



A CRITIQUE OF ECOTOURISM CONCEPTS IN TOURISM: AN ANALYSIS OF MISTAKES AND MISCONCEPTIONS

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi secara kritis konsep ekowisata dengan mengkaji kesenjangan antara prinsip-prinsip teoretis dan penerapannya dalam praktik. Penelitian ini berupaya mengungkap penyimpangan dan kesalahpahaman dalam praktik ekowisata yang menghambat pencapaian tujuan yang diharapkan. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dengan melakukan tinjauan literatur secara ekstensif untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis kekurangan dalam penerapan prinsip-prinsip ekowisata. Metode ini memungkinkan penilaian menyeluruh terhadap praktik yang ada dan penyebab mendasar dari kegagalannya. Penelitian ini mengungkap kekurangan yang signifikan dalam penerapan ekowisata, termasuk konservasi lingkungan yang tidak memadai, keterlibatan masyarakat yang kurang, dan kurangnya inisiatif pendidikan. Masalah-masalah ini berkontribusi pada degradasi lingkungan dan konflik sosial-budaya, yang menunjukkan adanya keterputusan yang jelas antara idealisme ekowisata dan praktik sebenarnya. Penelitian ini menawarkan wawasan orisinal tentang tantangan yang terus-menerus dihadapi ekowisata dengan menyoroti pentingnya kepatuhan ketat terhadap prinsip-prinsipnya. Penelitian ini memberikan rekomendasi praktis untuk meningkatkan praktik ekowisata, dengan fokus pada peningkatan keterlibatan masyarakat, konservasi yang efektif, dan pengelolaan berkelanjutan, sehingga berkontribusi pada diskusi yang lebih luas tentang pariwisata berkelanjutan.

Abstract

This study aims to critically evaluate ecotourism concepts by examining the gap between theoretical principles and their practical implementation. It seeks to uncover deviations and misconceptions in ecotourism practices that hinder the achievement of its intended goals. A qualitative approach is employed, utilizing an extensive literature review to identify and analyze the shortcomings in the application of ecotourism principles. This method allows for a comprehensive assessment of existing practices and the underlying causes of their failures. The research reveals significant deficiencies in the implementation of ecotourism, including inadequate environmental conservation, insufficient community involvement, and a lack of educational initiatives. These issues contribute to environmental degradation and socio-cultural conflicts, demonstrating a clear disconnect between the ideals of ecotourism and its actual practice. This study offers original insights into the persistent challenges facing ecotourism by highlighting the importance of adhering strictly to its principles. The research provides practical recommendations for improving ecotourism practices, focusing on enhanced community engagement, effective conservation, and sustainable management, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism.

Keywords:
Ecotourism
Concepts,
Ecotourism Practices,
Environmental
Conservation.

INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism, as a form of sustainable tourism, has experienced rapid growth over the past few decades and is considered a solution to mitigate the negative impacts of conventional tourism on the environment (Dimitriou, 2016). With a focus on nature conservation, local community empowerment, and environmental education for tourists, ecotourism aims to create sustainable and responsible tourism experiences (Xu, Ao, Cai, & Liu, 2022), and (Zoysa, 2022). This concept has garnered attention from numerous destinations worldwide, including Indonesia, which is rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage (Satrya, Kaihatu, Budidharmanto, Karya, & Rusadi, 2023).

However, in practice, the concept of ecotourism often encounters various errors and deviations that contradict its fundamental principles (Chande & Mishra, 2016). Many destinations claim to be ecotourism sites but fail in actual implementation (Dimitriou, 2016), (Kurniawan, Ripani, & Danti, 2023), (Tešin, Kovačić, Jovanović, Vujići, & Obradović, 2020). These errors range from improper implementation and poor management to the lack of local community participation and a shallow understanding of what ecotourism truly entails (Ajuhari, isa, & Aziz, 2016).

Several studies indicate that there are numerous misconceptions about ecotourism among both destination managers and tourists (Dimitriou, 2016), (Tešin, Kovačić, Jovanović, Vujići, & Obradović, 2020), (Zoysa, 2022), and (Satrya, Kaihatu, Budidharmanto, Karya, & Rusadi, 2023). These misconceptions include the belief that ecotourism is merely about nature experiences without considering conservation and sustainability aspects (Zoysa, 2022), or that ecotourism can be practiced without a genuine commitment to environmental preservation and local community empowerment (Dimitriou, 2016), and (Eddyono, Darusman, Sumarwan, &

Sunarminto, 2021). Consequently, some destinations that brand themselves as ecotourism sites end up contributing to environmental degradation and social conflicts (Hunt, Durham, Driscoll, & Honey, 2015).

