

ECOTOURISM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE REGIONAL ECONOMY – A STUDY OF NORTH BENGAL (INDIA)

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Ecotourism, the nature based travel with emphasis on education, management, development of sustainable tourism product and activity and wellbeing of the local people is not simply a marginal activity to finance protection of the environment but it has proved to be an engine of growth in many economies of the world. Eco tourism has been recognized as the backbone of economies of many countries. North Bengal being the northern territory of West Bengal of India is fortunate for its rich ecotourism destinations. The present paper will explore the ecotourism landscape of this tract of India. It will also reflect an overview of its impact on the regional economy with six case studies. The paper will be concluded with some problems and management strategies of ecotourism activity of the area.

Keywords: *present status, resource bases, regional impact, problems, management strategies*

JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is often seen as having great potential in developing countries which have substantial natural resources to attract tourists. It has been used as a strategy to promote regional development in both rural and urban areas and thus tourism has been recognized as an industry. The building of a tourism cluster in developing economies can be a positive force in improving outlying infrastructure and dispersing economic activity (Amposta, 2009). This happens so that the tourism clusters invite foreign exchange earnings, generates employment and income in accommodation and transport sector and souvenir industry and accelerates the development of infrastructure (Richins & Scarinci, 2009). For this reason tourism continues to be a favoured regional development tool for many governments around the world (Gronau & Kaufmann, 2009; Brida

et al., 2010; Dodds & Buttlar, 2010). Thus ecotourism can be a means of obtaining economic development in many areas. India is fortunate for its rich ecotourism destinations. North Bengal, the northern territory of West Bengal is one of these. However the present paper first provides the present status of ecotourism activity of North Bengal. Then it proceeds to summarize a critical account of the impact of ecotourism activity on the regional economy of the area. Finally it outlines some problems of ecotourism activity of the area and reflects management strategies and actions for the promotion of the ecotourism activity.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present paper embraces the following objectives

- To explore the status of ecotourism of North Bengal.
- To analyse the economic impacts of ecotourism on the study area.
- To suggest to policy makers, planners and academics that economically backward regions can be developed through the promotion of ecotourism.
- To present the tourism scenario of the North Bengal region in the world tourism map

DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY

The present study is mostly based on primary data generated through author's field survey and direct contact with tourists and common people of the region. The sites for collecting data were Lataguri, Kunjanagar, Rasikbeel, Mongpong, Lava, Kulik, Tekunia and Rasomati beel of North Bengal. These field surveys were conducted in a systematic and phased manner. In the first phase for the present study the secondary data were collected from different sources like Divisional Forest Officer, Koch Bihar(2008), Kunjnagar Eco-development Society(2008), Divisional Forest Officer, Wildlife Division II, Jalpaiguri (2008), Secretary, Lava Hotel Association (2008), Treasurer, Resort Owners' Association, Lataguri (2008) and Centre In-Charge, Mongpong Nature Centre(2008) during the period of October, November and December 2008.

The second phase was related to the collection of primary data. To collect data on revenue generation, employment opportunities and infrastructural development schedule surveys were conducted. 150 schedule surveys were carried out among the hotel owners and the local people at Lataguri during the month of December 2008.

However all these collected primary and secondary information were later on systematically processed, arranged, tabulated and analyzed to have a clear view of the ecotourism scenario of North Bengal. The information collected from primary and secondary sources have been verified with the field experience.

