



# Exploring Consumer Perception and Adoption of Eco-Friendly Practices in Hospitality: A Case Study of Nature Camps in Odisha India

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## Abstract

This study explores customer attitudes and the adoption of eco-friendly practices in the changing hotel business, with a focus on nature camps in Odisha. The research attempts to unravel the complexities of consumer decision-making and offer vital insights into their psyche, with a focus on sustainable tourism. By examining the effects and efficacy of existing environmentally friendly initiatives, the research hopes to direct Odisha's nature camps towards successful behaviour promotion that is environmentally benign. The way that the tourism business is changing and how the internet era is influencing traveller choices emphasise how important it is for nature camps to understand their customers' perspectives and implement eco-friendly practices. The study uses a quantitative research design to gauge consumer awareness, preferences, and eco-friendly practice-related behaviours. By utilising a deliberate selection procedure and methodical random sampling, the study guarantees a varied portrayal of viewpoints among participants at nature camps. The study aims to gather important quantitative data through the use of a standardised questionnaire, which will aid in the comprehension of the opportunities and difficulties experienced by nature camps in Odisha. The ultimate objective is to function as a catalyst for good change by promoting a responsible and sustainable approach to tourism in the area.

**Keywords:** Sustainable tourism, eco-friendly, nature camp, consumer awareness, hospitality industry, Odisha.

## Introduction

The necessity to preserve ecological balance and the growing issue of environmental degradation have grown to be major concerns. India is a developing nation that faces several obstacles in its efforts to preserve ecological balance. Over time, it has been discovered that a number of issues have persisted, including deteriorating air quality, noise and water pollution, biodiversity loss,

harm to wetlands, and more. A severe imbalance in the ecology results from all of these issues. "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people" is the broad definition of ecotourism provided by the International Ecotourism Society (Spenceley & Bien, 2013). Ecotourism is a type of travel that enables travellers who want to experience nature without endangering or disrupting the habitats to visit delicate, pristine, and comparatively untouched natural places. It requires visitors to natural places to travel responsibly in order to protect the environment, enhance the quality of life for locals, and maintain their culture. Héctor Ceballos-Lascuráin, a Mexican architect and environmentalist who is regarded as the Father of Ecotourism, is credited with coining the word ecotourism. He described it in 1983 as "tourism that entails visiting comparatively unspoiled natural places with the specific goal of learning about, appreciating, and taking in the scenery and its wild flora and fauna, as well as any existing cultural features (both past and present) found in these areas. He included phrases like "promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations" when he revised the concept in 1993. (Edition 85 of ECOCLUB)

Eco-tourism is defined by the World Conservation Union (IUCN, 1996) as an environmentally sustainable travel to natural areas to experience and appreciate nature and culturally significant features (past and present). Such travels encourage conservation, have a minimal impact on local communities, and boost their socioeconomic well-being. With an increasing emphasis on spending time in nature and raising awareness of environmental issues, ecotourism is one of the tourism industry's fastest-growing segments (United Nations, 2001).

With 480 km of coastline and 39% forest cover, Odisha is home to several of the world's most significant ecosystems. Here are some of the stunning Eastern Ghats sceneries on exhibit. Approximately 83% of Odisha's population resides in villages, where they play a vital role in protecting the state's natural resources. In 2016, the Forest and Environment Department of the Government of Odisha launched "Community Managed Nature Tourism" in the state after seeing how important it was to get the cooperation of communities that depended on forests for the preservation of forests and wildlife (Ecotour Annual Report 2018-19).

Odisha has various nature camps that provide a mix of eco-tourism and adventure among its beautiful forests and rich animals. Visitors may immerse themselves in Odisha's natural beauty and tranquilly by visiting one of the state's around 30 nature camps. From the mangrove woods of Bhitarkanika to the breathtaking waterfalls of Similipal and the tranquil lakes of Chilika, each camp provides a distinct experience such as boating, trekking, wildlife photography, and interaction with local tribes. These camps not only offer contemporary conveniences, but they also promote responsible tourism and community participation, making them suitable for nature lovers and adventurers alike (Sublime tour odisha).

