

**Perception of local villagers on sustainable
Ecotourism at Bamnoli (Kasbe), Satara District,
Maharashtra-A case study**

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Abstract

A sustainable ecotourism should include local people's perspective for better management. This paper is directed to know local people's reactions about the impact of ecotourism which is in emerging phase at study site on their livelihood and environment. Dependency on ecotourism is found high compare to other livelihoods. The demand was made by respondents to firmly implement rules through laws at tourism sites. The respond about biodiversity harassment due to ecotourism activity was negative. People were not in favor for development of giant tourism industry. The people of village are found sensitive about the core idea of ecotourism. Thus such integrated approach which includes perspectives of local people as well as carrying capacity should be taken into consideration would be advantageous for ecotourism managements.

Conservation and tourism are conceptualized to work together since the early twentieth century⁹. One of the impactful practices to conserve natural resources through community participation also includes ecotourism. It builds on the idea of using tourism to reinforce conservation and vice versa, while strengthening the criteria for sustainability^{1,8}. Thus it can achieve biodiversity conservation and uplift associated community socio-economically. As the concept of ecotourism includes conservation with income generation, it is one of the most fast growing sustainable land use strategies². But the actual

impact of ecotourism on the environment and surrounding forests are not well understood despite its large and growing economic importance^{3,6,10}. It is essential to measure ecological and economical impact of ecotourism through tourism sustainability and carrying capacity for policy making and ecotourism management⁷. A sustainable ecotourism should include local people's perspective for better management. This paper is directed to know local people's reactions about the impact of ecotourism on their livelihood and environment. The study was

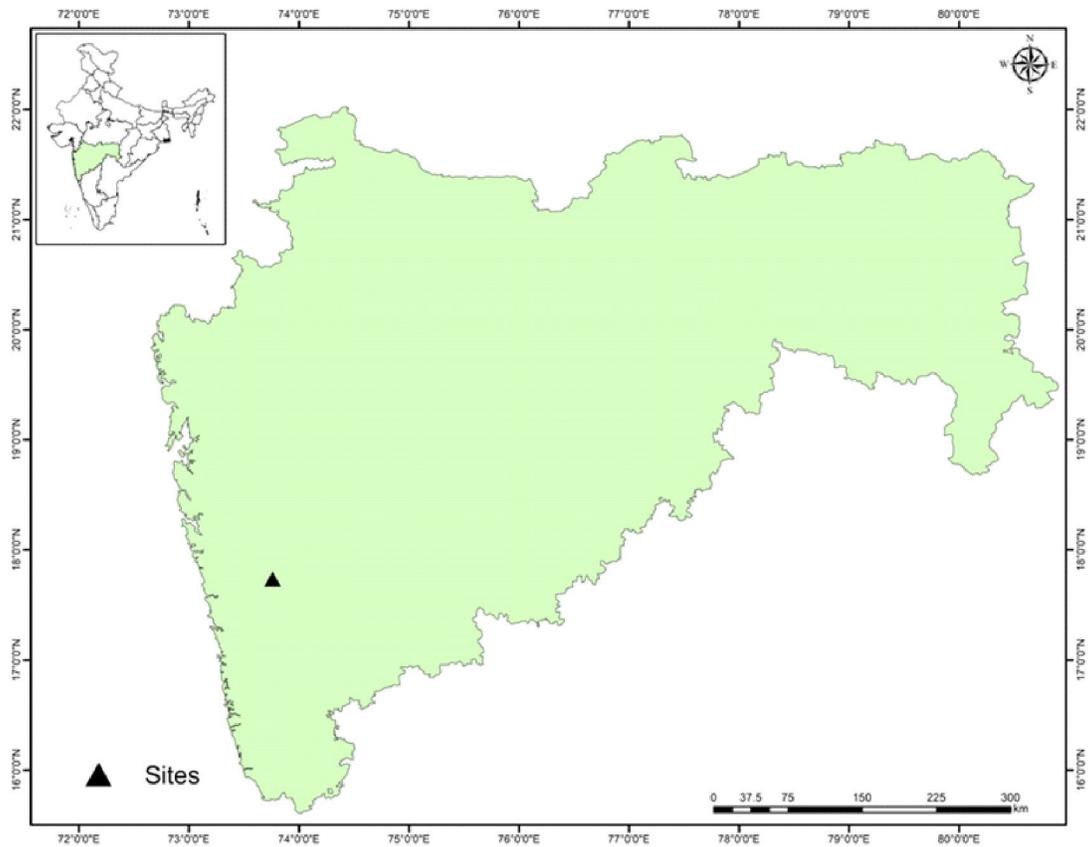


Fig. 1. Location of study site

inspired by primary observation of good example of sustainable ecotourism at Bamnoli (Kasbe), Jawali Taluka in Satara District of Maharashtra, India, located 28 km towards west from district headquarters Satara and 196 km from State capital Mumbai. The Ecotourism is still at emerging phase at study site. Therefore it was planned to get perceptions of locals with regard to ecotourism development in study area which was based on questionnaire survey. The idea is to help stake holders in sustainable development when ecotourism reach to advance phase in near future.