LOCATION & EXTENT OF THE PRESENT STUDY AREA

The present study area – North Bengal lies in the lap of northern part of West Bengal, comprising six districts – Darjiling, Jalpaiguri, Koch Bihar, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur and Malda. It extends approximately from 24° 45' N to 27° 02' N latitudinally and from 87° 45' E to 89° 50' E longitudinally (Fig-1). The total area of the region is about 21859 sq. km. “The northern part of North Bengal belongs to Sub Himalayan Zone while the southern part is built up of debris washed down from the Himalayan slopes especially through the rivers. Thus except northern fringe the entire region belongs to plains” (Karmakar 2008:43). The study area is drained by several rivers such as – the Teesta, the Torsha, the Jaldhaka, the Raidak, the Sankosh, the Mahananda, the Punarbhaba, the Atrai, the Kulik etc. The Sankosh river demarcates the En boundary of North Bengal. All of these rivers flow from the north to south direction. The climate of the study area is characterized by hot, humid and heavy rainfall although in the northern hilly areas a cool climate prevails. The study area is also enriched with several distinctive species of fauna and flora. With an agrarian background most of the people of the region are engaged in primary sector. Due to lack of proper tertiary activities the number of people engaged in this sector is less. Thus, North Bengal with its rich natural endowments can provide regional growth impulses through the promotion of ecotourism activity.

ecotourism of the present study area. In fact this tract of West Bengal is an ideal destination for 'one who has been long in city pent'. However this new form of tourism activity has flourished in some destinations like Lata guri, Kunjnagar, Jaldapara, Rasikbeel, Rajabhatkhawa and Kulik. Apart from these places it has also grown sparsely at Rupam Valley, Mongpong, Rasomati beel, Tekunia , Dakshin Khair bari, Sandakphu, Kalimpong and in Red Panda Camp of Neora Valley National Park.

Table 1 Profile of tourists in selected ecotourism destinations of North Bengal

Year	Kunajnagar	Lava	Lataguri	Rasikbeel	Mongpong	Kulik	Total no. of Eco tourists
2001-02	13854	18903	13576	1738	11560	1189	60820
2002-03	14080	20411	14225	2328	13281	1231	65556
2003-04	14350	20948	16579	1851	15382	1303	70413
2004-05	16065	23104	19791	1251	16530	1376	78117
2005-06	18530	24321	23514	1248	20105	1577	89295
2006-07	17340	25602	27730	1343	15356	1650	89021
2007-08	20121	21567	37631	2089	12209	1756	95373
Percentage growth rate of tourist inflow from 2001 to 08	45.24%	14.09%	177.19%	20.20%	5.61%	47.69%	56.81%

Sources:

Divisional Forest Officer ,Kochbihar(2008)

Kunjnagar Eco Development Society(2008)

Divisional Forest Officer, Wildlife Division li, Jalpaiguri (2008)

Secretary, Lava Hotel Association (2008)

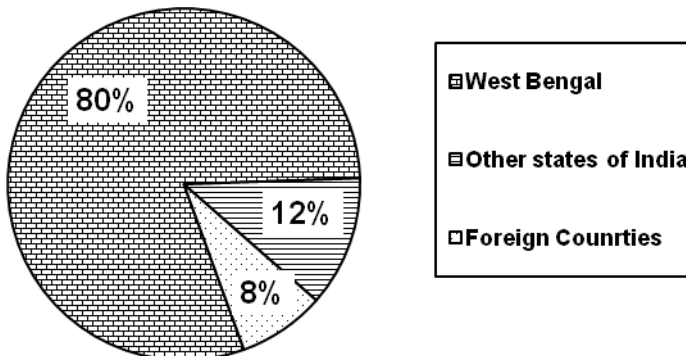
To have a profile of present status of ecotourism activity intensive physical surveys have been carried out by the author in different parts of the region during October- December, 2008. From table 1 it is clear that different ecotourism areas of North Bengal have been receiving a number of tourists in different successive years. The overall percentage growth rate of eco tourist inflow from 2001 to 2008 was 56.81% in North Bengal. Table 1 also reflects that the percentage growth rate of tourist inflow from 2001 to 08 was 177.19% for Lata guri, which is the highest growth rate among the ecotourism areas. This tiny hamlet lies in the lap of Gorumara National Park. This accelerating growth rate of eco tourism activity is not seen to other ecotourism destinations of North Bengal. It has taken only

eight years to reach such a growth rate. There are a number of factors, which have accelerated this speedy growth of ecotourism at Lataguri. These are-

