

POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE VILLAGE TOURISM KHONOMA NAGALAND

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ABSTRACT. The beautiful village of Khonoma in the Indian state of Nagaland, known for its lush landscapes, diverse wildlife and strong cultural heritage, is becoming a popular example of how sustainable tourism can be developed through community-based eco-friendly initiatives and conservation efforts. The village successfully combines traditional life. With modern ideas drawing visitors who want genuine cultural experiences and natural beauty. Khonoma's sustainable tourism works because it prioritizes protecting the environment and empowering the local community. Initiatives such as community-managed forestry organic farming and ecotourism ensure that tourism benefits both nature and the people who live there. Visitors are attracted to the village terraces, untouched nature and the unique Angami culture that offers locals an opportunity to earn money and share their culture. However, Khonoma still faces some obstacles. Poor infrastructure, a lack of tourist awareness about responsible travel, and the risk of too many tourists could harm the village's environment and culture. Finding a balance between development and conservation requires careful planning and active participation of the local community. Promoting responsible tourism, improving infrastructure in an environmentally friendly manner and highlighting the village's unique identity are essential for its future sustainable growth.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Community-Based Tourism, Ecotourism, Cultural Heritage, Responsible Travel

1 Introduction

Tourism has become a crucial factor in fostering economic growth, facilitating cultural exchange, and promoting environmental conservation in rural regions across the globe. Specifically, sustainable village tourism offers a unique opportunity to harmonize economic advancement with ecological integrity and socio-cultural sustainability. A notable example of this is Khonoma, a historic village located in Nagaland, India, celebrated for its rich biodiversity, distinctive traditions, and community-driven conservation initiatives.

Khonoma has earned the distinction of being India's first green village, thanks to its innovative conservation efforts, such as the Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary (KNCTS), which exemplify the villagers' dedication to sustainable practices. The village's tourism appeal is rooted in its unspoiled natural surroundings, the indigenous Angami Naga culture, traditional farming methods, and eco-friendly homestay options. Nevertheless, while Khonoma serves as a model for sustainable rural tourism, it also encounters various challenges. These challenges include the need to maintain a delicate equilibrium between rising tourism and ecological preservation, addressing infrastructure constraints, ensuring fair economic benefits, and safeguarding its cultural heritage against external pressures.

This paper investigates the potential of sustainable village tourism in Khonoma, emphasizing its environmental, economic, and socio-cultural importance. It also addresses the obstacles that could impede its long-term viability and suggests strategies for fostering responsible tourism that aligns with the village's conservation principles. By examining Khonoma's experiences, this study seeks to offer insights into how rural communities can create sustainable tourism frameworks that benefit both the local populace and the environment.

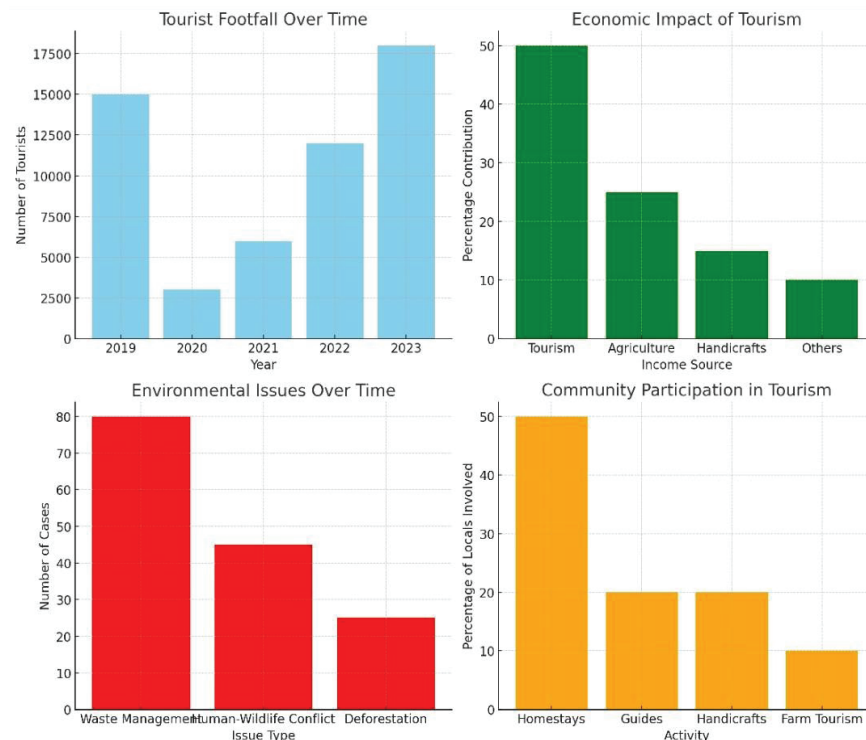


Figure 1. The data used for the graph is on based from the following Sources: Author