## **Literature Review**

The hotel sector is experiencing a paradigm shift towards sustainability, driven by the increasing environmental awareness among worldwide clientele. The term "sustainability" has several connotations and is often used. Consequently, the term has been oversimplified and occasionally

misinterpreted. According to Clark (2005), the concept of sustainability is meaningless in the absence of a precise definition. "It could mean anything, so it means nothing." Sustainability, as defined by Investopedia (2022), is the process of preserving resources for future generations in the environment and the economy. A growing number of challenges, including population growth, urbanisation, rising food consumption, pollution, climate change, loss of habitat, and finite resources, are making sustainability more crucial (Jones et al., 2016).

The hospitality industry needs sustainable solutions, especially in hotels that are frequently accused of being environmentally insensitive or of disregarding sustainability. Businesses, the environment, and consumers all gain from a move towards sustainability. The phrase "opportunity for corporations to turn the very crisis that they generate through their accumulation of capital via the exploitation of nature into myriad streams of emergent profit and investment revenue" (Kahn, 2010, pp. 43-44) is used to this, and the term "green consumerism" is used to characterise it. In the past, the hotel industry was seen as a luxury. Only those who had satisfied their basic needs—clothes, food, and shelter—were able to enjoy.

Formerly linked to elegance, joy, and pleasure, the hotel industry today stands for essentialism and need. About 200 million people are employed in the hotel industry globally, which makes it a major contributor to the world economy. In places like Thailand and the Maldives, tourism is vital to the local economy, claim Jones and Comfort (2020). Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the hospitality industry has made sustainability a top priority. Pollution and greenhouse gas emissions were significantly reduced as a result of cutting back on production, transportation, and air travel (Jones & Comfort, 2020). When things get back to normal, Jones and Comfort (2020) advise that incorporating more sustainable practices can lessen the environmental effect, even when travel has resumed and the epidemic has halted in certain locations. The global epidemic has shown that the visitor

**1. Eco-Friendly Practices in Hospitality:** The term "eco-friendly practices" in the hotel industry refers to a variety of programmes designed to minimise environmental effect while maximising social and financial advantages. These methods include reducing waste, using renewable resources, conserving energy and water, and involving the community (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010). Adopting such methods is crucial for the growth of sustainable tourism, since they are consistent with the values of environmental stewardship and responsible travel.