- Rich bio diversity of the surrounding Gorumara National Park
- Lata guri Nature Interpretation Centre
- Ethnic villages like Saraswati forest village, Budhram forest village, Bichabhanga forest village, Chatua forest village etc.
- Coordination between the forest department and the private entrepreneurs
- Involvement of local people in tourism activities such as accommodation, transport, cooking, tourist guides, folk dancing and souvenir industry

However, Kulik ranks second in the percentage growth rate of tourist inflow i.e, 47.69%. The growth rate of Kunjanagar is 45.24% while it is 14.09% for Lava. The growth rate of Mongpong is only 5.61%. From this tourist trend it is clear that Lataguri has been very popular ecotourism centre among ecotourism destinations. Other ecotourism areas are growing slowly in comparison to Lata guri.

Figure 2 Percentage share of tourists by place of origin in North Bengal



A schedule survey was conducted by the author in December 2008. The survey was administered randomly to 175 respondents at Lata guri, Kunjanagar, Rasikbeel, Mongpong, Rasomati beel, Tekunia and Kulik. Field observations show that 80% of the tourists are Bengalee (Fig. 2). They occupy the lion's share of the total tourists. About 12% of the tourists come from different states of our country. The rest 8% belongs to those tourists who come from different countries of the world i.e. U.K., U.S.A., Australia, Germany, Canada, Japan, Netherland,

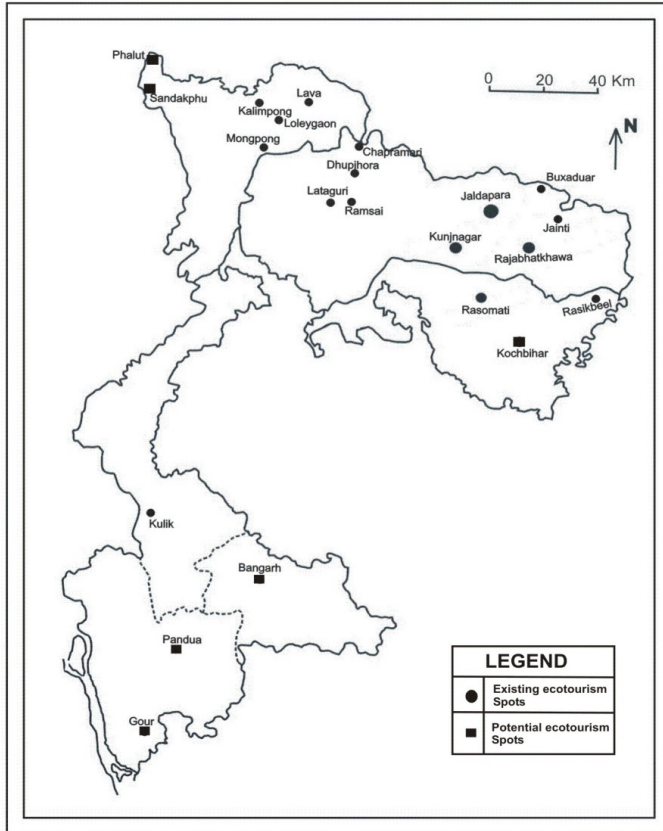
Belgium, Spain, Sweden, France, Denmark, New Zealand etc. However, no Kashmiri, Urdu tourists were recorded. The Khasi, Mizo, Manipuri, Naga, Garo etc. tourists were also absent during the survey.