- Tourism footfall over time:-The Guardian (Pinto-Rodrigues, 2020) – “India’s first ‘green’ village adapts to life without tourists”.
- Economic impact of tourism:- Times of India (2024) – “Khonoma, Nagaland: The success story of eco-tourism”.
- Environmental issues :- The Morung Express (2023)-“Asia’s first ‘Green village’ faces waste management challenge”.
- Community participation in tourism:-Sanctuary Nature Foundation – “Khonoma and the Angami”.

2. OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of this research is paper is to analyze the sustainable village tourism in khonoma. To evaluate its impact on the environment, participation of local communities, environmental conservation, the economic development. The key objectives of the research are:

- To examine khonoma approach to sustainable tourism

- To know about the challenges and potential of sustainable village tourism of khonoma
- To evaluate the role of local community participation and to explore the economic benefits through sustainable tourism.
- To identify the key issue of environment such as waste management, human-wildlife conflict and economic dependency on tourism.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Khonoma, located in Nagaland, India, is frequently recognized as Asia's inaugural "Green Village" due to its commitment to sustainable village tourism, which harmonizes environmental conservation with the preservation of cultural heritage. In 1998, the village initiated the Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary (KNCTS) to safeguard its diverse ecosystems, particularly focusing on the endangered Blyth's tragopan. This pivotal shift from hunting to conservation has significantly transformed community practices, establishing Khonoma as a benchmark for ecotourism (Tripoto, n.d.). The sanctuary not only protects local wildlife but also draws ecotourists, thereby enhancing the local economy.

The tourism strategy in Khonoma is fundamentally community-driven. Residents actively engage in managing homestays, providing guided treks, and presenting cultural experiences, which ensures that tourism profits are fairly distributed and cultural authenticity is preserved (Times of India, 2024). These initiatives have economically empowered the community, enabling a variety of income sources while maintaining traditional agricultural methods (Department of Information & Public Relations, 2021). Furthermore, the community-based tourism model reinforces the village's social cohesion by promoting shared responsibility in resource management and decision-making processes.

Nevertheless, the surge in tourism has brought about significant challenges, particularly concerning waste management. Despite Khonoma's strong commitment to environmental stewardship, the influx of visitors has resulted in littering and inadequate waste disposal practices. Although the Khonoma Village Students' Union conducts cleanliness campaigns, the absence of effective waste segregation and disposal systems remains a concern, threatening the village's environmental sustainability (The Morung Express, 2023). Additionally, the successful conservation initiatives have led to increased human-wildlife conflicts, with wildlife encroaching on agricultural areas and causing crop damage, which has created tensions within the community. The balance between the necessity for biodiversity conservation and the sustainability of agriculture has been emphasized (Pinto-Rodrigues, 2020).

The economic reliance on tourism has emerged as a significant challenge, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel restrictions led to a notable decline in tourist arrivals, adversely affecting the livelihoods of the community and highlighting the urgent need for alternative economic avenues to lessen dependence on tourism (Pinto-Rodrigues, 2020). To ensure the long-term viability of Khonoma's tourism model, it is vital to tackle these issues through effective waste management practices, reducing human-wildlife conflicts, and investigating alternative sources of income.

3.1 Conservation and Ecotourism

The creation of the Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary (KNCTS) in 1998 represented a key achievement in the village's conservation initiatives. The sanctuary was established to safeguard the endangered Blyth's tragopan and other indigenous species, focusing on the transition from hunting to sustainable wildlife conservation (Kikon, 2005). This change has inspired similar ecotourism projects driven by conservation in other areas, where

local inhabitants play an essential role in managing resources and protecting habitats (Dutta, 2012).

Khonoma's ecotourism approach is founded on community-based conservation, ensuring that locals actively engage in and gain advantages from tourism-related endeavors. Homestays, guided treks, and cultural exhibitions support a sustainable economic model in which profits are equitably shared (Times of India, 2024). Research by Jamir and Longkumer (2019) illustrates how participatory conservation fosters local dedication to sustainable tourism while maintaining indigenous knowledge systems.

3.2 Economic and Social Impacts

The transition to ecotourism has resulted in economic diversification, offering alternative livelihoods apart from subsistence farming. Research indicates that community-managed tourism promotes social unity by strengthening collaborative decision-making and sustainable resource management (Department of Information and Public Relations, 2021). The combination of traditional agricultural methods with tourism further ensures food security and economic resilience (Aier, 2018).