<p><b>Sustainable Water Management</b></p>	<p>Low-flow fixtures used to conserve water in hotels.</p> <p>Detection and repair of drips and leaks in guest rooms as well as the use of water-saving devices, such as diverter valves, are also crucial (Hsieh 2012:116; Nhapi &amp; Gijzen 2005:137).</p> <p>Placing a glass jar in the toilet tank reduces the amount of water used per flush, which can make a difference (Allen 2007:57).</p> <p>Rainwater harvesting is one way hotels can keep their operations waste free, for example, by using it to flush toilets (Allen 2007:57; Moreo 2008:2).</p> <p>Reclaimed or grey water can be used for irrigating golf courses and</p>
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	<p>landscaping (Moreo 2008:2; Timothy &amp; Teye 2009:87).</p> <p>Water from bathrooms, washing machines, dish washers and kitchens could be collected and be reused for gardening or car washing (Nhapi &amp; Gijzen 2005:137).</p> <p>Concerns about the careless use of water resources led to the linen and towel reuse efforts adopted by most of the world’s hotels (Timothy &amp; Teye 2009:87).</p>
<b>Energy Conservation</b>	<p>Green hotels implement measures for reduced energy consumption through operating as much as possible during daylight hours (Hsieh 2012:99).</p> <p>Using energy saving light bulbs such as compact efflorescent light bulbs and energy star-efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) (Moreo 2008:2).</p> <p>Investing in new renewable energies will make a difference to the hotel’s carbon footprint (Allen 2007:55), for example, renewable energy such as sunlight and wind power (Rogerson 2012:402).</p> <p>Occupancy sensors are also used in hotels to use energy in occupied rooms only.</p>
<b>Solid Waste Management</b>	<p>Recycling is one way in which hotels are participating in important waste management programmes (Timothy &amp; Teye 2009:86).</p> <p>Composting at the establishment is encouraged or municipal refuse collection can merge refuse at the composting depot that processes organic waste for use in the community gardens (Swilling &amp; Annecke 2006:324).</p>
<b>Air Quality Management</b>	<p>Air filtration can be implemented in hotels.</p> <p>Passing of decrees requiring that restaurants instil ventilation and create smoking sections would have a mitigatory effect (Dearlooe, Bialous &amp; Glanantz 2002:96; Moreo 2008:2).</p> <p>Hotels can cut vehicle pollution through lift sharing.</p> <p>Use of bicycles or public transport can reduce pollution and congestion on the roads (Allen 2007:58).</p>
<b>Environmental Purchasing</b>	<p>For guest rooms, administrative offices and kitchens, hotels can purchase recycled eco-friendly packaging such as take-out boxes and bags, stationery, toilet purchasing tissue and other items made from previously recycled goods/biodegradable packaging (Taylor <i>et al.</i> 1994:21; Timothy &amp; Teye 2009:84). Hotels should purchase locally-grown food.</p> <p>Locally-produced food items are fresh, indigenous and representative of the area, which significantly reduce economic leakages in hotels, thus supporting the local economy as much as possible.</p> <p>Green purchasing for hotels involves buying biodegradable products such as eating utensils, cleaning solutions, soaps and shampoos toilet</p>

	tissue and other items made for guest houses or hotel environmental programmes (Timothy & Teye 2009:84).
<b>Community Awareness</b>	<p>Environmental education is important within the organisation as well as within the community (Mansah 2006:415).</p> <p>Green information can be made available to the society using sources such as TV, radio news programmes, newspaper articles, magazine articles and leaflets in libraries.</p> <p>Conservation training activities should involve participation in local environmental initiatives, for example, cleaning a beach or park and financially supporting an association for the protection of the environment (Taylor <i>et al.</i> 1994).</p>
<b>Managing Permits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building permits could include, for example, green buildings, which seem to show noticeable improvement in the health and productivity of people working in them.</li> <li>• Another important consideration is compliance with legislation. When green management was first introduced, the major reasons for a hotel to go green was focused on complying with government regulations and saving money by reducing waste and energy usage (Lee <i>et al.</i> 2010:902).</li> <li>• Laws and regulations may include recycling requirements, building codes, incentives such as tax exemptions and credits for installing renewable energy source (Miller <i>et al.</i> 2012:58).</li> </ul>

Source: Mbasera, Miriam & Du Plessis, Engelina & Saayman, Melville & Kruger, Martinette. (2016). Environmentally-friendly practices in hotels.

**2. Consumer Perception and Sustainable Tourism:** Customers' perceptions of sustainable tourism have a big impact on the growth and success of these initiatives. Developing and implementing successful marketing and development strategies requires a deep comprehension of consumer attitudes, convictions, and behaviours regarding sustainable tourism offerings. Scholars such as Gössling, Scott, and Hall (2013) have highlighted the critical role that consumer education and knowledge play in shaping people's perceptions of sustainable travel. Dolnicar and Grün (2009) have examined consumer segmentation in sustainable tourism, highlighting the inclinations and driving forces of various customer segments. Additionally, Kozak and Rimmington (2000) examined visitors' satisfaction levels with eco-friendly vacation destinations. More research is needed to examine innovative marketing techniques and remove barriers that prevent customers from embracing sustainable travel practices.