SPATIAL VARIATIONS OF THE ECOTOURISM AREAS

If we observe the ecotourism destinations of North Bengal it is evident that these have not been concentrated in a particular area. The most rich nature tourism area lies in Jalpaiguri district. Lata guri (Gorumara) and Kunjnagar fall in this area (Fig.3). The Great Indian one horned Rhinoceros, Indian Elephant, Gaur (Indian Bison), wonderful avifauna like Hornbill, Nature Interpretation Centre and the ethnic villages like Saraswati forest village, Budhram forest village, Bichabhanga forest village, Chatua forest village etc. are the prime attractions of Lataguri. Again, the natural surroundings, murmuring of the Buri Torsha river, the Kunjanagar ecotourism park, ethnic cottages, observation tower, boating facility- all have laid the foundation of ecotourism activity at Kunjanagar. The second rich ecotourism area lies in Darjiling district. Lava and Mongpong are the important ecotourism centres of this area. Lava has multi-faced personality. The rolling hills, beautiful oak, pine and fir trees, and flowers – all these elements beckon tourists here from different states of India and abroad. Again resting on the immediate foothill the surrounding beauty of Mongpong is also very attractive. It is the place where Teesta River descends into plains running from mountainous country. From here one can view the relic of British Raj- the *Coronation Bridge*. On the other hand the third ecotourism area covers the Koch Bihar and Uttar Dinajpur district. Rasik beel and Kulik bird sanctuary are the two important ecotourism centres of this area. The Nature Interpretation Centre, birds like little Cormorant, large Egret, Open bill Stork, lesser adjutant Stork, lesser Pied King fisher, Braminy Kite, the Fish Aquarium, the Children Park, the Gharial (small sized Indian crocodile), Animal rescue centre and the Deer Park – all these have changed the Rasik Beel wetland into an eco tourist resort. The beauty of

migratory birds, their lifestyle, and the surroundings of the Kulik sanctuary beckon the tourists.

Figure 3 Existing and potential ecotourism spots of North Bengal



Apart from these Rasomati, Tekunia, Gorubathan, Kalimpong, Chalsa, Sandakphu, Phallut and Bhutan Ghat are also the rich potential ecotourism destinations which are sparsely distributed throughout the North Bengal.

IMPACT ON THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

“Ecotourism is viewed in many parts of the world as the next wave of community and regional development”(Hall & Boyd et al 2006 :21). There is a consensus that one of the special features of ecotourism is its ability to stimulate economic development therefore empowering local people through earning income and employment. From that stand point economic benefit is one of the objectives of using ecotourism as a development strategy. However the impact of ecotourism on the regional economy of the present study area can be highlighted in the following way-

REVENUE GENERATION: Tourism offers the opportunity for a redistribution of income and employment to regions that are traditionally lagged behind to the mainstream of economic life. For this reason many developing countries have, since the 1980’s, turned to ecotourism as a source of foreign exchange (Cater 1993). North Bengal, the present study area is no exception of it. The flow of money generated by the tourists in different ecotourism destinations of North Bengal filters through the economy stimulating various sectors i.e, accommodation, cuisine, transportation and entertainments etc. The money spent by the tourists goes to the local business in a number of ways. This money in turn is spent on salaries and on meeting the demands of the tourists such as food, drink, and entertainment etc. “Each time tourist makes expenditure, a ripple of additional spending is sent through the economy. This ripple is called a multiplier”(Stephen 1983:171). Thus “the expenditure incurred by the tourists supports not only the tourist industry directly but indirectly also supports a number of other related activities which produce goods and services for the tourist industry”(Singh 1989:263).

To have a glimpse of revenue generation from ecotourism author carried out field surveys in major ecotourism destinations of North Bengal during October- December, 2008. The following outcomes have been gathered from these field surveys--

LATA GURI - THE GREEN GATE WAY OF ECOTOURISM: For the convenience of the present study at first Lataguri, a tiny hamlet lies in the lap of Gorumara National Park has been selected. It is necessary to mention here that this destination ranks first among the ecotourism destinations of North Bengal for its tourist inflow and other tourism activities and development of the area within a short period of time. The rich floral variety; one horned Rhinoceros, Bison, Elephant, Deer and a variety of avifauna; ethnic diversity; riverine landscape, elephant riding, etc. have stimulated to develop ecotourism activity in this area.

