

Green Tourism Development in Jammu & Kashmir: An Economic Analysis in the Context of G20 Agendas

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Abstract: *This paper presents a robust framework for conducting an economic analysis of green tourism development in J&K. By leveraging secondary data, the analysis aims to provide insights into the economic viability of sustainable tourism practices while considering the influence of G20 sustainability agendas. The ensuing findings will shed light on the economic implications of adopting green tourism strategies and inform policy recommendations for sustainable tourism development in the region. The insights garnered through the economic analysis underscore the undeniable economic viability of adopting sustainable tourism practices in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). As the analysis highlights, such practices offer a pathway to robust economic growth, local job creation, and enhanced revenue streams. Notably, these economic benefits are intrinsically intertwined with the principles upheld by G20 sustainability agendas. The alignment between J&K's pursuit of green tourism and the G20's commitment to responsible tourism practices, environmental conservation, and inclusive economic development is unmistakable. By delving into the economic implications of embracing green tourism strategies, the analysis offers a nuanced understanding of the potential advantages and challenges that lie ahead. Armed with this knowledge, policymakers are empowered to craft targeted and effective recommendations for sustainable tourism development in the region. In essence, the economic analysis serves as a guiding light that illuminates the harmonious relationship between economic prosperity, environmental preservation, and global sustainability objectives within the context of J&K's journey towards a greener and more prosperous future.*

Key words: *Tourism , employment, sustainable, G20, Economic Growth, Multipliers, Revenue*

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I. Introduction:

Tourism, widely recognized as the world's largest industry, offers a spectrum of experiences from serene natural retreats to bustling urban explorations and culturally immersive journeys. Its economic significance is profound, drawing scrutiny from scholars, policymakers, and industry experts. In many regions worldwide, tourism serves as the primary driver of economic growth. Scholars have examined its potential as an engine for economic development (Lanza & Pigliaru, 1994), a pivotal generator of employment opportunities (WTTC, 2018), and a catalyst for regional progress (Hall, 2010). Additionally, studies have explored the industry's susceptibility to external factors like climate change (Becken & Hay, 2007) and its capacity to address critical issues such as youth unemployment (World Bank, 2018). The World Tourism Association anticipates a significant surge in the sector's GDP contribution, projecting it to reach an astounding US\$15.5 trillion by 2033. This would account for roughly 11.6% of the global economy and provide employment for an estimated 430 million people worldwide, constituting nearly 12% of the expected working population within this sector (Roday et al., 2009).

Beyond job creation in the service sector, tourism stimulates growth in both primary and secondary industries. By catalyzing infrastructure improvements and driving expansion across various economic sectors, tourism proves to be a powerful force for generating foreign exchange and offering a plethora of job opportunities. The profound impact of tourism on destination economies has been underscored by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. This unforeseen event led to a staggering 74% year-on-year reduction in international visitor arrivals, resulting in an estimated loss of US\$1.3 trillion in tourism revenue in 2020 (UNWTO, 2021). This, in turn, contributed to a significant 4% contraction in the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the same year (World Bank, 2020).

However, the surge in tourism also brings about negative environmental consequences. Overwhelming tourist arrivals, exceeding the region's capacity, can lead to a range of detrimental consequences. These include issues such as soil erosion, the depletion of natural resources, the accumulation of waste and air pollution, and the endangerment of biodiversity. Furthermore, it leads to the degradation of socio-cultural habitats and poses a threat to the natural integrity of both land and sea, to the point where the sustainability conditions of a locality may be jeopardized (Girard and Nijkamp, 2009; Andlib and Salcedo-Castro, 2021).

Nonetheless, the tourism sector presents a substantial, largely untapped resource in addressing significant environmental challenges due to its global reach and unmatched economic weight. Tourism plays a pivotal role in creating awareness of the value of cultural heritage and the environment among local communities. Even in nations with limited prospects for economic growth, a substantial influx of foreign travel is deemed imperative. Tourism holds the potential to serve as a growth engine for the economy, as well as a potent instrument for generating job opportunities and ensuring inclusive growth. Tourist organizations such as UNTWO and WTTC have firmly positioned the sector as a major contributor to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (Scott et al., 2012).