**3. Case Study: Nature Camps in Odisha:** The significance of nature camps in Odisha lies in their ability to foster sustainable tourist practices, environmental awareness, and conservation. By offering immersive experiences in natural surroundings, they help visitors develop a stronger bond with the environment and a sense of duty for its preservation. In Odisha, ecotourism—which emphasises ethical visitation to natural areas—is frequently linked to nature camps. Initiatives promoting ecotourism seek to reduce adverse effects on the

environment while boosting the local economy. Research by Patnaik and Mohanty (2017) and Das and Mishra (2015) has shown how nature camps in Odisha might support sustainable development by way of ecotourism. Conservation: Visitors may discover the various flora and wildlife of Odisha by attending nature camps. They support efforts to conserve biodiversity by bringing attention to how crucial it is to save endangered species and their habitats. Panda et al. (2018) conducted research that highlights the significance of nature camps in Odisha for advancing sustainable tourism practices and animal protection. In Odisha, nature camps frequently incorporate the local community in their operations, offering people chances for work, skill development, and revenue creation. This strategy for community participation promotes the preservation of natural resources and helps to build a sense of ownership. Studies conducted in 2016 by Mohanty and Patnaik have emphasised the socioeconomic advantages of nature camps for the surrounding Odisha people.

## **4. Challenges and Opportunities**

### **1. Challenges**

- a. **Insufficient Knowledge and Education:** Many hotels, including Odisha's nature camps, struggle to educate workers and visitors on the value of eco-friendly activities and their possible advantages.
- b. **Cost and Return on Investment:** Hotels, particularly smaller ones, may find it difficult to adopt green practices since they frequently need to make upfront expenditures. Nonetheless, research has demonstrated that reputational benefits and long-term cost reductions may exceed upfront expenses.
- c. **Infrastructure and Technology:** It might be difficult for hotels to upgrade their current infrastructure and implement new technology to support green practices, especially in distant locations like Odisha's nature camps.

### **2. Benefits of Using Green Practices**

- a. **Competitive Edge and Brand Image:** Hotels that use green practices, such as Odisha's nature camps, can stand out from the competition, draw eco-aware visitors, and improve their reputation (Source: Han and Kim, 2010).
- b. **Cost Savings and Efficiency:** Over time, hotels may save a lot of money by implementing green practices including waste management, sustainable sourcing, and energy and water conservation (Reference: Bohdanowicz, 2005).
- c. **Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement:** Embracing green practices gives hotels a chance to interact with suppliers, the community, and other stakeholders, encouraging cooperation and promoting sustainable development (Weaver, 2006).

### **3. Research Design**

With an emphasis on nature camps in Odisha, India, this study uses a quantitative research approach to examine customer attitudes and the hotel industry's embrace of eco-friendly practices. The primary research locations, the nature camps in Odisha, are carefully chosen, and

participant perspectives are guaranteed by random selection. The objective is to have 200 responders in the sample, representing those who have been to the nature camps in Odisha. A standardised questionnaire is used to gather data, and 158 individuals who have been to these nature camps have answered it. Pie charts are used for graphical representation and descriptive statistics are utilised to summarise the results of a systematic quantitative analysis of the acquired data. A participant's informed permission must be obtained, and response confidentiality and anonymity must be guaranteed. Potential biases from convenience sampling, scope restrictions that limit generalizability, and the study's exclusive emphasis on the hospitality sector are some of its limitations. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the study intends to offer insightful information about consumer attitudes and actions about environmentally friendly activities in nature camps, with the ultimate goal of advancing moral and sustainable travel in the Odisha, India, area.

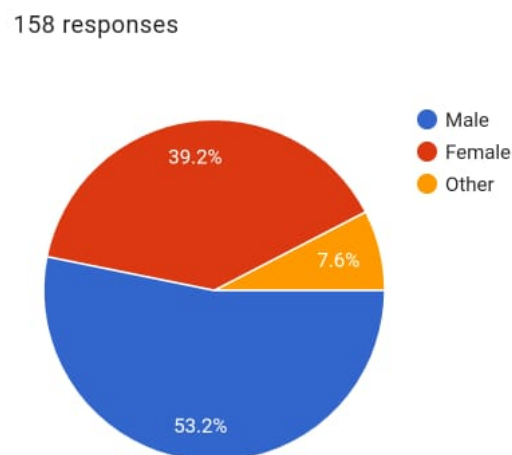
#### 4. Objectives

1. To investigate the current level of awareness among consumers in Odisha regarding eco-friendly practices in the nature camps.
2. To assess the factors influencing consumer choices in selecting nature camps.
3. To analyze the challenges faced by nature camps in Odisha in adopting and promoting eco-friendly practices.

