



## GROWTH OF SUSTAINABLE TORISM IN SIKKIM: A CASE STUDY OF DZONGU

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### Abstract

Sikkim, an Indian state in the northeast, offers a lot of promise for sustainable tourism because of its diverse biodiversity, distinctive cultural history, and beautiful scenery. The state is renowned for its beautiful Himalayan mountains, verdant valleys, glistening lakes, and a variety of flora and fauna, making it an excellent location for nature-based tourism activities including hiking, mountain biking, wildlife safaris, and eco-tourism. Local communities in Sikkim stand to benefit greatly from sustainable tourism by expanding job opportunities and supporting homestays, restaurants, and handicraft shops. It can also promote sustainable tourism practises like resource conservation, the use of renewable energy sources, and the protection of animals and natural environments.

The Sikkim government has taken number of steps to encourage sustainable tourism in the state, including the building of eco-tourist destinations, the creation of wildlife reserves and protected areas, and the adoption of sustainable tourism practises in national parks and historic sites..

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## Introduction

There are numerous various types of tourism, making its definition more elusive. Tourism involves a transient or brief departure from the location where a person typically resides and is employed. The tourist is eager to return home once his or her trip is complete. The duration of the visit can range from one night to a whole year. Most trips done for tourism are holidays lasting one to two weeks in length, though this is not always the case. On the other hand, many business trips only last a single night, and "gap period" students could take many months off to travel. People who travel outside of their hometown for a day are called day visitors who take excursions. Even though leisure time accounts for the vast majority of tourism activity, it is not the only aspect of the industry. There are many different reasons why people travel, including for work, to visit relatives and close friends, for higher education, and to maintain their well-being. Some examples of these activities are skiing, attending to a business meeting, travelling to a tourist attraction, and engaging in religious rites. Tourism is defined as "the actions of persons travelling to and residing in places outside of their usual surroundings for no more than one year in a row for business, leisure, and other endeavours unrelated to engaging in any kind of activity that is compensated while on a visit," according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (Tribe, 2009).

## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Effective government leadership is required to encourage broad involvement the creation of consensus, and the informed engagement of every relevant stakeholder. The process for generating sustainable tourism requires constant effect monitoring, the implementation of necessary measures when necessary, and the taking of preventative and/or corrective actions. In addition, sustainable tourism should maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction, ensure that the visitors have a worthwhile experience, deepen their comprehension of issues related to sustainability, and promote sustainable tourism adheres to among them.

Competitive and socially responsible tourism businesses, the ability for all residents to participate in tourism, good employment opportunities in the sector, and advantages for the local community from tourism-related activities are factors of sustainable tourism that are particularly important. This mandates that programmes related to tourism be maintained and include environmental preservation, resources for

cultural heritage, and cultural integrity. Numerous initiatives are made to put the principles of sustainable tourist development into effect, both at the regional and company levels.

Sustainable tourism is defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) as "tourism that addresses the needs of travellers, the tourism industry, the environment, and host communities in addition to its current and future economics, social repercussions, and environmental implications." (Kumar & Gupta, n.d.).

## SCOPE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

With over 200 million employment and 9% of the global GDP generated over the past fifty years, tourism is now one of the major economic sectors on the planet. Over many years, there has been a steady increase in the number of foreign visitors, which reached 1035 million in 2012.

This growth has been especially noticeable over the past ten years in developing economies, where it has averaged 5.6% annually compared to 1.8% for mature economies. As predicted by UNWTO

The tourism industry will continue to expand, and by 2030, there will be 1.8 billion tourists worldwide. Again, growing economies, notably those in developing nations, are expected to have the fastest growth. A sizable component of global trade is comprised of tourism. Services account for a significant component of exports, accounting for 29% globally and up to 52% for LDCs.

Over five times as much official development assistance as it is given to emerging market and developing nations in 2012 was spent there by foreign tourists, who brought in US\$386 billion. It serves as one of their primary sources of foreign exchange income.

## SCOPE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN INDIA

India has a sizable tourist market. It offers a market for tourism in several niches, including as cruises, adventure, health, wellness, sports, films, rural, and religious tourism, among others. India is well-known for its spiritual tourism both among domestic and foreign visitors. To boost tourism, our prime minister, Narendra Modi, suggested that residents travel to domestic tourist attractions in India by 2022. According to the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Report 2019, India came in at number 34 among other nations. Given its rich natural and cultural legacy, India has a huge potential for sustainable tourism. The country's

diverse landscape, which includes the Himalayas, beaches, deserts, and woods, offers plenty of chances for ecotourism, wildlife safaris, and other nature-based travel pursuits. India is a prime location for cultural and heritage tourism due to its rich cultural legacy, which includes ancient buildings, celebrations, and regional customs.