In this context, it is crucial to conduct a critical analysis of the ecotourism concepts applied in the tourism industry (Haribudiman, Berliandaldo, & Holman, 2023). This research aims to identify and analyse the errors and deviations in the application of ecotourism concepts (Teeroovengadam, 2018), and (ahmad, 2023). By understanding the sources of these errors, this study will provide valuable insights to correct and guide ecotourism practices onto the right path (hill & Gale, 2009), (Stronza, Hunt, & Fitzgerald, 2019), and (Satrya, Kaihatu, Budidharmanto, Karya, & Rusadi, 2023).

Through constructive criticism of ecotourism concepts, this research also aims to offer practical recommendations for stakeholders in the tourism industry, including governments, destination managers, and tourists (Diamantis, 2018), and (Wurarah, Jacob, Suslinawati, Utama, & Purbaningsih, 2022). These recommendations seek to ensure that ecotourism can genuinely contribute to environmental conservation, local economic empowerment, and the social and cultural well-being of local communities (Regina, 1999), (hill & Gale, 2009), (Khoiri, Rufaedah, Irfanah, Aeni, & Hasan, 2023) and (Satrya, Kaihatu, Budidharmanto, Karya, & Rusadi, 2023). Thus, this study not only contributes to the academic literature on ecotourism but also offers practical guidance to address challenges and harness the potential of ecotourism more effectively and responsibly.

Ecotourism is defined as responsible tourism in nature destinations while conserving ecosystems, habitats and the environment, improving the benefits for economic, social and culture, (Hunt, Durham, Driscoll, & Honey,

2015), (Dimitriou, 2016), and (Zoysa, 2022). Based on this definition, (Wood, 2002) states that the main concepts of ecotourism consist of: Ecotourism should contribute to biodiversity conservation by considering the impacts on flora, fauna, and ecosystems as a whole, including habitat protection and the rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems (Wood, 2002), and (Hunt, Durham, Driscoll, & Honey, 2015). It should support the well-being of local communities through job creation, income enhancement, and sustainable infrastructure development, ensuring that economic benefits are directly experienced by the local population (Wood, 2002), (Hunt, Durham, Driscoll, & Honey, 2015) and (Zakia, 2021).

Furthermore, ecotourism must include educational and interpretative experiences, providing deeper knowledge about natural environments and local cultures through educational activities, trained guides, information centers, and comprehensive interpretation programs (Mondino & Beery, 2019), (Chai-Arayalert, 2020), and (Satrya, Kaihatu, Budidharmanto, Karya, & Rusadi, 2023). Responsible actions by tourists and the tourism industry are crucial. Tourists should be encouraged to minimize negative impacts on the environment and local culture, while the

RESEARCH METHODS

The study titled "A Critique of Ecotourism Concepts in Tourism: An Analysis of Mistakes and Misconceptions" will employ a qualitative research methodology (Chai-Arayalert, 2020). This approach allows for an in-depth

tourism industry must adopt sustainable and environmentally friendly practices (Wood, 2002), (Walter, 2013), and (Satrya, Kaihatu, Budidharmanto, Karya, & Rusadi, 2023).

Ecotourism is typically delivered to small groups by small-scale businesses (Wood, 2002). This concept also emphasizes the importance of visitor carrying capacity to reduce environmental pressure and ensure a personalized and immersive experience for tourists, making it more manageable and sustainable (Kennell, 2016), and (Mondino & Beery, 2019). Ecotourism should minimize the consumption of non-renewable resources, including the use of renewable energy, reduction of carbon footprints, and efficient waste management to maintain the integrity of natural resources (Wood, 2002).

Local participation and ownership in ecotourism ventures are strongly emphasized, especially for rural communities (Garrod, 2010), and (Zakia, 2021). This includes empowering local communities through training, skill development, and support in establishing tourism enterprises, ensuring that tourism activities align with local values and needs (Wood, 2002), (hill & Gale, 2009), (Garrod, 2010), and (Tjilen, Phoek, & Fitriani, 2021).

exploration and understanding of the complex phenomena related to errors and deviations in ecotourism concepts (ahmad, 2023). The following outlines the research methods and process to be used:

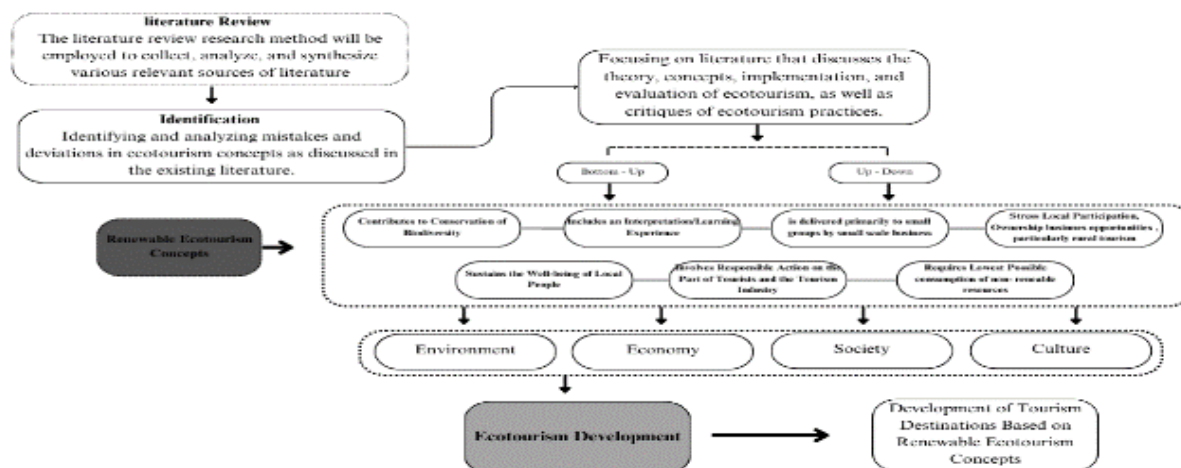


Figure 1. Analysis process

The research model aims to develop tourism destinations by applying sustainable and renewable ecotourism concepts. The primary focus of this study is to identify and analyse errors and deviations in the implementation of ecotourism concepts as discussed in existing literature (Zakia, 2021), and (Zoysa, 2022). The objectives of the research include several key aspects: mapping the errors and deviations in the ecotourism concepts that have been implemented across various tourist destinations (Xu, Ao, Cai, & Liu, 2022) analysing the factors influencing the success and failure of ecotourism implementation; and formulating recommendations for the development of sustainable tourism destinations based on innovative ecotourism concepts (Sangpikul, 2017).

This study employs a literature review methodology, involving the collection,

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The bottom-up and top-down approaches to ecotourism management play crucial roles in ensuring the sustainability and success of ecotourism destinations, each offering complementary characteristics and benefits.

Bottom-Up And Top-Down

The bottom-up approach involves the active participation of local communities in the planning and management of ecotourism, ensuring that local needs and interests are

analysis, and synthesis of relevant cultural sources (Mudasir, Ghausee, & Stanikzai, 2020), and (Satrya, Kaihatu, Budidharmanto, Karya, & Rusadi, 2023). The focus of the literature includes theories, concepts, implementations, and evaluations of ecotourism, as well as critiques of ecotourism practices (Zoysa, 2022). Secondary data for this research is obtained from various sources, including scholarly journal articles, academic books, and policy and regulatory documents (Zakia, 2021). The research employs two data analysis techniques: identifying key themes from the literature related to errors and deviations in ecotourism concepts, and analysing the content of the literature to uncover patterns, trends, and interconnections between concepts (Chande & Mishra, 2016). The main findings from the literature analysis, including identified errors and deviations in ecotourism concepts, will serve as a foundation for developing recommendations to improve ecotourism practices.

considered (Sakata & Prideaux, 2013), and (Jane & Pawitan, 2021). This approach enhances economic opportunities through the development of small businesses and tourism services, preserves local culture and traditions, and fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members towards environmental conservation (Sakata & Prideaux, 2013) and (Jamhawi & Hajahjah, 2015). Conversely, the top-down approach

entails the role of government in establishing policies and regulations, providing funding and infrastructure, and promoting ecotourism destinations (Müller, Huck, & Markovab, 2020), and (Saxena, Shanker, Sethi, & Seth, 2024). The government also supports environmental research and monitoring to ensure sustainable ecotourism practices (Alfiandri & Mayarni, 2023).

Overall, the differing characteristics and benefits of the bottom-up and top-down approaches aim to achieve the same objective: supporting ecotourism (Wood, 2002) and (Zakia, 2021). The bottom-up approach ensures that local needs and interests are addressed through active community participation, while the top-down approach provides the necessary framework, regulations, and resources.

