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Water Stress, Waste and Environmental Pressure in Tourism Economy

Amisha Thakur[1]*

[1]Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi, India

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***Corresponding author:** Amisha Thakur
Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi, India

Abstract **Original Research Article**

Tourism in Himachal Pradesh depends on the ecological quality of mountains, rivers, forests, landscapes and local settlements, yet the growth of tourism has also intensified pressure on the same environmental resources. This study examines water stress, waste, pollution and wider environmental pressure in Himachal Pradesh's tourism economy. The study analyses how tourism-related water demand, groundwater extraction, inadequate sewage treatment, vehicular emissions, solid waste accumulation, noise pollution, land-use change and weak regulatory enforcement affect ecological stability and destination sustainability. The analysis shows that tourism creates multiple environmental pressures across air, water, land and acoustic environments. Peak tourist seasons increase vehicular emissions and water consumption in hotels, resorts and recreational facilities add pressure on land and water resources, inadequate waste and sewage systems pollute rivers and landscapes and weak enforcement allows development priorities to override environmental protection. The study argues that environmental degradation is not external to tourism development, it directly threatens the long-term viability of the tourism economy because destinations depend on clean water, attractive landscapes, biodiversity and visitor confidence. The study concludes that Himachal Pradesh needs an integrated environmental governance framework for tourism, including water-efficient infrastructure, rainwater harvesting, wastewater treatment, waste management systems, zoning regulation, green building standards, community participation, tourist awareness and stronger enforcement mechanisms.

Keywords: Himachal Pradesh; tourism; water stress; waste management; environmental pressure; sustainable tourism.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism in Himachal Pradesh is built on environmental appeal. The state's mountain landscapes, rivers, forests, valleys, cultural settlements, pilgrimage sites, adventure routes and climate-sensitive destinations attract visitors because they offer ecological and aesthetic value. Tourism therefore depends directly on the quality of natural resources. Clean water, scenic landscapes, accessible forests, healthy rivers, stable slopes, biodiversity and pollution-free environments are not secondary to tourism, they are the foundation of the tourism economy.

At the same time, tourism expansion can create serious environmental pressure. Hotels, resorts, homestays, restaurants, transport networks, recreational activities, construction and seasonal visitor concentration increase demand for water, land, energy, waste disposal, sanitation, roads and public services. When tourist numbers increase faster than environmental management systems, the result can be water scarcity, sewage pollution, solid waste accumulation, traffic emissions, noise, land degradation, deforestation and ecosystem stress. This creates a paradox, tourism depends on environmental quality while simultaneously contributing to environmental decline.

In Himachal Pradesh, this paradox is particularly important because the state is ecologically fragile and climate-sensitive. The mountainous terrain, limited carrying capacity of valleys, dependence on river systems and vulnerability to landslides, floods, droughts and changing precipitation make environmental governance central to tourism planning. Unregulated tourism growth can place stress on water systems, degrade landscapes, increase pollution and intensify climate vulnerability. If such pressures remain unmanaged, tourism may weaken the very resources that sustain visitor demand.

The environmental pressures linked with tourism are not confined to one sector. Tourism-related transport contributes to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Hotels and resorts increase water and energy

use. Inadequate sewage treatment affects water bodies. Recreational activities and vehicular movement add noise pollution. Tourism infrastructure expansion contributes to land degradation, deforestation, soil erosion and habitat loss. These pressures interact with construction, urbanisation and climate change, making environmental impacts cumulative rather than isolated.

This study examines water stress, waste and environmental pressure in Himachal Pradesh's tourism economy. It further analyses environmental challenge and environmental stress focusing specifically on resource pressure, pollution, water stress, waste and environmental governance.

2. Research Problem and Objectives

The central research problem is that tourism growth in Himachal Pradesh has intensified environmental pressure in a fragile mountain context, creating risks for water security, waste management, ecosystem health and long-term destination sustainability. Tourism contributes to regional income and livelihoods, but its environmental footprint is increasingly visible in water extraction, sewage discharge, solid waste, vehicular emissions, land-use change and weak compliance with environmental standards.