India can gain much from sustainable tourism on an economic, social, and environmental level. It can promote economic growth and poverty alleviation by generating employment opportunities and revenue for neighbourhood communities. Additionally, it can support environmental conservation and maintain cultural history and traditions.

### AREAS IN SIKKIM SUITABLE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Northeastern India's tiny state of Sikkim is renowned for its magnificent scenery, varied culture, and abundant biodiversity. The state has a number of locations that are ideal for sustainable tourism, where business operations can be conducted while safeguarding the local natural and cultural heritage. Here are some Sikkim locations that are excellent for ecotourism:

1. **Khangchendzonga National Park:** This park, which has an area of 849.5 square kilometres, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The snow leopard, red panda, and Himalayan tahr are just a few of the endangered species that call this region home. The park includes a number of hiking trails and camping areas, as well as opportunities for birdwatching, nature hikes, and cultural tours.
2. **Dzongu:** The Lepcha population, one of Sikkim's indigenous tribes, calls this protected region in the north of the state of Sikkim home. Hot springs, waterfalls, and virgin woods are all featured in this region. Visitors can stay in Lepcha community-run homestays and take part in cultural events including traditional music and dance performances.
3. **Yuksom:** The first capital of Sikkim was located in this historic town in west Sikkim. The town offers a number of trekking trails, including the well-known Dzongri-Goecha La trek, and is surrounded by mountains and woods. Visitors can also explore the town's historical landmarks, including the Dubdi Monastery and the first Chogyal's (King of Sikkim's) coronation seat.
4. **Pelling:** In west Sikkim, Pelling is a well-liked vacation spot that offers breathtaking vistas of the Himalayan range, including Mt. Khang-

chendzonga. The town provides a number of hiking and trekking trails, including the Sangachoeling Monastery and Khecheopalri Lake treks. One of Sikkim's oldest monasteries, the Pemayangtse Monastery, is also open to visitors.

### A CASE STUDY OF DZONGU: AS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DESTINATION

Small village Dzongu is situated in Sikkim's north district in India. The Lepcha community, which has an own culture, language, and traditional practises, calls it home. The Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve, where Dzongu is located, is home to a number of rare and endangered plant and animal species. With its varied scenery, which include woods, waterfalls, mountains, and rivers, the area is a great place to go hiking, bird watching, and river rafting.

Visitors can learn about the Lepcha community's habits, beliefs, and way of life through homestays, cultural programmes, and community-led tourism projects in Dzongu, a region renowned for its cultural history. A number of sustainable tourism projects, including ecotourism efforts, homestay programmes, and conservation programmes, have been attracted to the area due to its natural beauty and biodiversity. These projects support ethical tourism practises while also benefiting the local economy.

Visitors from all regions of Sikkim and other states can travel to Dzongu because of its excellent road connectivity. The infrastructure of the area is also getting better, making it simpler for travellers to access amenities and facilities while lowering the environmental impact. Overall, Dzongu is a special place that provides travellers with a glimpse of the area's rich culture and wildlife.

### SCOPE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN DZONGU

Given its distinctive cultural legacy, biodiversity, and natural beauty, Dzongu's potential for sustainable tourism is substantial. Sustainable tourism practises can benefit the local economy while maintaining the nature and culture of the area. The following characteristics make Dzongu an ideal location for sustainable tourism:

1. **Cultural heritage:** The Lepcha community, which has a distinct culture, language, and traditional practises, is located in Dzongu. Through homestays, cultural programmes, and community-driven tourism projects, tourists can learn about local cultures, beliefs, and way of life.

