of plastic bags in Shimla from 1(low) to 5(high):

1

2

3

4

5

14- According to you, which are the types of vehicles mostly used in Shimla

CNG

Petrol

Diesel

15- Which of the following do you use to carry stuff when you shop?

Plastic bags provided by the shopkeepers

You carry your own bags

16- Which of the following is used by the shopkeeper to provide the goods:

Eco bags or linen bags

Plastic bags

17- What kind of bags do you carry?

Plastic bag

Paper bag

Linen bag

Both Paper bag and Linen Bag

18- Which energy source do you use for heating your room?

Electric rod

Gas

Wood

19- Any suggestion?

