iJRASET
International Journal For Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 12 **Issue:** VIII **Month of publication:** August 2024

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2024.63876

www.ijraset.com

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International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 12 Issue VIII Aug 2024- Available at www.ijraset.com

Tourism and Its Environmental Impact on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

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Abstract: ***This article explores the impact of tourism on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a pristine archipelago known for its rich biodiversity and unique ecosystems. With increasing tourist influx, the islands face environmental challenges that threaten their natural beauty and ecological balance. Though the tourism development in the islands is in its growing stage, yet the development may have adverse effects on the island's ecosystem and the traditional culture.[1] The study examines the extent of tourism's impact, including pollution, habitat destruction, and pressure on local resources, and discusses sustainable tourism practices to mitigate these effects. The findings aim to inform policymakers, stakeholders, and the public about the importance of balancing tourism development with environmental conservation.***

Keywords: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, tourism impact, environmental degradation, sustainable tourism, biodiversity, conservation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, located in the Bay of Bengal, are celebrated for their stunning landscapes, diverse marine life, and vibrant coral reefs. Over the past few decades, tourism has become a major economic driver for the islands, attracting visitors from around the globe. However, the rapid growth of tourism has raised concerns about its environmental impact. This article investigates how tourism activities affect the natural environment of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and suggests measures for promoting sustainable tourism to protect these fragile ecosystems.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative field observations. Data was collected from various sources, including government reports, academic studies, and environmental assessments. Surveys and interviews were conducted with local residents, tourists, and business owners to gather insights into the perceived and actual environmental impacts of tourism. Additionally, on-site inspections and environmental monitoring were performed to assess the current state of ecosystems and infrastructure.

No.Of Tourists Visited In Andaman And Nicobar Islands

SL.No.	Year	Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total no.of Tourists
1	2021	53549	980	54529
2	2022	133657	2533	136190
3	2023	323619	9025	332644
4	2024	285886	7118	293004

Source: Andaman and Nicobar Tourism

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III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Pollution

The influx of tourists has led to increased waste generation, including plastic pollution, which poses a threat to marine and terrestrial life. Beaches, once pristine, now suffer from littering, and improper waste disposal practices exacerbate the problem.



B. Habitat Destruction

Construction of resorts, hotels, and other tourist facilities often involves clearing forests and mangroves, leading to habitat loss for many species. Coral reefs, crucial for marine biodiversity, are damaged by activities such as snorkeling, diving, and anchoring of boats.



C. Resource Pressure

The growing tourist population places a strain on local resources, including freshwater, energy, and food supplies. This pressure can lead to resource depletion and conflicts with local communities who rely on these resources for their livelihoods.

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D. Cultural Impact

The influx of tourists can also affect the indigenous communities of the islands, leading to cultural erosion and disruption of traditional ways of life.



E. Sustainable Tourism Practices

To mitigate these environmental impacts, several sustainable tourism practices can be implemented:

F. Waste Management

Establishing robust waste management systems, including recycling programs and awareness campaigns to reduce littering and plastic use.

G. Eco-friendly Infrastructure

Promoting the use of eco-friendly construction materials and designs that minimize environmental damage.



H. Marine Conservation

Implementing strict regulations for water-based activities to protect coral reefs and marine life, including designated areas for snorkeling and diving.

I. Community Involvement

Engaging local communities in tourism planning and development, ensuring that they benefit economically while preserving their cultural heritage.

J. Education and Awareness

Educating tourists about the ecological sensitivity of the islands and encouraging responsible behavior through information campaigns and eco-tours.