Study site :

Bamnoli (Kasbe) is a small village with 553 population and 123 households (census 2011). It is located near Sahyadri Tiger Reserve of Western Ghats surrounded by rich evergreen, semi-evergreen moist deciduous forests (Fig. 1).

The study had been carried out through interviewing locals with questionnaires. The study considers checking perception of locals towards the environmental impact on ecotourism. Added to this it includes economic

impacts of ecotourism for livelihood generation. Total 45 respondents were attended with inclusion of different categories such as restaurant/hotel owners, educated youth/working class and homemakers. The study analyzed the following research questions.

1. What were the sources of income before the development of ecotourism ?
2. Does your family solely depend on ecotourism activities ?
3. Is there any significant advantage of ecotourism in their economic conditions ? If yes what are they ?
4. Have you witnessed any human wildlife conflict ?
5. Whether the biodiversity in surrounding area is reduced due to ecotourism ? If yes which species are affected ?
6. Is there any impact of ecotourism on adjacent environment ? If yes what are the primary effects ?
7. Whether the development of immense resorts and hotels should prosper in the area?
8. What is the government hold for the development of ecotourism ?
9. Is there any need of awareness for tourists ?

About 20 year ago ecotourism started at Bannoli and it is flourishing since last 5 years. Before ecotourism development, locals were depending on farming, fishing and employments from nearby towns. At present the people of village mainly depend on ecotourism activities which can include camping, local guides, boating, local tea stalls and food restaurants, etc. It was noted during the survey that farm land was reduced as catchment area increased due to construction

of large Dam on Koyna River. Therefore dependency on ecotourism is increased as availability of cultivated land is decreased. The respond was negative for biodiversity reduction or harassment due to ecotourism activity. The only human animal conflict was found with monkeys (disturb people and destruct properties), snakes (occasional incidence of snake bite), wild pig (Crop destruction) and bear (rare incidence of attack on human). There was no consequence of plastic or any other waste pollution found due to ecotourism activity. Added to this the interviewed local woman informed that the village is cleaned frequently by them with the help of local administration departments (panchayat) under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan campaign of government. Many respondents answered that tourists are cause of noise pollution, misbehavior after drinking and rude behavior towards locals that spreads negativity and nuisance in the study site. Thus it was highly demanded to create awareness amongst tourist about behavioral ethics. The demand was made by respondents to firmly implement rules through laws at study site. People were not in favor of large scale infrastructural development because they fear that it may destroy their small scale businesses and also would destruct natural resource and harm the environment. It was also favored by some respondent that it would generate opportunity for more employment generation for locals. The support of government was offered by training forest guide, home stay schemes and advertisement on websites for the development of ecotourism.

Sustainable ecotourism should conserve wildlife and biodiversity, create incentives to protect landscapes and support livelihood of host communities⁵. Conservationists have

observed ecotourism to be a potential strategy to protect the environment while also meeting human financial needs of that area⁸. In this way ecotourism is distinguish from general tourism by its conservation, sustainable and livelihood goals¹ at least in its emerging or mature stage. The situation of ecotourism in present study area is in emerging stage hence less amount of conflicts and negative effects are found in study. Added to this the people of village are very conscious and sensitive about the core idea of ecotourism and believe in preservation of natural recourses. The demand for strictly implementation of rules through laws and penalties by local authority was made by respondents which show that locals are aware about upcoming conflicts about it.

Tourism sustainability and carrying capacity are linked in a number of ways *i.e.* ecological/environmental, physical, economical, socio-perceptual and policy/management⁴. The World Tourism Organization (WTO, Geneva, Switzerland¹¹) in its Global Code of Ethics for Tourism considers that the various actors in tourism should not only watch over their own agenda but also take into consideration the interests of the community as well as a place's cultural heritage and natural environment. In future there is a vast scope of development of ecotourism in the study area. Therefore as suggested by WTO, during the advance phases of development of ecotourism in Bamnoli, the perspectives of local people and carrying capacity of the area should be taken in to consideration. It is also found that there is a need of study to check physical and biological features which will depict ecotourism potentials of the study area. It is also important to find the role of different stakeholders of Bamnoli

in sustainable ecotourism and environment friendly development which can be used to make ecotourism management plan for this area.

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