2. **Biodiversity:** The Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve, where Dzongu is located, is home to a number of rare and endangered plant and animal species. While encouraging tourism, visitors can discover the area's many sceneries by hiking through woods, waterfalls, and mountains.
3. **Natural Beauty:** The gorgeous landscapes of Dzongu, which include breath-taking mountain views, crystal-clear rivers, and dense woods, are well-known. While minimising their environmental impact, visitors can engage in outdoor pursuits including river rafting, birdwatching, and walking.
4. **Sustainable Tourism activities:** Dzongu offers a number of activities that promote responsible tourism while bringing economic advantages to the community, including ecotourism projects, homestay programmes, and conservation programmes.
5. **Accessibility:** Dzongu is easily reached by road, allowing travellers from all across Sikkim and the surrounding states to visit. The infrastructure of the area is also getting better, making it simpler for travellers to access amenities and facilities while lowering the environmental impact.

## ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism is a term used to describe ethical and sustainable travel that supports the preservation of wildlife, the environment, and local communities. It entails visiting wilderness regions including woods, mountains, and wildlife preserves while minimising environmental effect and supporting regional conservation initiatives. Activities that foster awareness and appreciation of regional cultures and the natural environment include hiking, bird watching, animal safaris, and cultural encounters. Ecotourism projects frequently collaborate closely with local communities to offer financial advantages, including the creation of cash from tourism-related activities, which can be a reliable source of income for the area. Since more people are becoming aware of the detrimental effects of mass tourism on the environment and local populations, ecotourism has grown in popularity. By Ecotourism efforts can aid in the preservation of the environment and wildlife while also bringing economic benefits to nearby communities. A little community in North Sikkim called Dzongu has a lot of potential for ecotourism because of its diverse wildlife, distinctive culture, and beautiful surroundings. Ecotourism in Dzongu can give visitors the chance to experience and learn about the local way of life and culture while

fostering environmental preservation and assisting the local economy.

In Dzongu, you can participate in ecotourism activities like nature hikes, bird watching, village tours, cultural events, and traditional food experiences. Additionally, visitors can become involved in neighbourhood conservation projects like preserving forests, managing waste, and using sustainable farming methods. Several threatened species, including the red panda, snow leopard, and Himalayan black bear, can be found in the Dzongu region. Ecotourism initiatives can generate cash for the local community while increasing awareness of the value of protecting these species and their habitats.

Initiatives have been launched by the local administration and community-based organisations to promote ecotourism in Dzongu. A number of homestays and eco-camps have been built to give visitors the chance to experience the local way of life and culture while also boosting the local economy. They have also put into practise sustainable tourism techniques like resource conservation, waste management, and the utilisation of renewable energy.

## CULTURAL TOURISM

The term "cultural tourism" refers to travel experiences that emphasise a destination's history, traditions, art, music, language, and architecture. Visits to museums, historic sites, religious, and cultural festivals, as well as taking part in cultural events like wine and food tastings, dance performances, and artisan workshops, can all be considered forms of cultural tourism. By promoting cultural heritage and aiding in cultural preservation initiatives, cultural tourism supports the local economy. As tourists gain knowledge of many cultures and lifestyles, it also aids in the promotion of intercultural appreciation and understanding. Especially in rural locations, cultural tourism can be a significant source of revenue for populations with few other options for employment. Through cultural programmes, homestays, and other community-led projects, it can also give local communities the chance to engage with and profit from tourism. The Lepcha community, one of Sikkim's indigenous tribes, resides in the protected region of Dzongu in North Sikkim. There are many options for cultural tourism in the area, which has a rich cultural legacy. Some of the initiative taken are:

1. The chance to stay in homestays maintained by the Lepcha community is one of the key draws of cultural tourism in Dzongu. Visitors can

learn about the Lepcha people's traditional way of life and have an authentic cultural experience at these homestays. Visitors can engage in cultural activities like watching traditional music and dance performances and learning about the history, language, and customs of the Lepcha people.

2. Dzongu's Lepcha Museum is another well-liked spot for cultural tourism. The museum is home to a collection of artefacts, images, and records pertaining to the Lepcha people's history and culture. Visitors can discover more about the Lepcha language, customary attire, farming, and handicrafts.
3. For tourists, the Dzongu Cultural and Literary Society also arranges cultural trips that take them to historic Lepcha villages, monasteries, and holy places. Visitors can discover more about the Lepcha people's customary farming methods, handicrafts, and traditional medical practises.
4. The Lepcha community holds a number of events throughout the year, including the Namsoong Festival and the Kanchendzonga Festival, which provide guests a chance to experience the native way of life. Sports competitions, cultural exhibits, and performances of traditional music and dance are all part of these festivals.