Green Tourism and G20 Sustainability Agendas:

Green tourism, synonymous with sustainable tourism, embodies a conscientious approach to travel, emphasizing the preservation of natural environments, cultural heritage, and local communities (Murphy and Price, 2005). Its core objective is to minimize the ecological impact of tourism activities, thereby fostering a balanced coexistence between tourism and the environment. This philosophy has gained global prominence, recognizing the pivotal role of sustainability in shaping the trajectory of the tourism industry. However, the surge in global tourism, while economically advantageous, has also brought to light potential environmental hazards, ranging from extensive infrastructure development to heightened carbon emissions (Gosling et al., 2020).

At the global level, the G20 forum, representing approximately 85% of the world's GDP and over 75% of global trade, plays a central role in discussions on international financial and economic matters (World Trade Organization, 2021). In 2023, India's presidency within the G20 focuses on sustainable development and environmental consciousness. As of 2023, India holds the Presidency of the G20, positioning it at the forefront of discussions surrounding global economic policy, financial stability, trade, and other critical international issues. The G20's sustainability agendas are closely aligned with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), economic growth (SDG 8), and preserving life below water (SDG 14).

The theme of India's G20 presidency, "LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)," underscores the significance of individual and national choices in advancing environmental sustainability (Pigram and Wahab, 1997). This theme advocates for transformative actions at both the personal and national levels, aspiring for a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future (G20 Insights, 2023). Recognizing the critical role of lifestyle choices in achieving global environmental goals, this approach emphasizes the profound impact that individual decisions can have on the collective well-being of our planet. By aligning green tourism principles with G20 sustainability agendas, there is a shared commitment to leverage the potential of tourism for positive change, safeguarding the prosperity of host communities and the overall ecological health of our planet.

Green tourism in Jammu & Kashmir

Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) stands as a testament to natural beauty and cultural richness, captivating tourists worldwide. Post-pandemic recovery witnessed a commendable surge in both Indian (64.5% growth in 2022 over 2021) and Foreign Tourists (1111.3% growth in 2022 over 2021), signifying a promising revival in the region's tourism industry. However, heightened environmental concerns necessitate a thorough examination of the economic ramifications of adopting green tourism practices. In essence, green tourism in J&K champions a sustainable and thoughtful approach, aiming to preserve the region's invaluable natural treasures while mitigating the environmental impact of tourism. This entails a comprehensive range of strategies and principles geared towards safeguarding J&K's pristine landscapes, diverse ecosystems, and rich cultural heritage. Fundamentally, green tourism underscores the imperative of conserving natural assets as a linchpin of sustainable development. The region's unrivaled natural splendor, from the majestic Himalayas to the tranquil Dal Lake, not only holds intrinsic value but also serves as a linchpin for economic growth. By nurturing and protecting these natural wonders, green tourism ensures that J&K's allure remains intact, thereby contributing to both economic prosperity and a heightened sense of local pride.

Central to green tourism is the systematic reduction of environmental impact linked with tourism activities. Acknowledging the fragility of J&K's delicate ecosystems, green tourism advocates for an array of practices targeting the reduction of carbon emissions, waste generation, and ecological disruption associated with tourism. This encompasses the promotion of sustainable transportation options, waste management strategies, and the adoption of energy-efficient accommodations. By embracing these measures, green tourism endeavors to guarantee that the influx of tourists does not compromise the very ecosystems that draw them to the region. Furthermore, green tourism acknowledges that its role extends beyond the mere promotion of responsible tourism practices. It actively engages in the preservation of cultural heritage, recognizing the inseparable connection between J&K's distinctive cultural tapestry and its natural landscapes. Through the honoring of local traditions, facilitation of cultural exchange, and support for community-based tourism initiatives, green tourism elevates the value of authentic experiences that honor both the environment and the people who call it home.

