

Kyrgyzstan's Sustainable Ecotourism Industry:

A model method to achieve sustainable development and environmental conservation?



Lindsey Ehinger
MA Candidate
University of
Wyoming
GAST & ENR

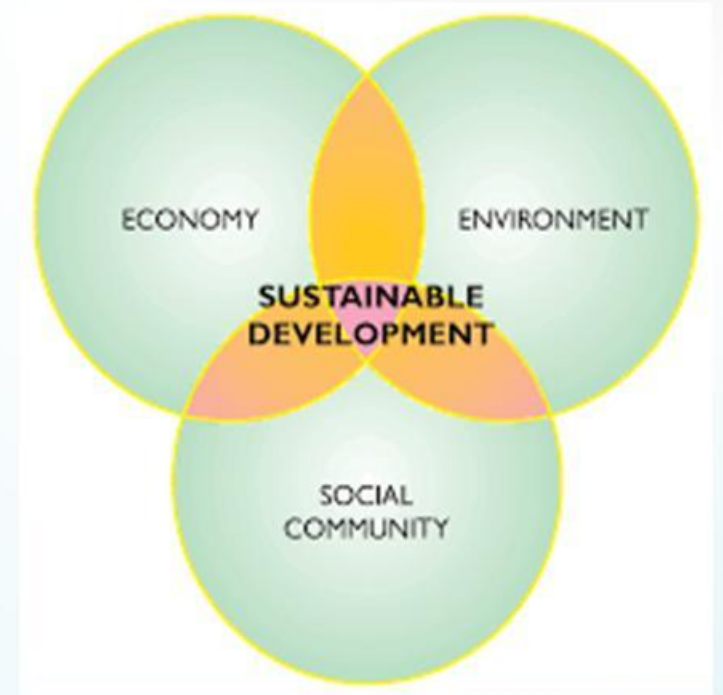
PROBLEM STATEMENT

Rapid increases in tourism can result in increased economic prosperity but also negative environmental, cultural, and social impacts. Kyrgyzstan's network of community based ecotourism aims to improve rural livelihoods while promoting greater environmental conservation and cultural awareness.

This research seeks to investigate how sustainable community based ecotourism in Kyrgyzstan achieves sustainable development and conservation within the context of Kyrgyzstan's National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE GREEN ECONOMY

- Multiple definitions, topics, strategies
 - Green building, corporate social responsibility (CSR), green energy, life-cycle analysis
 - "Greenwashing"
- Satisfying needs of current generation without sacrificing needs of future generations
- People, planet, profit
 - Limited resources, interdependence
- Incorporating environmental awareness and social well-being into all aspects of the economy



GLOBAL LEVEL—THE UNITED NATIONS

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda (2016-2030)
 - Succeeding the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) agenda (2000-2015)
- Collaborative, iterative, inclusive process with multiple stakeholders
- Monitoring and data collection
- Climate change—every person, every nation is affected
- Globalization—increased connectivity



NATIONAL LEVEL—THE NSDS

- National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) (2013-2017)
- Chapter 5: Environmental Protection to Ensure Sustainable Development
 - Interrelation of political, economic, environmental problems
- “Green economy”
 - Energy and resource efficiency and security (production and consumption), renewable energy, environmental impact assessments, monitoring pollution, accounting for climate change, green taxes and investments, natural disaster risk reduction

POLICIES IN THE UNITED STATES

- NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act) in 1969
- EPA (Environmental Protection Agency)
- State laws—California
- Private sector--LEED
- Local ordinances—Jackson Hole Energy Sustainability Project
 - Reduced electricity use 29%
 - Reduced gasoline use 32-68% across departments
- Small changes can make a big difference!

JACKSON HOLE/YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING



WHERE IN THE WORLD IS WYOMING?



WYOMING'S ENVIRONMENT

- Many similarities to Kyrgyzstan
- Natural resource based: extraction (oil, gas, coal), ranching (farming), tourism
- World's first national park
 - Over 3 million visitors annually from all over the world
- Importance of environmental conservation

TOURISM AS A MEANS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



- International tourist arrivals reached 1.14 billion in 2014 (3.7% annual growth)

TOURISM AND THE SDGs

- "Harnessing tourism's benefits will be critical to achieving the SDGs and implementing the post-2015 development agenda."
–Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary-General, World Tourism Day 2014
- Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
 - 8.9: By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products
- Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
 - 12. b: Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products
- Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
 - 14.7: By 2030, increase economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs...through sustainable tourism

COMMUNITY BASED ECOTOURISM

- Form of ecotourism that emphasizes local community development in which residents are significantly involved in project management and the majority of benefits are retained by the community
- Sustainable tourism, nature tourism, conventional tourism, mass tourism
 - Example: Issyk-Kol vs. Arslanbob
- Multifaceted, multiplier effect (varying data)
- Strong potential, but high failure rates

NEGATIVE BYPRODUCTS FROM TOURISM

- **Environmental**

- Garbage, pollution, wastewater, traffic, building wastes, erosion, vegetation loss, wildlife habitat intrusion, site hardening impacts

- **Cultural**

- Cultural intrusion, cultural commodification, erosion of traditions and customs, imposition of alien value system, resentment

- **Social**

- Unequal economic gains, social disputes among community members, lack of control over decision making

- **Economic**

- Revenue uncertainties, revenue leakage, opportunity costs, crop damage by wildlife

RESEARCH PROJECT



- Challenges

- Lack of data, unexpected results
- Conflicting advice
- Lack of direction, helpfulness
- Feasibility—visas, costs

- Reflections

- Imperfection is OK
- Adaptability
- Small changes can have a large impact
- Cooperation, collaboration across disciplines