#### 5. Results and Analysis

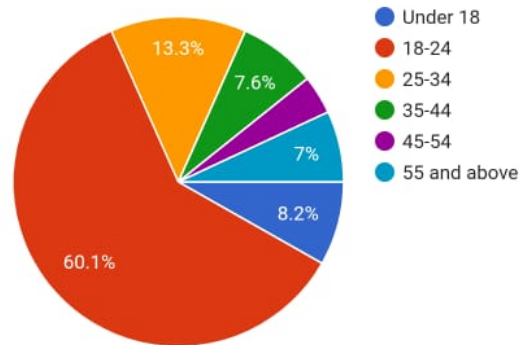
The following results were gathered through the questionnaire that was filled by the respondents.

1. The first two questions were aimed at understanding the demographics of the sample population. Out of the 158 responses 53.2% were males, 39.2% are females and the rest 7.6% are others.



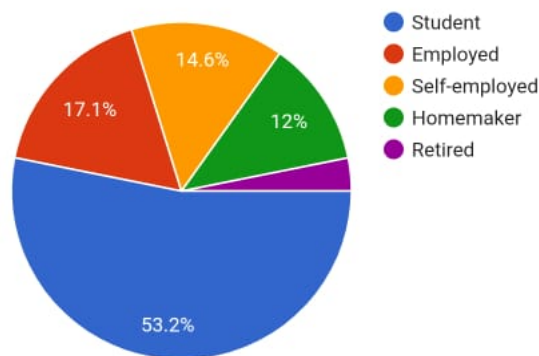
2. This question aimed at understanding the age of the given population in an attempt to know the population better. Out of 158 respondents the age breakup was as shown in the above pie chart.

158 responses



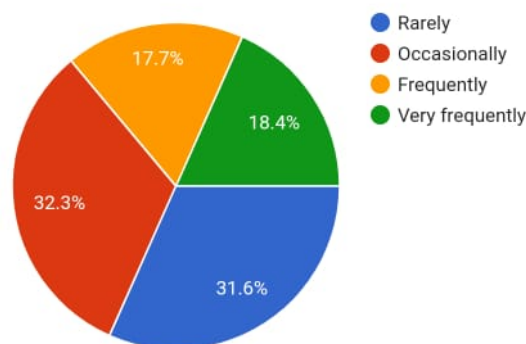
3. The next question was framed to understand the occupation and hence the spending styles of various generation, out of which 53.2% were students, 17.1% were employed, 14.6% were self employed, 12% were homemakers and the remaining were retired personnel.

158 responses



4. The next question was framed to understand the frequency of visiting the nature camps, out of the 158 responses 31.6% visited rarely, 32.3% visited occasionally, 17.5% visited frequently, and the remaining 18.4% visited very frequently.

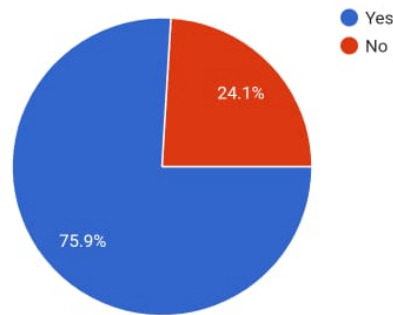
158 responses



5. The next question was aimed to assess the awareness level of the participants about the eco-friendly practices in the nature camp, out of the 158 responses 75.9% respondents were aware and the rest 24.1% were not aware.