The G20 sustainability agendas present a comprehensive framework offering J&K a strategic roadmap towards transitioning to a more sustainable tourism model. By aligning with these agendas, J&K can tap into a reservoir of global expertise and best practices, with a strong emphasis on responsible tourism practices and environmental conservation. The G20's focal points on carbon emission reduction, biodiversity conservation, and community engagement resonate strongly with J&K's vision for responsible tourism development. These agendas serve as a compass, providing insights into successful initiatives and policies implemented worldwide to mitigate the adverse impacts of tourism while maximizing its benefits. Through the adoption of G20 principles, J&K can implement measures to minimize the ecological footprint of tourism activities, encourage the preservation of its cultural heritage, and ensure that local communities reap the economic rewards of sustainable tourism. In essence, these G20 sustainability agendas furnish J&K with a robust framework in harmony with its own objectives, empowering the region to progress towards a more sustainable tourism model that safeguards its natural treasures and contributes to the overall well-being of its communities. The convergence of green tourism with global sustainability agendas, as championed by the G20, further amplifies its significance. The G20's emphasis on sustainable development aligns seamlessly with J&K's ambition for a thriving tourism sector that remains ecologically sustainable. By embracing the principles advocated by the G20, green tourism in J&K gains a broader framework, highlighting its role in not only local but also global endeavors to address environmental challenges.

Research Objectives:

1. Assess the economic implications of green tourism development in J&K.
2. Investigate the influence of G20 sustainability agendas on J&K's tourism policies.
3. Identify the challenges and opportunities associated with green tourism.
4. Formulate policy recommendations and strategies based on economic analysis for fostering sustainable tourism practices.

Data Collection and Methodology:

In conducting an economic analysis of green tourism in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), the methodology hinges on the acquisition of secondary data. This data is paramount in shedding light on the current state of tourism in the region and its potential for sustainable expansion. Sourced from reputable outlets such as government reports, industry studies, and official tourism databases, along with surveys and published research, this data encompasses crucial metrics like tourist arrivals, accommodation occupancy rates, spending behavior, and more. This comprehensive dataset forms the bedrock for an insightful assessment of the economic ramifications associated with the adoption of green tourism practices.

Economic Implications and Alignment with G20 Sustainability Agendas in Jammu & Kashmir

Incorporating green tourism practices in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) is not only a stride towards environmental preservation but also a strategic move with profound economic implications. The adoption of environmentally conscious and responsible tourism approaches holds the potential to not only bolster short-term financial gains but also pave the way for sustainable, long-term economic prosperity. As global travelers increasingly seek destinations committed to conservation and community well-being, J&K stands poised to harness this burgeoning trend to its advantage.

Key Economic Implications of Green Tourism

- **Economic Growth through Niche Tourism:** By embracing green tourism, J&K can tap into a niche market of environmentally conscious travelers. These ecologically-minded tourists are inclined to invest more in

experiences aligned with their values. Positioning itself as a green tourism hub would attract this segment, resulting in increased revenue from higher spending on accommodations, activities, and local products, thereby stimulating economic growth.

- **Diversification and Reduction of Seasonality:** Green tourism practices allow J&K to diversify its tourism offerings, reducing dependence on specific peak seasons. Offering a range of sustainable activities, from nature treks to cultural exchanges, can attract tourists year-round. This not only boosts revenue but also mitigates the negative impact of seasonality, ensuring a more stable and sustainable flow of income for local businesses.
- **Enhanced Local Business Opportunities:** Green tourism prioritizes community engagement and the inclusion of local businesses. This approach has the potential to stimulate economic development at the grassroots level, creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs, artisans, and service providers. By fostering an environment where small businesses thrive, J&K generates income and employment opportunities for local residents.
- **Cultural and Heritage Preservation:** Green tourism encourages deeper engagement with local cultures and heritage. This emphasis on authenticity resonates with travelers seeking meaningful experiences. As J&K promotes cultural interactions and traditional craftsmanship, it creates economic opportunities for communities while preserving and celebrating the region's unique identity.
- **Long-Term Destination Competitiveness:** The commitment to green tourism practices enhances J&K's long-term destination competitiveness. With sustainability becoming a crucial criterion for travelers, J&K's efforts to preserve its natural beauty and minimize its ecological footprint can set it apart in the global tourism market. A positive reputation for responsible practices can attract more visitors and foster a loyal tourist base, leading to sustained economic growth.
- **Resilience and Future-Proofing:** By adopting green tourism practices, J&K future-proofs its tourism industry against potential shifts in consumer preferences and global trends. The focus on sustainability ensures that the destination remains appealing and relevant, even as societal awareness of environmental issues continues to grow, thereby safeguarding the economic stability of J&K's tourism sector.
- **Increased Revenue and Job Creation:** Sustainable tourism practices lead to increased revenue by attracting environmentally conscious travelers willing to spend more on eco-friendly experiences. This focus on biodiversity conservation and responsible tourism also leads to the creation of new employment opportunities across various sectors, benefiting local communities.
- **Economic Multipliers:** Sustainable tourism encourages spending within the local economy, creating a multiplier effect. By enforcing visitor limits and promoting eco-friendly practices, J&K has witnessed an increase in demand for local products, guided tours, and accommodations, contributing to overall economic vitality.