Nonetheless, the heavy dependence on tourism income creates economic risks, particularly evident during the COVID-19 crisis. Travel limitations caused a drastic reduction in tourist visits, greatly affecting local earnings (Pinto-Rodrigues, 2020). This situation highlights the necessity for alternative income-generating approaches, like agroforestry and handicraft creation, to alleviate the hazards linked to over-reliance on tourism (Lal and Singh, 2021).

3.3 Environmental Challenges

Despite Khonoma's robust environmental commitment, increasing visitor numbers have intensified waste management issues. The village does not have a thorough waste segregation and disposal system, leading to environmental harm despite ongoing cleanliness campaigns organized by the Khonoma Village Students' Union (The Morung Express, 2023). Comparative analysis of sustainable waste management in ecotourism locations suggests that incorporating circular economy practices, such as composting and recycling, could greatly improve waste reduction efforts (Sharma et al., 2020).

Another urgent issue is human-wildlife conflict stemming from successful conservation initiatives. Growing wildlife populations have resulted in crop damage, impacting farmers and creating discord within the community. Research indicates that adaptive land-use planning and compensation programs can aid in reconciling conservation objectives with agricultural sustainability (Nair and Deka, 2017). Such strategies are vital for maintaining a balance between biodiversity conservation and rural livelihoods.

3.4 Policy and Future Directions

The sustainable tourism model of Khonoma's long-term success relies on integrated policy measures. Prioritizing effective waste management practices, diversifying income streams, and implementing conflict resolution strategies is essential. Researchers stress the importance of local governance in securing the sustainability of community-led tourism models (Das and Saikia, 2015). Policies that encourage eco-friendly infrastructure and responsible tourism practices could further enhance Khonoma's conservation legacy (Bhattacharya, 2019).

Khonoma exemplifies the potential of sustainable village tourism through its initiatives focused on community-led conservation and cultural heritage preservation. Nevertheless, it is imperative to address challenges such as waste management, human-wildlife interactions, and economic dependency to secure the village's ongoing success and sustainability.

4 METHODOLOGY

This report examines both the potential and challenges of sustainable village tourism in Khonoma, Nagaland. This report is based on mixed-method approach which is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. This research aims to know the impact of sustainable tourism on the local communities, economy and on environment. This also research explore the role of community in eco-friendly tourism and also identify some key challenges such as waste management and human-wildlife conflict.

4.1 Research design- The analysis of sustainable and eco tourism approach of khonoma is done by case study for in-depth analysis of eco-tourism model. The study combines secondary data analysis to understand the dynamics of sustainable tourism in village.

4.1 Data collection method- Secondary data collection

- As per the literature review mentioned in my research on sustainable tourism that includes government report, academic research and media articles like The guardian, The times of India, The Morung express.
- Analysis of the official tourism policies reports from sources like department of information and public relations, Nagaland.

4.2 Limitations

- The dependence on secondary data might limit the opinion and perspectives of the local community.
- The research lack primary data which means the research do not include direct interviews and observations.

5 Case study

Khonoma, a village located in Nagaland, India, serves as a compelling example of sustainable village tourism due to its rich cultural heritage, dedication to environmental conservation, and breathtaking natural scenery. The village's cultural practices and eco-tourism projects, such as the Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary, create opportunities for responsible tourism that uplifts local communities and protects the environment. Nonetheless, issues like environmental deterioration, commercialization of culture, inadequate infrastructure, and resistance from the community require careful attention. Successful strategies should include community-driven tourism initiatives, enhancing capacity, building eco-friendly infrastructure, encouraging low-impact activities, and fostering partnerships with governmental bodies and NGOs. With careful planning, Khonoma has the potential to set a precedent for sustainable tourism that benefits both the local population and the environment while maintaining its distinct cultural character.

CONCLUSION

Khonoma serves as an outstanding model sustainable village tourism, effectively integrating conservation efforts with cultural preservation and economic advancement .initiatives led by the community in eco-tourism, such as the Khonoma nature conservation and TragopanSanctuary(KNCTS), have contributed to the protection of biodiversity while enhancing the local economy.

Nonetheless, issues like waste management, conflicts with wildlife, and over-reliance on tourism pose significant threats to its sustainability. To secure Lasting success, Khonoma needs to implement improved waste management system, address wildlife conflicts, and explore diverse income streams that extend beyond tourism

In summary, Khonoma illustrates how nature focused tourism driven by the community can promote both ecological sustainability and economic well-being, providing a model for other rural regions seeking sustainable development.

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