The study has four objectives. First, it identifies the main forms of environmental pressure associated with tourism in Himachal Pradesh. Second, it analyses the relationship between tourism growth, water stress, waste, pollution and land-use change. Third, it examines why pollution control and environmental management remain difficult in tourism-dependent and ecologically sensitive regions. Fourth, it proposes an integrated approach to environmental governance for sustainable tourism.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a qualitative research design that relies entirely on secondary sources for data collection. Information was gathered from reports, policy documents, statistical data and research studies published by governmental bodies such as the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Department, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) and the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC). In addition, data from reputable non-governmental institutions, including research organisations and international development agencies, were utilised to supplement the analysis. The data analysis primarily involved thematic analysis, in which key trends, patterns and linkages between tourism, construction, human development and climate change impacts were identified and critically examined. The reliance on multiple secondary sources ensures a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of the issues, while maintaining the credibility and reliability of the findings.

4. Tourism and Multi-Dimensional Environmental Pressure

Tourism-related environmental pressure in Himachal Pradesh is multi-dimensional. It includes air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, land degradation, biodiversity loss, waste accumulation, resource depletion and climate amplification. The tourism and construction activities in Himachal Pradesh have created environmental challenges across multiple pollution vectors. Tourist transportation networks emit carbon dioxide, particulate matter and nitrogen oxides during peak seasons (Gunthey, 2023; Mahajan, 2023). Construction operations release particulate matter through machinery and dust (Academy, 2024; Sharma, 2025). Tourism also generates noise pollution through vehicular traffic and recreational activities, while construction equipment operates at high decibel levels (Gunthey, 2023; HP State Pollution Control Board, 2022).

These pollution vectors do not remain separate in practice. Air pollution affects health and destination quality. Water pollution damages aquatic ecosystems and affects local communities. Noise pollution reduces the quality of life and can disrupt wildlife. Land degradation affects biodiversity and can increase vulnerability to landslides and erosion. Together, these impacts reduce the ecological and experiential quality of tourism destinations.