Renewable Ecotourism Concept

Many destinations claim to be ecotourism sites but struggle to consistently apply the principles of ecotourism (Dimitriou, 2016). This issue often stems from a lack of genuine commitment to environmental preservation, despite the ecotourism label. Additionally, many service providers do not fully understand the concept of ecotourism (hill & Gale, 2009), and (Stronza, Hunt, & Fitzgerald, 2019). For instance, some destinations overlook the importance of biodiversity conservation, where ecotourism destinations should ideally focus on protection, rehabilitation, and ecosystem conservation (hill & Gale, 2009). This situation indicates that the concept of ecotourism is frequently misaligned with the goals and direction of development (Wood, 2002).

Moreover, numerous destinations claiming to be ecotourism-oriented neglect local welfare (Zakia, 2021). Some destinations fail to involve local communities in destination management and service provision (Wood, 2002). Ecotourism programs that do not actively engage local communities often fail to provide equitable economic benefits, which should be one of the primary objectives of

ecotourism (Regina, 1999), (Giampiccoli & Glassom, 2021), and (Zakia, 2021).

Additionally, many ecotourism destinations fail to deliver learning and interpretive experiences. Ecotourism should include educational and interpretive experiences for both tourists and local communities (Wood, 2002), and (Chai-Arayalert, 2020). This can be achieved through educational activities, trained guides, information centres, and in-depth interpretive programs that provide insights into the natural environment and local culture (Walter, 2013), and (Satrya, Kaihatu, Budidharmanto, Karya, & Rusadi, 2023). Furthermore, many ecotourism destinations do not implement the concept of responsible action (Azinuddin, Hanafiah, Shariffuddin, Kamarudin, & Som, 2022). Responsible actions from tourists and the tourism industry are crucial (Wood, 2002). Tourists should be encouraged to minimize negative impacts on the environment and local culture, while the tourism industry must adopt sustainable and environmentally friendly practices, including participation in conservation activities and maintaining ecosystems (Stronza, Hunt, & Fitzgerald, 2019), and (Satrya, Kaihatu, Budidharmanto, Karya, & Rusadi, 2023).

Many ecotourism destinations also fail to apply the principles of small scale and group size (Mondino & Beery, 2019). Ecotourism is generally delivered to small groups by small-scale businesses (Wood, 2002), which helps reduce environmental pressure and ensures a personalized and in-depth experience for tourists, while being easier to manage sustainably. Thus, tourism destinations should consider over-tourism and carrying capacity to prevent environmental degradation (Kennell, 2016), and (Mondino & Beery, 2019). The concept of minimizing the consumption of non-renewable resources is also often overlooked by many ecotourism destinations (Wood, 2002). Ecotourism should minimize the consumption of non-renewable resources, including the use of renewable energy, carbon footprint

reduction, and efficient waste management to maintain natural resource sustainability (Jia, 2018).

Finally, many ecotourism destinations do not apply the principles of local participation and ownership (Garrod, 2010), (Zakia, 2021). Local participation and ownership in ecotourism businesses are highly emphasized, especially for rural communities (Wood, 2002). This includes empowering local communities through training, skill development, and support in establishing tourism enterprises, ensuring that tourism activities align with local values and needs (hill & Gale, 2009), (Garrod, 2010), (Tjilen, Phoek, & Fitriani, 2021).

Benefits Of Renewable Ecotourism Concepts

Properly developed and principle-based ecotourism can have significant positive impacts on the environment, economy, society, and culture (Sangpikul, 2017), (Mudasir, Ghausee, & Stanikzai, 2020), and (Baydeniz, Çilgınoğlu, & Sandıkcı, 2024). A thorough understanding and application of ecotourism concepts will yield beneficial outcomes such as:

Well-managed ecotourism contributes to environmental conservation by minimizing negative impacts on local ecosystems (Fennell, 2007). Research findings indicate that environmental management and natural habitat protection are often neglected, leading to environmental degradation (ahmad, 2023). Destinations that are genuinely committed to environmental preservation will ensure that all tourism activities consider their impact on the entire ecosystem (Sangpikul, 2017). This concept includes habitat protection, ecosystem rehabilitation, and environmental education programs (hill & Gale, 2009), and (Baydeniz, Çilgınoğlu, & Sandıkcı, 2024).