The economic implications of green tourism in J&K are multi-faceted and far-reaching, offering not only immediate financial gains but also a trajectory towards long-term sustainable economic growth. As J&K emerges as a beacon of responsible tourism, it sets the stage for a prosperous future that harmonizes with both the environment and the well-being of local communities.

Alignment with G20 Sustainability Agendas

Jammu & Kashmir's (J&K) green tourism aspirations align seamlessly with specific G20 sustainability goals, declarations, and initiatives, fostering a harmonious convergence between regional development and global sustainability objectives. Here's how J&K's aspirations resonate with key G20 sustainability principles:

- **Climate Change Mitigation:** J&K's commitment to green tourism is in line with G20's emphasis on climate change mitigation. Green tourism practices often involve reducing carbon emissions, adopting renewable energy sources, and implementing eco-friendly transportation. J&K's efforts to minimize its ecological footprint through sustainable accommodations, energy-efficient facilities, and responsible transportation align with G20's goals to combat climate change.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** J&K's focus on green tourism inherently involves the preservation of its rich biodiversity. This aligns with G20's commitment to biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management. By promoting activities such as wildlife conservation, guided eco-tours, and nature-based experiences, J&K contributes to global efforts to protect and celebrate the world's natural heritage.
- **Community Engagement and Livelihoods:** J&K's green tourism initiatives can enhance community engagement and livelihood opportunities for local populations. This resonates with G20's emphasis on inclusive and sustainable economic growth. By involving local communities in eco-trekking, cultural exchanges, and artisanal activities, J&K promotes equitable distribution of benefits and aligns with G20's focus on social development.

- **Resilient Infrastructure:** J&K's sustainable tourism development includes investments in resilient infrastructure that can withstand environmental challenges. This corresponds to G20's objectives of fostering resilient infrastructure and promoting sustainable urbanization. J&K's initiatives, such as waste management systems and environmentally conscious construction, contribute to building infrastructure that can endure changing conditions.
- **Cultural Preservation and Heritage:** J&K's commitment to green tourism extends to cultural preservation and heritage conservation. This mirrors G20's recognition of the importance of cultural heritage in sustainable development. By promoting cultural exchanges, traditional craftsmanship, and community-based tourism, J&K aligns with G20's objectives of preserving cultural diversity.
- **Responsible Consumption and Production:** J&K's emphasis on sustainable practices, waste reduction, and eco-friendly products corresponds to G20's goal of promoting responsible consumption and production.

Thus, J&K's green tourism aspirations align closely with G20's sustainability goals, declarations, and initiatives. By embracing green tourism practices, J&K contributes to global efforts to address climate change, conserve biodiversity, promote community well-being, and achieve sustainable economic growth. This alignment signifies the region's commitment to both regional development and the global sustainability agenda

Challenges and Barriers in Green Tourism Development:

Embracing green tourism in destinations like Jammu & Kashmir entails confronting various economic challenges and barriers. While the rewards of sustainable tourism are significant, surmounting these obstacles is pivotal for its effective execution. Following are some noteworthy economic challenges and barriers that need to be addressed:

- **Initial Investment Costs:** Implementing sustainable practices often requires significant upfront investments in eco-friendly infrastructure, renewable energy sources, waste management systems, and sustainable accommodations. These costs can be substantial and may pose a barrier, especially for regions with limited financial resources
- **Perceived Higher Costs for Tourists:** Green tourism initiatives might lead to a perception of higher costs for tourists due to investments in sustainable practices. Some travelers may be hesitant to pay extra for eco-friendly accommodations and activities, potentially impacting the demand for green tourism experiences.
- **Limited Awareness and Education:** Lack of awareness and understanding about the benefits of green tourism can hinder its adoption. Both tourists and local stakeholders need education and awareness campaigns to appreciate the long-term economic and environmental advantages of sustainable practices.
- **Resistance to Change:** Transitioning from conventional to green tourism practices may face resistance from stakeholders accustomed to traditional approaches. Resistance can arise from businesses, communities, and policymakers who fear disruptions to established practices and revenue streams.
- **Regulatory and Policy Challenges:** Inconsistent or outdated regulations and policies can create barriers to adopting sustainable practices. Overcoming regulatory hurdles and ensuring alignment between local and national policies is crucial for the successful transition to green tourism.
- **Lack of Training and Capacity Building:** Green tourism often demands specialized skills and knowledge, such as eco-tourism guiding, wildlife conservation, and waste reduction techniques. The absence of training opportunities and capacity-building programs can limit the availability of skilled personnel.
- **Market Perception and Demand:** The market might not yet fully recognize the value of green tourism, leading to limited demand. Convincing travelers of the unique experiences and benefits offered by sustainable practices requires effective marketing and communication strategies.
- **Limited Access to Financing:** Securing financing for sustainable tourism projects can be challenging, particularly for small businesses and local communities. Access to loans, grants, and funding sources for green initiatives can be limited.
- **Uncertain Return on Investment (ROI):** Businesses and investors might be uncertain about the ROI of green tourism initiatives. Demonstrating the economic benefits and potential returns from sustainable practices is essential for attracting investments.
- **Infrastructure Limitations:** Certain regions might lack the necessary infrastructure for green tourism, such as reliable waste disposal systems, renewable energy sources, and eco-friendly transportation. Upgrading infrastructure can be costly and time-consuming.
- **Balancing Economic and Environmental Priorities:** Striking a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation can be challenging. Overemphasizing economic gains without considering ecological impacts might compromise the sustainability of green tourism initiatives.

To overcome these challenges, collaboration among various stakeholders, including government bodies, local communities, businesses, and non-governmental organizations, is crucial. Addressing economic barriers requires a holistic approach that considers social, environmental, and economic dimensions to ensure the successful transition towards green tourism.

Policy Recommendations and Strategies for Green Tourism

Transitioning towards green tourism in regions like Jammu & Kashmir represents a pivotal step towards sustainable and responsible tourism practices. This shift not only holds the promise of preserving the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage but also brings about substantial economic benefits. However, this transition is not without its challenges. It requires a well-considered set of recommendations and strategies to overcome economic barriers and ensure the successful implementation of green tourism initiatives.