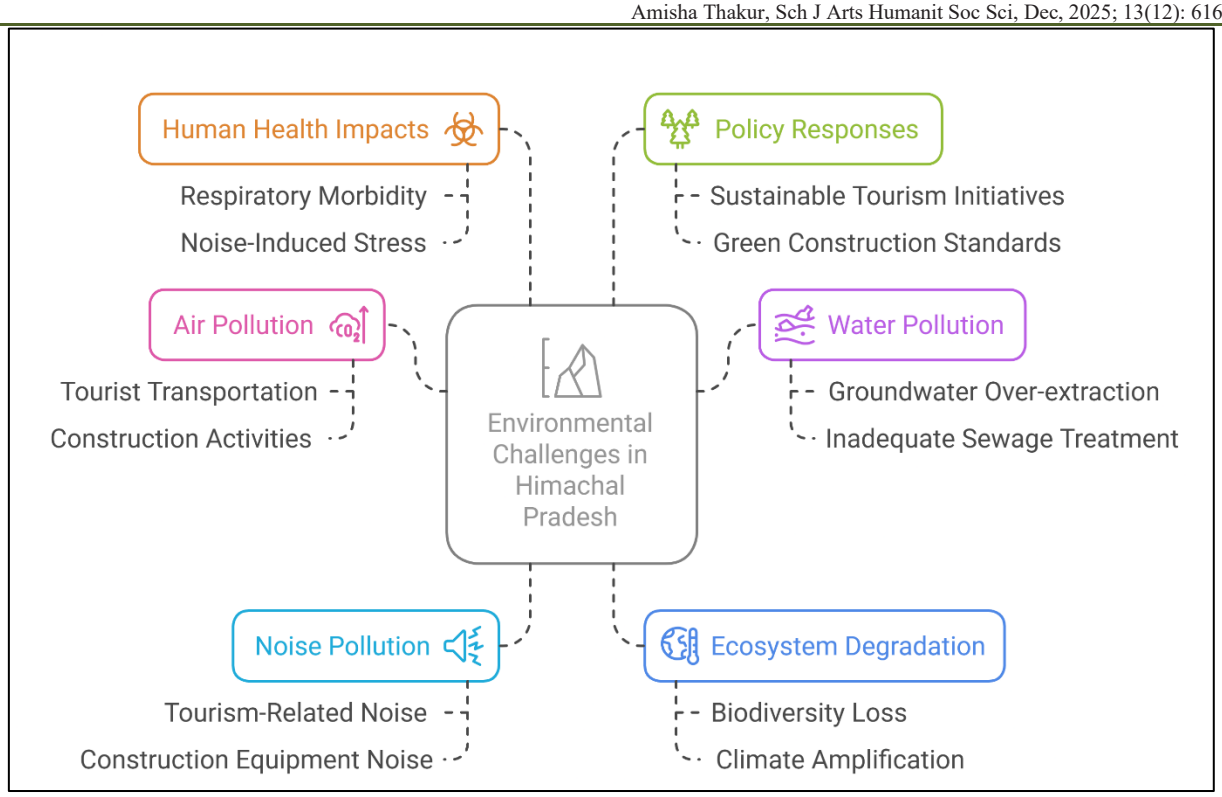

Figure 1: Environmental Challenges in Himachal Pradesh

Figure 1 captures this multi-dimensional pressure. It shows that Himachal Pradesh's environmental problems are not caused by a single source but by interacting systems of tourism, construction, transport, weak enforcement, resource demand and ecological fragility. The tourism economy depends on mountains, rivers, forests and cultural landscapes, but these same resources come under pressure from tourist mobility, infrastructure expansion and inadequate environmental management.

Air pollution is strongly linked with tourist mobility. During peak seasons, private vehicles, tourist buses, taxis and related transport increase emissions in mountain towns and road corridors. Mountain topography can worsen the effect of emissions because steep gradients and congestion increase fuel consumption. Traffic congestion near tourist destinations can also increase localised air pollution and reduce visitor experience. In ecologically sensitive areas, such pollution may affect both residents and tourists.

Water pollution is another major concern. The tourism's strain on resources includes groundwater over-extraction and inadequate sewage treatment, which pollute aquatic ecosystems (Kumar & Poonam, 2023). Construction-related sediment runoff also contaminates water bodies (Himdhara Environment Research and Action Collective, 2016). In tourism destinations, untreated wastewater, greywater discharge, poor sewage systems and litter near water bodies can damage rivers and streams. This is particularly serious in a mountain state where river systems support agriculture, households, hydropower, biodiversity and tourism.

Noise pollution is often less visible but still significant. Tourism-related vehicles, recreational activities and construction equipment can exceed acceptable noise levels (Gunthey, 2023; HP State Pollution Control Board, 2022). Noise affects residents, workers, tourists and wildlife. In destinations promoted for serenity, nature, pilgrimage or wellness, noise pollution can undermine the very experience being marketed. Therefore, environmental pressure should not be understood only through visible waste or water stress, it also includes sensory and health-related impacts.

5. Water Stress and Tourism Resource Demand

Water stress is one of the most important environmental challenges facing tourism in Himachal Pradesh. Tourism facilities require water for accommodation, restaurants, sanitation, cleaning, landscaping, heating systems and visitor comfort. During peak seasons, water demand increases sharply, especially in popular destinations. The tourism activities place pressure on local water resources through increased groundwater extraction and consumption during peak seasons (Kumar & Poonam, 2023; Kant & Gupta, 2021).

The problem is particularly acute because tourism demand is often seasonal and concentrated. A destination may have limited local water resources but experience sudden visitor surges during holidays, summer months, pilgrimage periods or winter seasons.

Hotels, homestays, restaurants and recreational facilities then compete for water with local households, agriculture and public services. When water systems are not planned for peak demand, scarcity becomes more visible and socially contested.

In destinations such as Manali, excessive extraction from rivers and streams to meet the growing needs of the tourism industry has led to acute water shortages (Kapoor & Singh, 2025). This example illustrates the wider concern, tourism growth can turn water from a shared ecological resource into a stressed service input. When rivers and streams are over-extracted, both ecosystems and communities are affected. Reduced water availability can affect sanitation, agriculture, household use, hotel operations and visitor satisfaction.

Groundwater extraction is another critical issue. Tourism establishments may rely on groundwater when public water systems are insufficient. However, unregulated extraction can disrupt natural water cycles and worsen drought conditions. The excessive groundwater extraction for tourism has disrupted natural water cycles and worsened drought conditions (Himachal Pradesh Council for Science, Technology & Environment, n.d.). This shows that tourism water use must be understood in relation to climate vulnerability. As precipitation becomes more uncertain, unregulated extraction becomes more risky.