From the income generation point of view the area is really very fortunate because in 2007-08 the total revenue collected from tourists is \$ 57460 and from other sources there is another \$ 18120. Table 2 shows that prior to 2000 there was no revenue generation at Lataguri because on that period ecotourism activity was not flourished here. After the initiation of ecotourism activity revenues begin to accumulate in the area. This huge amount has been possible only due to promotion of ecotourism in the area. In fact tourism is more and more promoted as a solution to the resulting poor socio economic situation (Townsend, 1997; Hall & Jenkins, 1998; Jenkins et al., 1998).

TABLE 2 Revenue generation from ecotourism at Lataguri after 2000

Sources of Revenue	Before 2000	2007 – 08 (In US \$)
Revenue from Tourists	Nil	57460
Guides	Nil	10400
Folk Artists	Nil	3780
Handicrafts	Nil	3940

Source : Author's Field Survey (2008)

KUNJNAGAR ECOTOURISM PARK: The natural surroundings, murmuring of the Buri Torsha River, panoramic view of Jaldapara wildlife sanctuary, the park, ethnic cottages, observation tower, boating facility- all have laid the foundation of ecotourism activity at Kunjnar. Table 3 shows that during the period of 2002-03 the income generation from ecotourism at Kunjnar was US \$ 16920 and in 2007-08 it reached to US \$ 21720 . Thus the percentage growth rate of income generation from 2002 to 2008 has been calculated at 28.37%. This income generation has been possible only due to the development of ecotourism in the area.

Table 3 Income generation from ecotourism at Kunjnagar

Year	Income in US \$
2002-03	16920
2003-04	20800
2004-05	21000
2005-06	25000
2006-07	21000
2007-08	21720

Source: Kunjnagar Eco-Development Committee(2008)

RASIK BEEL ECOTOURISM CENTRE: The beauty of Rasik Beel is very fascinating. Migratory birds like little Cormorant, large Egret, Open Bill Stork , lesser Adjutant Stork , lesser Pied King fisher, Braminy Kite, the Nature Interpretation Centre, the Fish Aquarium, the Children Park, the Gharial Rescue centre, Animal Rescue centre and the Deer Park – all these have changed the Rasik Beel wetland into an ecotourist centre. Rasik beel ecotourism centre has also been earning a huge amount of revenue in different years. In 2001-02 the amount collected from ecotourism was US \$ 12000 and it was about US \$ 10680 during the period of 2007-08 (Table 4).

Table 4 Earnings at Rasikbeel ecotourism centre

Year	Earnings in US \$
2001-02	12000
2002-03	12400
2003-04	5440
2004-05	3320
2005-06	5780
2006-07	8380
2007-08	10680

Source: divisional forest officer (kochbihar 2008)

TEKUNIA AND RASOMATI BEEL ECOTOURISM CENTRE: Revenue income from ecotourism at Tekunia and Rasomati Beel is also attractive. Tekunia ecotourism centre earned an amount of US \$408.5 during the period of 2007-08 while the Rasomati Beel received US \$ 1145 during the same period (Table 5). This revenue income has been possible only due to the development of ecotourism activity in these areas. Table 5 reveals that Rasomati Beel ecotourism centre draws more visitors than the Tekunia. Hence it is clear that Rasomati Beel ecotourism centre has been very popular among the visitors.