### HERBAL TOURISM

The term "herbal tourism" describes tourism activities that emphasise conventional medical and healing methods based on plant-based medicines. It entails travelling to places like India, Thailand, and China that are renowned for their traditional knowledge and herbal medicine-related customs. Visits to traditional herbal gardens, plantations, and marketplaces are examples of herbal tourism activities where tourists can learn about the characteristics and use of various herbs and plants. Along with spa and wellness programmes that include herbal therapies, it can also include workshops and training sessions on herbal cures. By encouraging traditional knowledge and practises connected to herbal medicine and supporting local companies that make and sell herbal treatments, herbal tourism helps local communities economically. Additionally, it supports the preservation of traditional herbal medicinal knowledge and techniques, which are frequently passed down from one generation to the next. The region's abundant biodiversity and the Lepcha community's historical expertise in herbal medicine are the main attractions of Dzongu's herbal tourism industry. The Lepcha people employ a number of rare and endangered plant

species that are found in the area for medicinal and other uses. Some of the initiatives taken are:

1. Those interested in herbal tourism can take part in guided forested tours where they can learn about the many plant species and their purposes. Visitors can learn about the therapeutic benefits of numerous plants and herbs, as well as their preparation and application, from the Lepcha population, which is renowned for its traditional knowledge of herbal medicine.
2. The *Aconitum heterophyllum*, also called "Atis," which is used to treat fever, cough, and cold, is one of many medicinal plants native to the Dzongu region. Another plant in the region is the *Rhododendron arboreum*, also known as "Lali Gurans" locally, which is used to treat a variety of conditions including fever, gastrointestinal problems, and sore throats.
3. Visitors may also explore the Lepcha community's traditional medicinal plant gardens. These gardens offer visitors the chance to learn about the production, processing, and use of a range of plants, including medicinal herbs, spices, fruits, and vegetables.
4. For guests interested in herbal treatment, the Dzongu Cultural and Literary Society also arranges workshops and training sessions. These courses offer comprehensive knowledge of the various plant species and their applications, as well as practical instruction in the making and application of herbal remedies.

### ADVENTURE TOURISM

Adventure tourism describes travel activities like hiking, mountaineering, rock climbing, rafting, and skiing, among others, that incorporate both physical activity and adventure. It is a type of tourism that attracts people looking for a challenge and an adrenaline rush, and it frequently involves exploring natural settings and landscapes. By generating employment possibilities in tourist-related sectors like guiding, equipment rental, and accommodation, adventure tourism improves local economies. As adventure tourism providers are frequently dedicated to responsible and sustainable tourist practises that minimise the impact on the environment, it also aids in promoting the conservation of natural ecosystems and animals.

1. Sikkim's Dzongu region, which is secluded and stunning, provides a distinctive selection of adventure tourism activities. In Dzongu, some of the most well-liked adventure tourism activities include: Trekking: For those who enjoy trekking, Dzongu is the ideal location. In Dzongu, there are many hiking trails that provide tourists breath-taking views of the

mountains, woods, and waterfalls. Popular trekking trails in Dzongu include the Tholung Trek and the Kishong Trek.

2. **White Water Rafting:** Some of the best white water rafting adventures in India may be had on the Teesta River, which passes through Dzongu. With rapids ranging in difficulty from grade II to IV, the Teesta is appropriate for both novice and expert rafters.
3. **Mountain biking:** Dzongu is a popular location for mountain bikers due to its picturesque appeal and twisting routes. In Mangan, visitors can rent mountain bikes and tour the neighbourhood.
4. **Rock Climbing:** Dzongu's rocky landscape presents a number of options for rock climbing. Under the direction of qualified instructors, visitors can scale the area's cliffs and stones.
5. **Birdwatching:** Over 300 different species of birds may be seen in the Dzongu area, making it a birdwatcher's paradise. Explore Dzongu's woodlands and riverbanks to look for uncommon and endemic bird species.