Water stress also has an equity dimension. Tourists may consume water for comfort, while local communities may face scarcity. Hotels and resorts may have greater capacity to secure water through private arrangements, whereas households and small businesses may depend on limited public supply. If tourism planning does not regulate water use, it can produce unequal access between visitors, businesses and residents. This can create local resentment and undermine community support for tourism.

Water stress is closely linked to wastewater. Increased water use produces increased wastewater. If sewage and wastewater treatment systems are inadequate, tourism water demand turns into water pollution. Untreated sewage, greywater, detergents and waste discharge can damage aquatic ecosystems and affect public health. Therefore, water management in tourism must include both supply and treatment.

6. Waste, Sewage and Pollution in Tourism Destinations

Waste generation is one of the most visible environmental impacts of tourism. Tourist destinations often experience sudden increases in plastic waste, food packaging, bottles, disposable items and other solid waste during peak periods. If waste collection, segregation, recycling and disposal systems are inadequate, waste accumulates in markets, roadsides, trails, rivers and open spaces. In mountain destinations, waste management is more difficult because terrain, distance and limited municipal capacity complicate collection and transport.

The poor waste management systems have led to river pollution and habitat destruction (Jangra & Jattan, 2024). Popular destinations and remote valleys struggle with solid waste accumulation, especially when plastic waste overwhelms inadequate disposal systems. This problem is not only aesthetic. Waste can block drainage, pollute rivers, harm wildlife, degrade landscapes and reduce destination appeal. In a tourism economy dependent on scenic landscapes, waste directly threatens economic sustainability.

Sewage management is equally important. The inadequate sewage treatment is identified as a contributor to water pollution (Kumar & Poonam, 2023). Hotels, restaurants, homestays and tourist facilities generate wastewater that must be treated properly. Where treatment systems are absent or insufficient, wastewater can enter streams, rivers, soils and settlements. This creates public health risks and damages aquatic ecosystems. It also undermines visitor confidence in destinations promoted as clean and natural.

Construction linked with tourism expansion adds another layer of pollution. Dust, particulate matter, sediment runoff and chemical runoff can contaminate air and water systems (Kant & Gupta, 2021; Chhikara & Dhankhar, 2023). Construction may be necessary for accommodation, roads and services, but if poorly regulated, it can degrade the environmental base of tourism. Sediment runoff can affect water bodies, while dust and particulate matter affect air quality and health.

Waste and sewage problems are also linked with institutional capacity. Many regions lack adequate waste-management systems and infrastructure limitations are especially visible in remote areas (Kumar *et al.,* 2019). Mountainous terrain complicates infrastructure development, while financial and technical constraints limit the adoption of pollution-control technologies (Kaw, 2018). Therefore, environmental pressure is not only caused by tourist behaviour, it is also caused by weak systems for managing the consequences of tourism.

7. Land-Use Change, Deforestation and Environmental Stress

Tourism growth also affects land. Hotels, resorts, roads, recreational facilities, parking spaces, markets and related infrastructure require land. In ecologically sensitive mountain areas, land-use change can have serious consequences. The expansion of tourism infrastructure has led to land degradation, including deforestation, loss of green cover, soil erosion,

landslides and habitat destruction (Kumar & Poonam, 2023; Kant & Gupta, 2021).

Unregulated urbanisation for tourism development can displace agricultural land and natural habitats, accelerating ecological decline (Kapoor & Singh, 2025; Wong, 2004). This process is especially problematic because tourism depends on the landscapes that are being modified. When forests are cleared, slopes destabilised and agricultural land converted into built-up areas, the destination may gain short-term infrastructure but lose long-term ecological value.