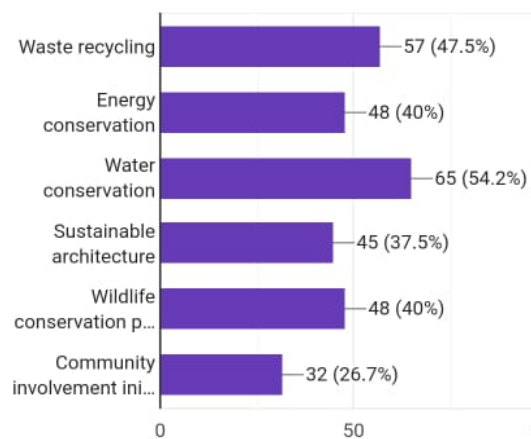


158 responses



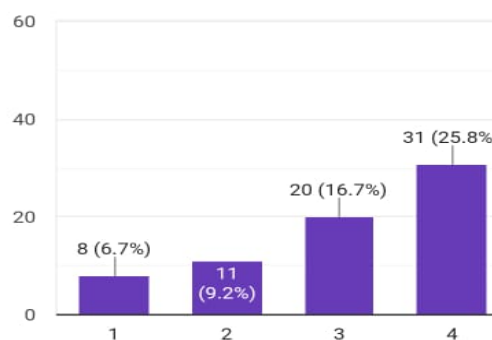
6. Moving forward with the respondents which chose yes, the next question aimed at understanding the awareness level of the various green practices followed in the nature camps. Out of the 120 respondents 54.2% participants chose water conservation, 47.5% chose waste recycling, 40% chose energy conservation and wildlife conservation, 37.5% chose sustainable architecture, and the rest 26.7% chose community involvement and initiatives.

120 responses

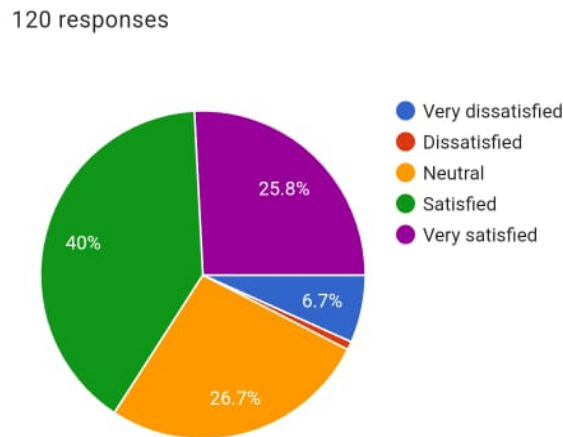


7. The next question was framed to assess the role of eco-friendly practices in the decision making process by the consumer. Out of the 120 responses, 41.7% respondents chose the maximum 5 on the Likert scale, 25.8% respondents chose 4, 16.7% respondents chose 3, 9.2% respondents chose 2 and the remaining, 6.7% respondents chose 1.