Table 5 REVENUE INCOME FROM ECOTOURISM AT TEKUNIA AND RASOMATI BEEL DURING THE PERIOD OF 2007-08

TEKUNIA RASOMATI BEEL

Month	Inc Income in US \$	Income in US \$
January	60	400
February	51	300
March	42.5	250
April	30	50
May	150	20
June	5	Off season
July	4.5	Off season
August	4	Off season
September	5.5	10
October	11	40
November	10	30
December	35	45
Total	408.5	1145

Source: Register of the R.B.E.T.C and Mathabhanga range office, Beat office (2008)

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES: “Tourism generates considerable employment, both directly in the sectors in which tourist expenditure occurs and, more widely, via inter industry linkages”(Cooper et al 2006:36). In fact ecotourism is a labour intensive industry and thus is an efficient way to generate employment in North Bengal also. In North Bengal ‘most natural areas are located in rural locales. The development of tourism in such areas can have considerable impact on the local people’

(Aparna et al. 2007:236). Thus the spread of ecotourism activity has opened a new source of livelihood to many ethnic people encircling the Gorumara National Park. The Park authority has employed Santals and Oraon people as tourist guides and folk dancers (Table 6). A live show of the ethnic tribal dance can be seen every evening in all the ecotourism camps at Lata guri, Murti, Dhupjhora, Kalipur and Budhram Forest Village. However they are also encouraged to engage in souvenir industry. In this way the park authority to some extent has been succeeded to provide employment generation amongst the local people. In fact “tourism is a growing focus of economic policy in regions where employment creation through other means of investment is difficult” (Sharpley & Telfer et al 2006:122).

Table 6 Employment generation at Lataguri after 2000

Sources	Before 2000	2007 - 08	Percentage of employment
Accommodation Sector	Nil	300 persons	62.37%
Transport Sector	Nil	70 ,,	14.55%
Souvenir Industry	Nil	20 ,,	4.16%
Employment as Guide	Nil	35 ,,	7.28%
Members engaged in Folk dancing	Nil	56 ,,	11.64%
Total		481	100

Source: Author's Field Survey (2008)

The field survey carried out by the author during December, 2008 at Lataguri, the most rich ecotourism destination reveals that the area has benefited much from the employment point of view. Due to expansion of ecotourism activity the area generates employment opportunities to the local people. There is no other means of employment in the area except agriculture. Thus ‘of particular importance to small economies, tourism permits the gains of economies of scale’(Ryan 2006:150). From the field survey it is found that at present 481 people are

directly related to the tourism activity. Of the total employment, 62.37% has been engaged in accommodation sector. Thus this sector generates maximum employment opportunities. Transport sector employs 14.55% while the percentage of members engaged in folk dancing is 11.64. Souvenir industry employs less number of people i.e, 4.16%. In fact “one of the special features of ecotourism is its ability to stimulate economic development therefore empowering local people through earning income and employment” (Hall & Boyd et al 2006:173). Table 6 shows the employment scenario in different sectors generated by ecotourism after 2000 in the area.

INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT: Tourism cluster in developing economies plays an important role in improving outlying infrastructure and dispersing economic activity. In fact ‘this development is the primary component for the beginning of tourism in any region’(Singh 1989:264). Besides, the development of infrastructure forms the basis for diversification of other economic activities such as small scale industries, horticulture, and means of communication etc. Thus the tourist development directly or indirectly acts as an effective means for revival of infrastructure and regional development (Fig. 4). To have a glimpse of infrastructural development due to ecotourism a case study has been carried out by the author during the period of November and December, 2008 at Lata guri , the most rich ecotourism centre of North Bengal. From the field survey it is seen that there has been a radical change in infrastructural and supra structural development after 2000 at Lataguri. For instance in 2007-08 the number of resorts in the area was 30 whereas there was no resort before 2000 (Table 7). The movement of small vehicles suitable for jungle safari has also been increased. There are 54 vehicles in the area now. The number of telephone booths is at present 10 while there was no telephone booth before 2000.

PROBLEMS

Though blessed with a rich flora, fauna and other natural and cultural resources the region has not witnessed major tourism development activity. The reasons behind it are as follows:

- **LACK OF PROPER PUBLICITY:** Most of the ecotourism spots of North Bengal are least advertised or given adequate publicity. Except Jaldapara and Gorumara ecotourism spots the other spots are not brought into publicity properly. Lava, Lodaygaon, Suntaleykhola, Tarakhola , Sandakphu, Buxa-

Joyantia, Fallut , Rasik Beel, Dakshin Khair bari, Rasomati Beel, Tekunia and Red Panda Camp areas have not been advertised properly and so these areas receive few foreign tourists.