Land degradation also increases climate vulnerability. Loss of vegetation can increase runoff, reduce water retention, intensify soil erosion and contribute to landslide risk. The environmental pressures associated with tourism and construction can therefore feed into disaster vulnerability. Tourism suffers from environmental change and contributes to it through greenhouse gas emissions and ecosystem destabilisation (Thomas, 2014). This feedback loop is central to understanding tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

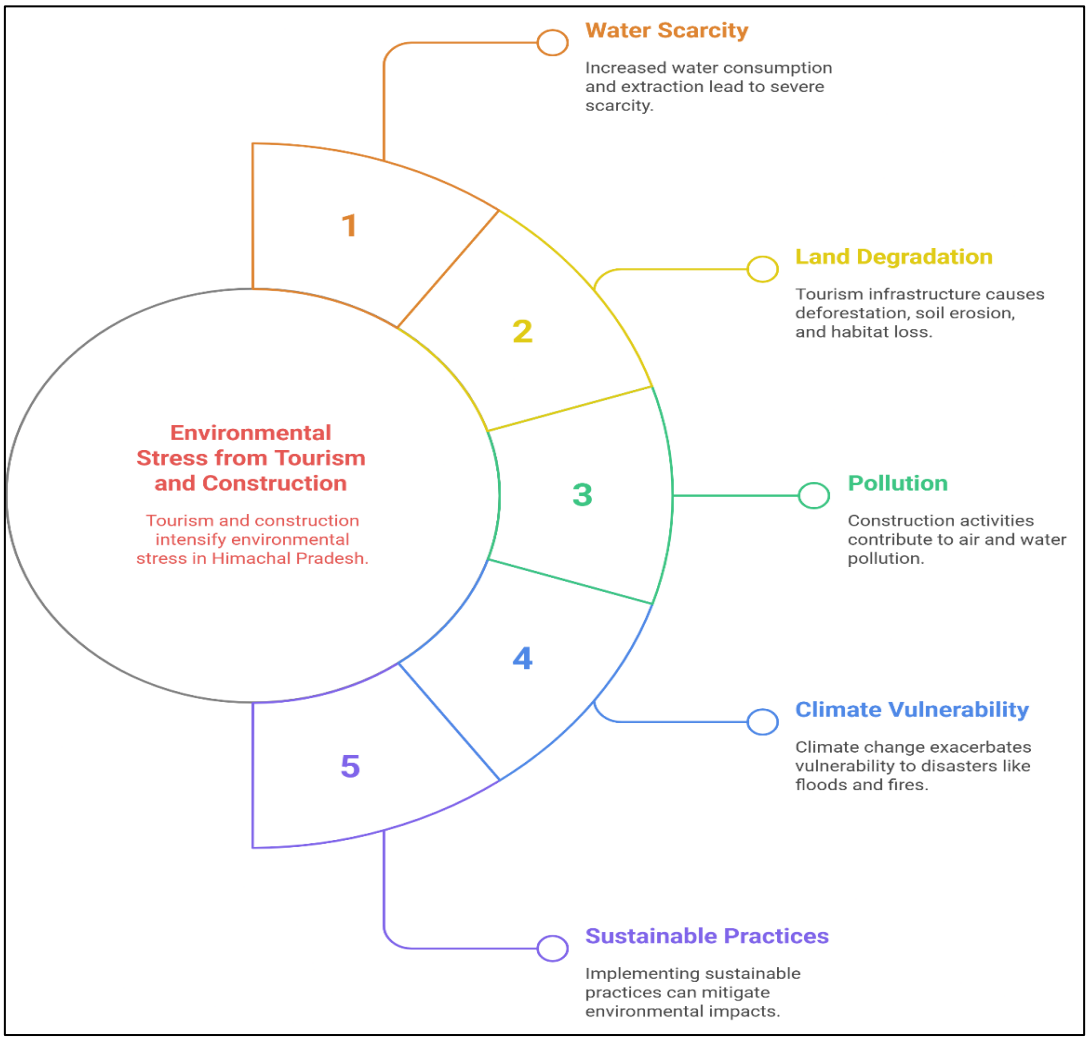

Figure 2: Environmental Stress

Figure 2 highlights the circular relationship between development pressure and ecological degradation. Tourism increases demand for infrastructure, water, transport and services. These demands create pressure on land, water and ecosystems. Environmental degradation then reduces destination quality, increases climate vulnerability and threatens the tourism economy. The cycle can only be broken through regulation, conservation, sustainable infrastructure and community participation.

Land-use regulation is therefore essential. Strict zoning must control construction in ecologically sensitive areas. Green building standards and sustainable construction practices should reduce the environmental impact of new development. Infrastructure should not be approved only on the basis of market demand, it should also be assessed for water availability, slope stability, waste capacity, ecological sensitivity and cumulative impact.