#### VILLAGE TOURISM

The term "village tourism," usually referred to as "community-based tourism," describes tourism activities that give tourists the chance to have a firsthand look at local communities and ways of life. It entails travelling to rural and small-town locations, lodging in locally owned properties, and taking part in local customs and cultural experiences like farming, handicraft creation, cooking, and performing arts. Village tourism promotes local economies by generating jobs and promoting regional enterprises including bed & breakfasts, eateries, and handicraft stores. As visitors have the chance to learn about and engage in local customs and traditions, it also aids in the preservation of traditional lifestyles and cultural practises. Dzongu, a secluded and stunning area of Sikkim, provides tourists with a rare chance to engage in village tourism. Native Lepcha people who live in the area have a distinctive and varied culture. Here are a few well-liked local tourist pursuits in Dzongu:

1. **Homestays:** By staying in homestays, tourists can get a taste of the Lepcha people's traditional way of life. Visitors can enjoy traditional Lepcha meals and learn about the community's culture and customs at the homestays, which are often basic but comfortable.
2. **Cultural Tours:** Tourists can go on cultural tours of the Lepcha villages in Dzongu, where they can view typical Lepcha homes, discover the history and traditions of the people, and

engage in customary sports like archery, weaving, and singing.

3. **Village Walks:** Tourists can enjoy leisurely strolls around the Lepcha villages in Dzongu to meet the residents, observe the distinctive architecture, and take in the natural beauty of the area.
4. **Visits to Lepcha Farms:** Visitors can tour the Lepcha farms in Dzongu to experience traditional agricultural techniques, see the biodiversity of the area, and taste locally grown produce.
5. **Community events:** Visitors can take part in community activities like festivals and cultural performances where they can get a taste of the colourful Lepcha culture.

#### GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN DZONGU

In an effort to encourage sustainable tourism in Dzongu and protect the area's distinctive culture, ecology, and scenic beauty, the Sikkim government has launched a number of programmes. Listed below are a few government programmes:

1. **Development of Ecotourism:** To encourage the use of sustainable tourism practises, the government has created ecotourism initiatives in Dzongu, such as the Tholung Eco-Tourism Project. These initiatives seek to preserve the biodiversity of the area while generating employment possibilities for the neighbourhood.
2. **Homestay Programme:** In Dzongu, the government has started a homestay programme to encourage tourists to stay with local families and learn about the distinctive culture of the Lepcha people. The programme aims to boost the local economy while reducing the negative effects of tourism on the environment.
3. **Conservation Programmes:** The government has started a number of conservation initiatives in Dzongu, including the Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve Project and the Lepcha Tree Nursery Project. Through the promotion of sustainable tourism methods, these initiatives seek to protect the biodiversity and natural beauty of the area.
4. **Infrastructure Development:** The government has made investments in Dzongu's infrastructure, including the building of roads, bridges, and other facilities. This construction has reduced the environmental impact while increasing accessibility for tourists.
5. **Awareness programmes:** To inform visitors about responsible tourism practises and the need to protect the region's distinctive culture

and biodiversity, the government has started awareness programmes. These projects seek to increase environmentally conscious travel and lessen its negative effects.

6.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS:

Given its distinctive cultural legacy, biodiversity, natural beauty, and sustainable tourism activities, Dzongu offers a considerable potential for sustainable tourism. Visitors can learn about the area while encouraging ethical tourism practises and helping the community's economy.

Here are some of the suggestions for enhancing sustainable tourism in Dzongu:

1. **Respect Local Culture:** Travellers should show respect for the Lepcha community's local culture by abstaining from any actions that would insult or belittle its traditions and practises.
2. **Select Homestays:** Travellers should pick homestays over hotels or resorts to help the local economy and lessen the environmental impact of tourism.
3. **Obey Ecotourism Rules:** Tourists should abide by ecotourism rules, which include not littering, using as little water as possible, and refraining from any actions that endanger the ecosystem or wildlife.
4. **Support Local Businesses:** Tourists should support local businesses by purchasing goods, mementos, and handicrafts that are produced locally. This will boost the local economy and advance environmentally friendly tourism methods.
5. **Participate in Conservation Programmes:** Tourists should become involved in community-led conservation projects including garbage management, planting trees, and other sustainable tourism-related projects.
6. **Select Sustainable Transportation:** To cut carbon emissions and advance sustainable tourism practises, travellers should choose sustainable transportation options including biking, walking, or electric cars.
7. **Respect Natural Resources:** Visitors should show respect for natural resources like water, woods, and animals by avoiding resource waste, environmental pollution, and actions that endanger wildlife or their habitats.

In conclusion, Dzongu can promote sustainable tourism by honouring local customs, choosing homestays, adhering to ecotourism standards, patronising regional establishments, taking part in

conservation initiatives, using sustainable transportation, and protecting the environment. These actions can support ethical tourist promotion while safeguarding the area's distinctive culture, biodiversity, and scenic beauty.

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