

The Sustainability of Ecotourism Activities: Development of an Accessible, Applicable, and Efficient Tool for Assessment in the Caribbean Region

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Abstract: *Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Ecotourism is increasing in popularity as nations and visitors seek to minimise their impact on the natural environment. The Caribbean, like much of the developing world, lacks monitoring and governmental management of their growing ecotourism industry due to both personnel and resource scarcity. This study aimed to develop a tool for effective management of the Caribbean ecotourism industry. This tool is based on sustainability indicators and includes all onsite activities necessary to facilitate the business of ecotourism. Sustainability indicators were selected via the responses from a community survey, environmental checklist, screening and scoping exercise and semi-structured interviews. A reductionist approach was used to ensure that the indicators met the requirements of both World Tourism Organisation (WTO) and Organisation of Economic Development (OECD). This data was then evaluated for five different scenarios representing demographic and social changes and translated into target plots for efficient assessment purposes. Results from this analysis indicate that sustainability of ecotourism activities in the Caribbean region can be assessed across fifteen indicators among the three core pillars of sustainability: environmental, societal and economic. Sensitivity analysis showed that the assessment tool responded to social and demographic changes and that evaluation of average impact differentials across each core pillar of sustainability could be used to plan for possible future detrimental impacts.*

Keywords: *Ecotourism, tourism, sustainability indicator, target plot, Iwokrama, Jamaica*