8. Why Pollution Control Remains Difficult

The study identifies several challenges in implementing pollution-control measures in tourism and construction sectors. Regulatory inefficiencies are a major obstacle. Weak enforcement mechanisms allow non-compliance with environmental standards (Rooij, 2008). Complex regulatory frameworks can also discourage compliance and innovation in pollution prevention (Byers, 1991). In practice, this can create a system in which minimal compliance becomes the norm rather than environmental responsibility.

Economic constraints intensify the problem. Pollution-control technologies, waste-management systems, wastewater treatment, green building materials and monitoring systems can be costly. Businesses operating in competitive tourism markets may prioritise short-term revenue over long-term sustainability, especially when environmental compliance appears expensive (Fauzany *et al.,* 2023). Tourism-dependent regions often face pressure to favour immediate economic growth over environmental protection (Azarmi *et al.,* 2019).

This tension is highly relevant to Himachal Pradesh. The state's reliance on tourism creates conflicts between environmental protection and development priorities (Kumar & Poonam, 2023). Many businesses may not be able to afford sustainable technologies and weak enforcement or fragmented policies undermine compliance (Kaw, 2018). Corruption and lax oversight can further weaken environmental governance (Kumar & Poonam, 2023).

Infrastructure limitations also constrain pollution control. Remote areas may lack waste-management systems, sewage treatment plants, recycling facilities, monitoring capacity or technical expertise (Kumar *et al.,* 2019). Mountain terrain increases the cost and complexity of environmental infrastructure. A waste system that may be easier to operate in a plain urban area may be much more difficult in a remote hill settlement. This does not reduce the need for waste management, rather, it requires context-specific solutions.

Public awareness and community participation are also necessary. The limited public awareness and cultural resistance to modern practices can hinder environmental efforts (Thakur, 2022). Tourists, businesses and local residents all shape environmental outcomes. If tourists litter, if businesses discharge untreated wastewater, if local systems lack collection capacity and if enforcement remains weak, environmental pressure accumulates.

The difficulty of pollution control therefore arises from multiple interacting barriers, weak regulation, high costs, limited infrastructure, fragmented policies, low awareness, ecological fragility and development pressure. An effective response must address all of these dimensions together.

9. Sustainable Tourism as Environmental Governance

The study identifies several strategic measures to address resource depletion while accommodating tourism and urban development. Sustainable tourism practices are central. Ecotourism initiatives that emphasise conservation and environmental education can encourage tourists to engage in less damaging activities. Responsible travel behaviour, including reducing water and energy consumption and minimising waste, can significantly reduce the environmental footprint of tourism.

Water management is one of the most urgent priorities. Rainwater harvesting systems and efficient water-management facilities in hotels and resorts can support more sustainable water use. Wastewater treatment plants can enable recycling and reuse, reducing pressure on freshwater resources. These measures are important because water stress affects both tourism operations and local communities.

Urban planning must also improve. Strict zoning regulations should control urban sprawl and protect ecologically sensitive areas. Green building standards and sustainable construction practices can reduce the environmental impact of new developments. Tourism infrastructure should be planned according to carrying capacity rather than short-term demand.

Community engagement is another critical component. Local residents should be involved in decision-making and conservation efforts so that tourism development reflects local priorities. Community participation builds ownership and responsibility for natural-resource management. Educational campaigns for both locals and tourists can increase awareness of sustainable practices. Environmental governance works better when communities are not treated only as recipients of policy but as active participants.

Government policy remains essential. Comprehensive policy frameworks that prioritise sustainable development and environmental protection must be developed and enforced (Government of Himachal Pradesh, 2019). Incentives for businesses and developers to adopt sustainable technologies can encourage wider participation. However, incentives must be combined with enforcement. Voluntary action alone is unlikely to address systemic environmental pressure.

10. DISCUSSION: ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURE AS A TOURISM RISK

The analysis suggests that environmental pressure should be understood as a direct tourism risk. Often, water stress, waste, pollution and land degradation

are treated as environmental side effects of tourism. However, in Himachal Pradesh, they directly threaten tourism viability. Tourists visit the state for clean landscapes, scenic beauty, nature, culture, rivers, mountain air and a sense of ecological escape. If these qualities are degraded, tourism demand may decline or shift elsewhere.