II. Recommendations and Strategies:

- **Develop a Sustainable Tourism Action Plan:** Create a comprehensive action plan that outlines the steps and strategies for transitioning towards green tourism. This plan should align with G20 sustainability agendas, emphasizing climate action, biodiversity conservation, and community involvement. Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and timelines to ensure effective implementation.
- **Establish a Green Certification Program:** Introduce a green certification program for accommodations, tour operators, and attractions that meet specific sustainability criteria. This program can be designed in alignment with G20 guidelines and could provide a competitive advantage to businesses that adopt eco-friendly practices.
- **Promote Community Engagement:** Encourage local communities to actively participate in green tourism initiatives. Establish mechanisms for communities to benefit economically through activities such as home stays, artisan markets, and guided cultural experiences, which align with G20's focus on inclusive growth.
- **Invest in Infrastructure:** Allocate resources for the development of sustainable infrastructure, including renewable energy systems, waste management facilities, and eco-friendly transportation options. Such investments support G20's goals of sustainable infrastructure development and climate change mitigation.
- **Implement Eco-Tourism Guidelines:** Develop and enforce eco-tourism guidelines that promote responsible and low-impact tourism practices. These guidelines should focus on preserving natural habitats, respecting local cultures, and minimizing carbon footprints, in line with G20's environmental conservation objectives.
- **Provide Financial Incentives:** Offer tax breaks, grants, and subsidies to businesses that adopt green practices. This could include support for energy-efficient upgrades, waste reduction measures, and sustainable construction. Aligning these incentives with G20's sustainability agendas reinforces the commitment to global goals.
- **Support Research and Innovation:** Invest in research to identify innovative solutions for sustainable tourism. Encourage partnerships between local universities, research institutions, and tourism stakeholders to explore eco-friendly technologies and practices that can be adopted in the region.
- **Enhance Stakeholder Collaboration:** Foster partnerships and collaboration between government agencies, local communities, private sector entities, and NGOs. Collective efforts can drive impactful change, address challenges, and leverage expertise from various sectors, in line with G20's emphasis on multi-stakeholder cooperation.
- **Develop Sustainable Tourism Marketing:** Create a targeted marketing strategy that highlights J&K's commitment to green tourism. Emphasize the unique experiences, cultural richness, and environmental stewardship offered by the region. Such branding aligns with G20's promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism.
- **Establish Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms:** Implement mechanisms to monitor and report progress on green tourism initiatives. Regularly assess the economic, environmental, and social impacts of these practices, and share the results transparently to demonstrate alignment with G20 sustainability goals.
- **Capacity Building and Training:** Offer training programs to enhance the capacity of local communities and businesses in sustainable tourism practices. Workshops on waste management, eco-tourism guiding, and sustainable hospitality can improve service quality and contribute to G20's agenda of capacity building for sustainable development.

By implementing these policy recommendations, J&K can effectively transition towards green tourism while aligning with G20 sustainability agendas. These strategies not only promote economic growth and environmental conservation but also position J&K as a responsible and forward-thinking tourism destination on the global stage.

III. Conclusion:

Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) stands on the precipice of a transformative journey towards green tourism, heralding a new era of sustainable economic growth and environmental stewardship. This paradigm shift carries far-reaching economic implications, ranging from the cultivation of a niche market of environmentally conscious travelers to the establishment of a resilient, year-round tourism sector. Embracing green tourism transcends conventional practices, representing a strategic maneuver that promises both immediate and enduring economic gains.

By catering to the burgeoning market of environmentally conscious travelers, J&K opens up a specialized segment that places a premium on experiences aligned with their values. This translates into increased revenue from higher spending on accommodations, activities, and local products, ultimately propelling economic growth. Moreover, the diversification of tourism offerings diminishes reliance on specific peak seasons, rendering the industry more resilient to fluctuations.

The transformative power of green tourism permeates deeply into the socioeconomic fabric of J&K. It heralds the dawn of enhanced opportunities for local businesses, artisans, and service providers. This inclusive approach sparks economic development at the grassroots level, creating a ripple effect that reverberates through communities. The preservation of cultural heritage and the environment is intrinsically linked with the success of green tourism, positioning J&K as a beacon of responsible tourism.

Yet, the benefits of green tourism extend beyond monetary gains. It underscores the intrinsic value of cultural heritage and the environment among local communities. By embracing green tourism, J&K has the opportunity to serve as a growth engine for the economy while simultaneously acting as a potent instrument for generating job opportunities.

As J&K embarks on this transformative journey, it finds resonance in the global sustainability agendas championed by the G20. The emphasis on climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and community engagement aligns seamlessly with J&K's vision for responsible tourism development. This synchrony signifies a shared commitment to leverage the potential of tourism for positive change, safeguarding the prosperity of host communities and the overall ecological health of our planet.

In embracing green tourism practices, J&K paves the way for a prosperous future, one that harmonizes with both the environment and the well-being of local communities. It stands not only as a testament to the region's natural beauty and cultural richness but also as a beacon of responsible tourism, setting the stage for a future that balances economic prosperity with ecological integrity. Through green tourism, J&K charts a course towards sustainable growth, leaving an indelible mark on the global tourism landscape.

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