The economic benefits of principle-based ecotourism can be equitably experienced by local communities (Fennell, 2007), and (Mondino & Beery, 2019). Some ecotourism programs fail to actively involve local communities, resulting in minimal economic

benefits to the host communities (Sangpikul, 2017). Truly inclusive ecotourism will create job opportunities, increase income, and support sustainable infrastructure development, thereby enhancing the economic well-being of local residents (Weaver, 2001), (Mondino & Beery, 2019), and (Baydeniz, Çilgınoğlu, & Sandıkcı, 2024).

Community participation is crucial in ecotourism but is often overlooked. Without active community involvement, the social benefits of ecotourism cannot be fully realized (Fennell, 2007). Well-managed ecotourism will ensure that local communities play an active role in destination management, fostering harmonious social relationships and reducing conflicts (Sangpikul, 2017), and (Duffy, 2002). This also ensures that tourism activities align with local values and needs (Weaver, 2001), and (Baydeniz, Çilgınoğlu, & Sandıkcı, 2024).

Ecotourism must also address cultural aspects by providing in-depth learning and interpretation experiences about local cultures to tourists (Duffy, 2002). Some destinations fail to provide adequate educational experiences, leaving tourists with insufficient understanding of the local environment and culture (Satrya, Kaihatu, Budidharmanto, Karya, & Rusadi, 2023). Principle-based ecotourism destinations will prioritize in-depth interpretive programs, trained guides, and educational information centers, thereby increasing awareness and appreciation of local cultures (Weaver, 2001), and (Chai-Arayalert, 2020).

Recommendations For Improvement

Understanding the concept of ecotourism comprehensively is crucial. Proper application of ecotourism principles will yield better benefits, enhancing economic advantages while ensuring effective implementation of ecotourism principles (Weaver, 2001), (Wood, 2002), (Fennell, 2007), and (hill & Gale, 2009). Service providers and related sectors must ensure the application of ecotourism principles, including:

Effective conservation efforts should be

prioritized to protect and rehabilitate ecosystems and habitats (ahmad , 2023). The well-being of local communities must be addressed by creating economic opportunities, increasing income, and supporting sustainable infrastructure (Zakia, 2021). Providing educational experiences and in-depth interpretation of local environments and cultures is essential (Wood, 2002), and (Chai-Arayalert, 2020). Both tourists and the tourism industry should adopt responsible practices to minimize negative impacts on the environment and local cultures (Azinuddin, Hanafiah, Shariffuddin, Kamarudin, & Som, 2022).

Emphasize small-scale operations and manage group sizes to reduce environmental

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive critique of ecotourism concepts, emphasizing both theoretical foundations and practical applications. Ecotourism, as a sustainable tourism approach, aims to mitigate the negative impacts of conventional tourism through nature conservation, local community empowerment, and environmental education. Despite its potential benefits, many destinations misapply the principles of ecotourism, leading to discrepancies between theory and practice.

The analysis identifies common errors in ecotourism implementation, including inadequate environmental conservation efforts, insufficient local community involvement, and a lack of educational and interpretive programs. Many destinations that claim to adhere to ecotourism principles fail to genuinely integrate these principles into their practices, resulting in unintended environmental degradation and socio-cultural conflicts. This misalignment highlights the need for a more critical and informed application of ecotourism concepts.

The findings underscore the necessity for a holistic understanding and application of ecotourism principles to achieve its intended

pressure and ensure a more personalized and sustainable tourism experience (Wood, 2002). Reduce the use of non-renewable resources, employ renewable energy sources, and implement efficient waste management practices to preserve natural resources (Jia, 2018). Foster local participation and ownership in ecotourism businesses, empowering communities through training, skill development, and support for establishing tourism ventures (Garrod, 2010), and (Zakia, 2021). By adhering to these recommendations, ecotourism can be effectively managed to achieve its intended environmental, economic, social, and cultural benefits.

benefits. Effective conservation practices, genuine local community engagement, and comprehensive educational programs are essential components of successful ecotourism. Additionally, minimizing the consumption of non-renewable resources, emphasizing small-scale operations, and fostering local ownership are crucial for sustaining ecotourism's positive impacts on the environment, economy, society, and culture.

In conclusion, to enhance the effectiveness of ecotourism and ensure it fulfills its promises, stakeholders including governments, destination managers, and tourists must adhere to the principles outlined in this study. Addressing the identified errors and embracing the recommendations will enable more effective management of ecotourism, ultimately delivering its intended environmental, economic, social, and cultural benefits. This research contributes to the academic understanding of ecotourism and provides practical guidance for improving practices and achieving sustainable tourism outcomes.

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