Water scarcity can reduce visitor satisfaction and create conflict between tourists and residents. Waste accumulation can damage destination image. Sewage pollution can affect public health and river ecosystems. Traffic emissions and noise can undermine the experience of hill destinations. Land degradation can increase disaster risk and reduce scenic quality. Therefore, environmental management is not separate from tourism development; it is central to it.

A key issue is the cumulative nature of environmental pressure. A single hotel, road, vehicle, or waste site may seem manageable. But when many facilities, vehicles, visitors and construction projects accumulate in a fragile landscape, the combined impact becomes significant. Tourism planning must therefore assess cumulative impact rather than approving activities in isolation. Carrying capacity, water availability, waste capacity, road congestion and ecological sensitivity should all be considered together.

Another issue is the seasonal concentration of environmental pressure. Peak tourist seasons generate sudden increases in water demand, waste, traffic, noise and sewage. Infrastructure that functions during normal periods may fail during peak periods. This means that environmental planning must be designed for peak pressure, not average pressure. Waste collection, water supply, sanitation, traffic management and enforcement must be strengthened during high-demand periods.

The study also highlights the importance of environmental justice. Local residents often bear the consequences of tourism pressure like water scarcity, waste accumulation, congestion, pollution and landscape degradation. Businesses may benefit from visitor spending, while communities may face environmental burdens. Sustainable tourism must therefore include fair distribution of both benefits and costs. Communities should have a say in how tourism develops and how environmental resources are managed.

Finally, the relationship between tourism and climate change must be recognised. Tourism contributes to environmental stress through emissions, land-use change, resource extraction and waste. At the same time, tourism is vulnerable to the climate impacts intensified by environmental degradation. This creates a feedback loop. Tourism that ignores environmental limits increase its own vulnerability. Tourism that protects environmental systems strengthens its long-term resilience.

The governance challenge is to move from reactive clean-up to preventive environmental planning. Many tourism destinations respond to waste, water scarcity and pollution only after pressure becomes visible. By then, rivers may already be polluted, landscapes may already be degraded and local resentment may already have increased. Preventive planning would require every major tourism destination to assess its water budget, waste generation, sewage capacity, transport emissions, noise levels and land-use pressure before further expansion. Such planning would make environmental limits visible before they become crises.

A destination-level environmental audit can become a useful tool in this process. Such an audit would identify how much water is available locally, how much is consumed by residents and tourism facilities, how wastewater is treated, where solid waste goes, how much traffic enters during peak periods, whether noise levels exceed acceptable limits and whether new construction is occurring in ecologically sensitive zones. This would allow local authorities to identify pressure points and design targeted interventions rather than relying on general policy statements.

The study also suggests that environmental governance must distinguish between large tourism establishments and small local operators. Large hotels and resorts often have greater environmental footprints and more capacity to invest in water-saving technologies, sewage treatment, renewable energy and waste management. Small homestays and local enterprises may have lower footprints but fewer resources to comply with technical standards. A fair environmental policy should therefore combine mandatory standards for high-impact establishments with technical and financial support for small operators. Without such differentiation, sustainability requirements may become burdensome for local communities while larger actors continue to dominate resource use.

Visitor behaviour is another important part of environmental pressure. Tourists influence water use, waste generation, transport demand, noise and pressure on local spaces. Responsible tourism cannot be achieved only through government regulation or business compliance; it also requires changes in visitor conduct. Clear signage, digital advisories, hotel-based awareness, local guide orientation, plastic restrictions, refill water systems and penalties for littering can help reduce the pressure caused by visitors. In environmentally fragile destinations, tourist education should be treated as infrastructure, not as an optional awareness activity.

The study further highlights the importance of linking environmental governance with local livelihoods. Waste management, water conservation, eco-guiding, local monitoring, recycling, composting and environmental education can create employment if organised properly. Local youth groups, women's groups, self-help groups and community organisations can participate in destination cleanliness, waste segregation, conservation campaigns and visitor awareness. This would transform environmental management from an external regulatory burden into a community-based livelihood opportunity. However, such participation should be paid, organised and supported rather than assumed as voluntary labour.