- **LACK OF CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN FOREST DEPARTMENT AND TOURISM DEPARTMENT:** Except some hill based resorts most of the ecotourism destinations of North Bengal are forest based. Jaldapara, Gorumara, Buxa National park are its examples. To visit these areas tourists have to be dependent on the forest department. Bookings for accommodation in these ecotourism destinations (except Gorumara National Park) are a difficult task, which impede the free flow of both inland and foreign tourists.
- **LIMITED 'TOURIST CIRCUIT' PACKAGE:** The regional 'Tourist Circuit' concept has not been implemented everywhere. This package has been successful in Jalpaiguri and Koch Bihar districts and in some parts of Darjiling district. The package does not cover the important places like Lolaygaon, Suntaleykhola, Tarakhola , Sandakphu and Buxa Tiger Reserve areas.
- **LACK OF PROPER ORGANIZATIONAL SET UP:** Lack of systematic organization is another constraint of ecotourism in the study area. There is no separate tourism organization in North Bengal. "New directions (paradigms) that are emerging in the tourism field suggest that the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism planning comprises not only advances in tourism planning theory and practices but also improvement in the organizational framework within which decisions are designed and put into practice"(Costa 2001:425). Hence there should have a separate Tourism Organisation for North Bengal which will constantly monitor the tourism activity of the area.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:** The rapid growth rate of ecotourism activity at Lataguri is inviting some negative impacts on the environment. "Wall(1994) notes that ecotourism attracts attention to natural treasures, thereby increasing the pressures upon them"(Newsome et al 2006:19). Thus, increasing construction of resorts is causing loss to a number of plants. According to Lataguri Gram Panchayet, a local governing body about 10 acres of forest lands have been wiped out for the construction of the resorts and other infrastructural facilities in the area since 2000. In fact 'heavy human use of open space adversely affects the biomass' (Singh,1989:269). Again the

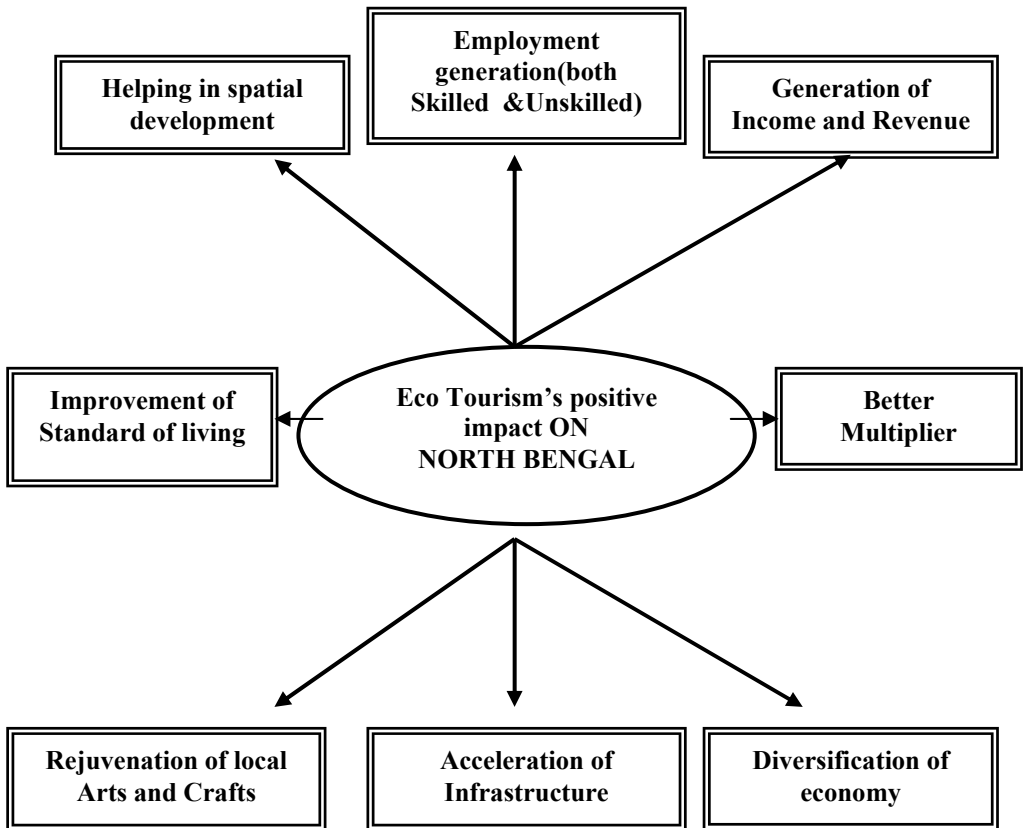
increasing use of wood as fuel and timber in a number of industrial products such as souvenir industry also leads to felling and cutting of trees.