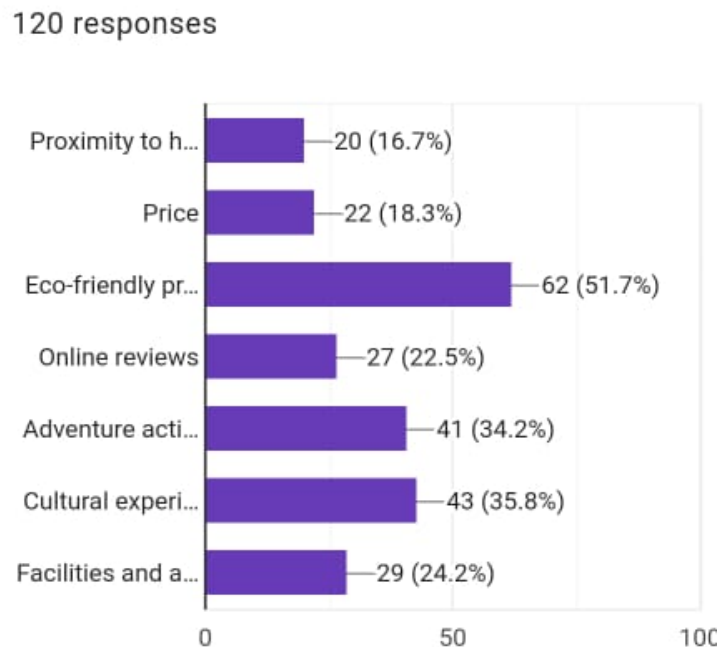
120 responses



8. The next question was framed at gauging the satisfaction level due to the eco friendly practices. Out of the 120 responses, 40% respondents were satisfied, 26.7% respondents chose neutral, 25.8% respondents chose very satisfied, 6.7% respondents chose very dissatisfied, and the remaining 0.8% respondents chose dissatisfied.

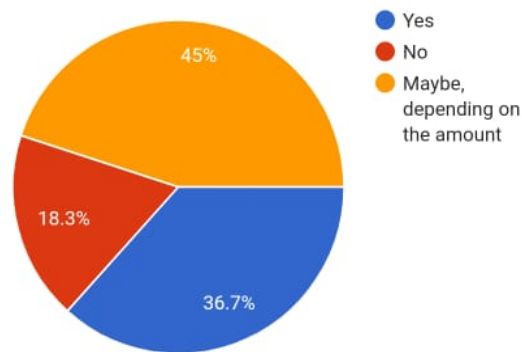


9. The next question was framed to assess the factors which influenced the decision making process while selecting the nature camp. Out of the 120 responses 51.7% respondents chose eco-friendly practices, 35.8% respondents chose cultural experiences, 34.2% respondents chose adventure activities, 24.2% respondents chose facilities and amenities, 22.5% respondents chose online reviews, 18.3% respondents chose price as a factor, the remaining 16.7% respondents chose proximity to home.



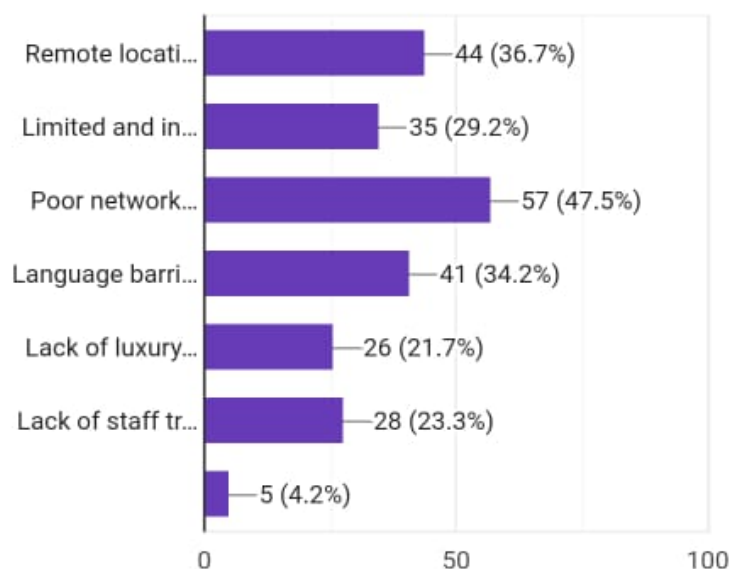
10. The next question was aimed to gauge the willingness of the respondents to pay extra to a nature camp that actively promotes eco-friendly practices. Out of the 120 responses, 45% respondents chose maybe, depending on the price, 36.7% respondents chose yes and the remaining 18.3% respondents chose no.

120 responses



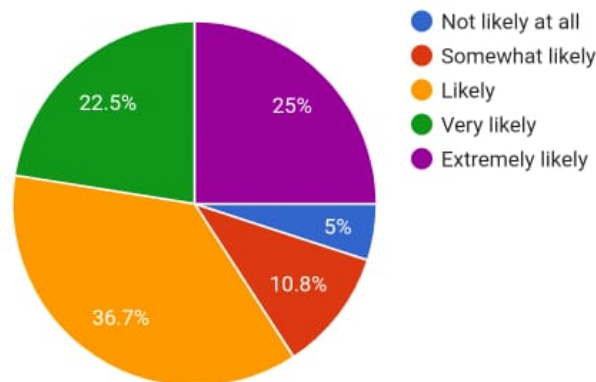
11. The next question aims in understanding the problems which the respondents might have encountered during their stay in the nature camp. Out of the 120 responses 47.5% respondents chose poor network connection and connectivity, 36.7% respondents chose remote locations, 34.2% respondents chose language barriers with staff, 29.2% respondents chose limited and inconsistent hot water supply, 23.3% respondents chose lack of staff training, 21.7% respondents chose lack of luxury amenities and the remaining 4.2% respondents chose others.