Technology can support environmental governance, but it cannot replace local institutions. Water meters, waste tracking, air-quality sensors, GIS mapping and digital complaint systems can improve monitoring. Yet these tools are effective only if data leads to action. If pollution data is collected but not used for enforcement, technology becomes symbolic. Therefore, monitoring systems must be linked with clear responsibilities, penalties, incentives and public reporting. Transparency can strengthen accountability by allowing communities to know whether tourism establishments are complying with environmental norms.

Finally, environmental governance should be integrated with tourism branding. Himachal Pradesh's long-term tourism image depends on ecological quality. Destinations that manage water responsibly, reduce waste, protect landscapes and involve communities can build stronger reputations among responsible travellers. Conversely, destinations associated with pollution, overcrowding, waste and water conflict may lose appeal over time. Sustainability should therefore not be seen as a restriction on tourism competitiveness. It can become the basis of a more durable and credible tourism economy.

11. Recommendations

First, Himachal Pradesh should develop destination-level water management plans for tourism areas. These plans should assess water availability, peak-season demand, groundwater extraction, hotel and homestay consumption, local household needs and wastewater treatment capacity. Second, rainwater harvesting and water-efficient infrastructure should be made mandatory or strongly incentivised in hotels, resorts, homestays, restaurants and public tourist facilities. Water-saving fixtures, greywater reuse and wastewater recycling can reduce pressure on freshwater resources. Third, sewage and wastewater treatment systems should be strengthened in tourism destinations. Untreated sewage and greywater should not be allowed to enter rivers, streams or open land. Small decentralised treatment systems may be necessary in remote mountain areas. Fourth, solid waste management should be upgraded through source segregation, plastic reduction, collection systems, recycling, composting and strict penalties for dumping. Tourist destinations should have peak-season waste plans that anticipate sudden increases in visitor-generated waste. Fifth, zoning and land-use regulations should protect ecologically sensitive areas from unregulated tourism construction. New tourism infrastructure should be assessed for water availability, slope stability, waste capacity, forest impact and cumulative environmental pressure. Sixth, tourist mobility should be managed to reduce air pollution and congestion. Public transport, shared mobility, parking regulation, pedestrian-friendly zones and low-emission transport options can reduce vehicular pressure in popular destinations. Seventh, environmental monitoring should be improved. Air quality, water quality, waste generation, noise levels, groundwater extraction and land-use change should be regularly monitored in tourism hotspots. Monitoring data should inform planning and enforcement. Eighth, businesses should be supported and required to adopt sustainable technologies. Incentives can help small hotels, homestays and restaurants install water-saving systems, renewable energy, waste-segregation facilities and sewage-treatment solutions. However, incentives must be combined with compliance requirements. Ninth, community participation should be built into environmental governance. Local residents, panchayats, women's groups, youth groups, tourism businesses and civil-society organisations should participate in destination-level environmental planning. Tenth, tourist awareness campaigns should be strengthened. Visitors should receive clear guidance on water conservation, waste reduction, responsible travel, noise control, local ecological sensitivity and respect for community resources.

12. CONCLUSION

Water stress, waste and environmental pressure are central challenges for Himachal Pradesh's tourism economy. Tourism depends on the environmental quality of mountains, rivers, forests, landscapes and settlements, but tourism growth also increases pressure on these resources. Tourism contributes to air pollution, water stress, groundwater extraction, inadequate sewage treatment, waste accumulation, noise pollution, land degradation and biodiversity loss. The study has argued that environmental degradation should be treated as a tourism risk. If destinations lose clean water, scenic quality, ecological stability and public health standards, the tourism economy itself becomes vulnerable. Environmental management is therefore not a constraint on tourism development; it is a condition for sustainable tourism. Himachal Pradesh requires integrated environmental governance for tourism. This includes water-efficient infrastructure, rainwater harvesting, wastewater treatment, solid waste systems, strict zoning, green buildings, pollution monitoring, community

participation and responsible visitor behaviour. The goal should not be to stop tourism but to align tourism with the carrying capacity and ecological sensitivity of mountain environments. A sustainable tourism economy in Himachal Pradesh must protect the resources that make tourism possible. Clean rivers, stable landscapes, functioning waste systems, reliable water supply, biodiversity and community well-being are not optional environmental concerns. They are the foundation of long-term tourism resilience. Without strong environmental governance, tourism growth may undermine its own future. With careful planning and enforcement, tourism can support livelihoods while protecting the fragile ecological systems on which it depends.

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