Table 7 Infrastructural development at Lataguri after 2000

Sources	Before 2000	2007 - 08
Tourist Resort	Nil	30
Hotel (Only Fooding)	2	5
Transport (Maruti / Sumo etc)	1	54
Telephone Booth	Nil	10
Handicrafts Sales Centre	Nil	1

Source: Author's Field Survey (2008)

Figure 4 Ecotourism's positive impact on North Bengal



MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

“Tourism management in most natural areas relies on a combination of various management strategies and actions”(Newsome et al 2006:223). For the present study area also several management strategies can be adopted. The potential ecotourism spots of the area i.e, Buxa-Jayantia, Chalsa, Fallut, Sandakphu, Gorubathan, Phallut and Bhutan Ghat, Gour , Pandua, Jagajivanpur areas have to be linked up with proper roads and other infrastructural facilities. Recreational facilities like bathing, climbing, libraries, souvenir shops, books and newspaper stalls etc. are to be introduced in selected resorts; otherwise days in the study area would not be interesting to the tourists. Proper flexible measures have to be carried out for bookings of accommodation of the forest based ecotourism destinations. In order to have a full benefit of tourism activity all important ecotourism destinations have to be included with the ‘Tourist Circuit’ concept. Thus the Hill, Heritage, and Forest added attractions have to be brought under this concept. Again the co-ordination between forest department and tourism department must be followed since most of the tourist destinations of the area are forest based. Apart from this emphasis should be given on the proper advertisement and publicity programmes. Thus ‘with regard to product development, tourism marketers should pay particular attention to the important relationship between marketing and tourism planning’ (Cooper 2006:94). The task of a planner does not end when a plan has been prepared for three years, five years or seven years. “A system of constant revision and monitoring of the plan progress should be a part of the exercise of the planning”(Bhatia 1985:124) Targets must be revised at times in the light of changing resources, conditions and circumstances. Therefore, for the successful ecotourism planning of the study area monitoring progress should be adopted periodically.

CONCLUSION

The present study reflects an overview of present status of ecotourism activity of different areas of North Bengal. It also provides an analysis of the economic benefits that ecotourism projects of the different areas contribute to some local areas as well as providing some baseline assessment of its impact on social and resource development of North Bengal. The fundamental findings are that ecotourism has improved the regional economy through income and employment generation in different National park areas of North Bengal. Several planning measures

have been highlighted for North Bengal to promote the ecotourism activities of the area.

With an agrarian background most of the people of the region are engaged in primary sector. Due to lack of proper tertiary activities the number of people engaged in this sector is less. Thus, ecotourism with its rich natural endowments can do a lot for the good of the regional economy and society of this economically backward area of India.

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