120 responses



12. The next question was framed to see the willingness of the respondents to recommend nature camps based on their eco- friendly practice. Out of the 120 responses, 36.7% respondents chose they are likely to recommend, 25% chose extremely likely, 22.5% chose very likely to recommend, 10.8% chose somewhat likely to recommend and the remaining 5% chose not likely at all to recommend.

120 responses



## Conclusion and Recommendations

The study produced interesting findings on customer attitudes and actions towards eco-friendly activities at nature camps in Odisha, India, based on the paper's objectives. A substantial majority of respondents, or 75.9%, to the study on consumer awareness levels were aware of the environmentally friendly activities used in nature camps. This finding suggests a good basis for advancing sustainable tourism in the area. Furthermore, the evaluation of the variables impacting consumers' decisions to choose nature camps brought attention to the critical role that eco-friendly practices play, as more than half of the respondents (51.7%) named them as a major element in their decision-making process. This emphasises how crucial it is to include sustainability activities in nature camp programmes in order to draw in eco-aware tourists. In addition, an examination of the obstacles encountered by nature camps while implementing and advocating environmentally sustainable practices identified many critical areas of concern, such as inadequate network access (47.5%), isolated settings (36.7%), and communication difficulties with staff (34.2%). These results highlight the necessity of improving staff training and resolving infrastructural constraints in order to deliver a smooth and environmentally responsible visitor experience. All things considered, the study offers insightful information to nature camps in Odisha that want to improve their sustainability programmes and encourage ethical tourism.

## Recommendations

Several suggestions might be made in light of the study's findings to improve the adoption of environmentally friendly practices in Odisha's nature camps:

- **Awareness Initiatives:** Start focused awareness efforts to inform customers about eco-friendly activities offered by nature camps. Use digital channels to spread the word about sustainability efforts and their advantages, such as social media and websites.
- **Instructional Plans:** Provide employees thorough training programmes to help them get over language challenges and improve their understanding of environmentally friendly

practices. They will be able to interact with visitors more effectively and help put sustainable initiatives into action as a result.

- **Infrastructure Improvement:** To solve issues like sporadic network connectivity and remote areas, invest in infrastructure improvement. Use technology to improve communication and offer environmentally friendly facilities like solar-powered geysers and environmentally friendly design.
- **Community Involvement:** Encourage collaborations with nearby communities to encourage participation in environmentally conscious projects. To build a more sustainable environment, promote cooperation on garbage recycling programmes, water conservation initiatives, and animal preservation strategies.
- **Customer Incentives:** Provide discounts or other prizes to customers who choose nature camps with sustainable efforts. This will encourage them to actively support eco-friendly methods. This has the potential to boost involvement and emphasise the significance of eco-friendly travel.
- **Feedback mechanisms:** Provide a means for customers to provide feedback on their experiences and recommendations for enhancements. Make sure that eco-friendly activities in nature camps are in line with the interests and expectations of your customers by using this input to continually improve and perfect them.
- **Collaborations & Partnerships:** Work together with governmental bodies, nonprofits, and industry participants to promote laws that encourage environmentally friendly travel habits. Form alliances to increase access to resources, exchange best practices, and support environmentally sustainable projects.

Nature camps in Odisha may successfully address the issues raised in the study and improve their sustainability efforts by putting these suggestions into practice. This will draw in eco-aware customers while also supporting responsible travel in the area and the preservation of the area's natural resources.

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