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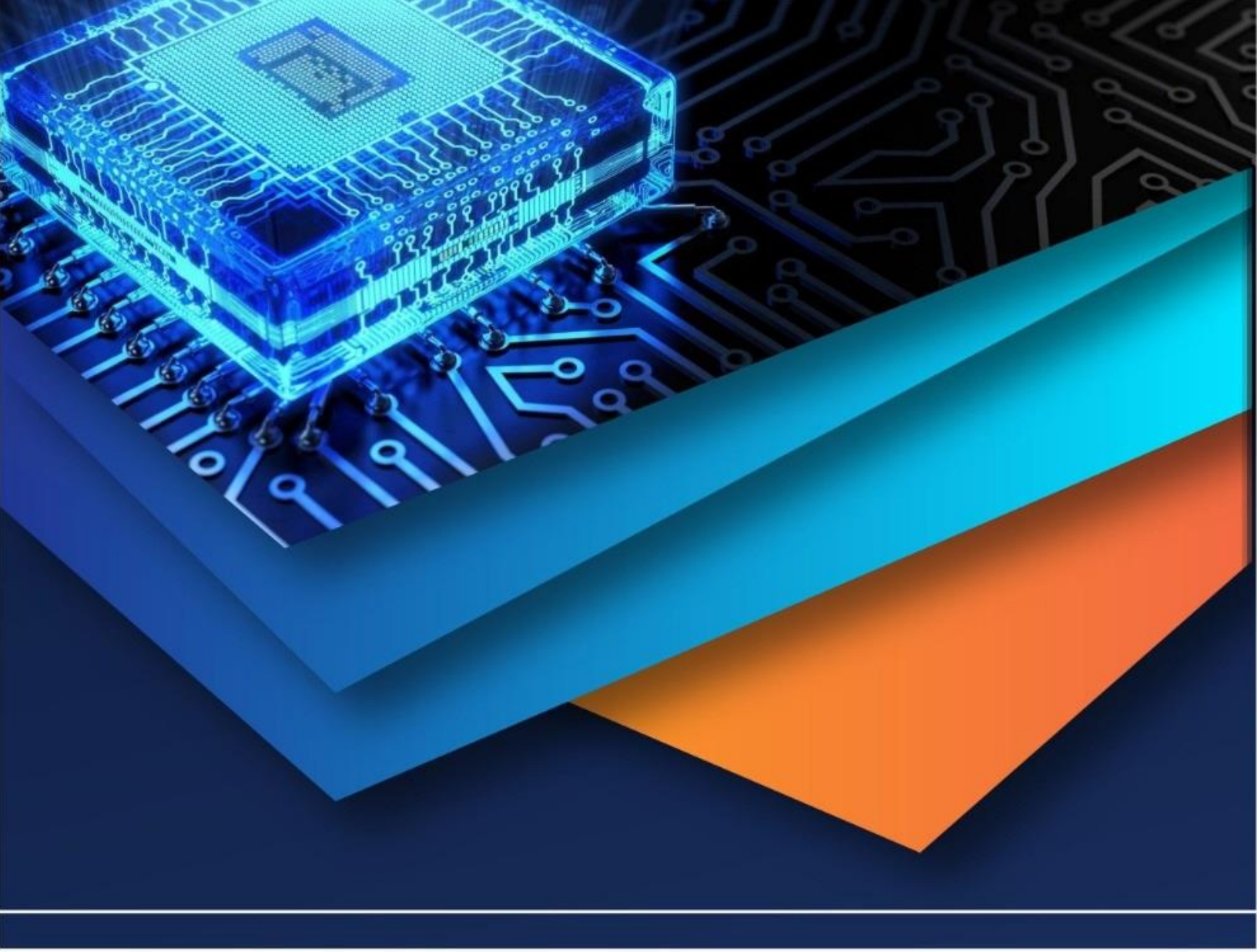
IV. CONCLUSION

Tourism in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands offers significant economic benefits but also poses substantial environmental risks. To ensure the long-term sustainability of both the tourism industry and the islands' ecosystems, it is crucial to adopt and promote sustainable tourism practices. Collaborative efforts among government agencies, local communities, and the tourism sector are essential to balance development with conservation. By doing so, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands can continue to thrive as a premier tourist destination while preserving their unique natural heritage for future generations.

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