

Impact of Outdoor Recreation on Environment

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ABSTRACT

History has proven that environment of a place leads to the existence and development of tourism. Outdoor recreation lovers are prone to choose places with eye catching sceneries, beautiful weather and special landscape characteristics as their outdoor activity locations. According to Fishbein & Ajzen (1980) and Knapp (1999), attitude towards the environment is the main factor that affects human behaviour in the environment. Meanwhile, Wright (1991) said that recreation is a free time activity for the purpose of the leisure including after work activities. The exhilaration of outdoor recreation activities has been a trend in today's world. Generally, this would cause direct and indirect impacts to the nature and all living organisms. Thus, all activities need to be practiced and done based on all environmental codes and ethics. This is important for the next generation to appreciate the treasures of nature more than today's generation. Based on this phenomenon, the writer will unravel and discuss the issues and challenges of outdoor recreation towards the environment.

Key words: Outdoor recreation, Environment, Tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

Some people always think that a simple visit to the local forest could cause impact. But what is impact actually? There are a lot of reasons to be considered with the amount of impacts that visitors placed on the wilderness. The amount of wilderness left is decreasing day by day. If proper care was not taken, environment could face a big problem. Natural areas are visited for people to get away from the city and it involves a lot of recreational activities such as mountain biking, kayaking, four wheel driving, hiking, climbing, orienteering, camping and others.

The number of visitors is increasing every year. Damaged to the forest happen when careless impact was caused by visitors when enjoying the outdoor activities. According to Mason (2004) human environment and the natural environment are interwoven and human activity is both affected by and has effects on the natural environment. This is what social impact is all about, affecting those visiting the outdoors.

Environment is the home of the insects, animal and others. Our home is in the cities and it is not ethics to disturb other habitats. For example, would one throw rubbish on the floor of another person's house? Of course not, the same should be practiced when

visiting the home of our friends in the forest. In this discussion, there are three types of impacts which are visual, audible and physical impacts.



Picture 1 : kayaking activities

1.1 Visual Impact

Many people seek the outdoors as a place to get away from people so they don't wish to see any body else during their stay. Many people make mistake at the camping area. The whole big family camp near a trail or lake. All the mistakes that they do make animals and habitats in the jungle are not comfortable with that area.

The social side of it comes from the other visitors in the outdoors who have to see this interruption of nature from the sight of tents. Wild animal also noticed this interruption. Their water source and the lake have been disturbed and they do not wish to go there again.

1.2 Audible Impact

Audible impact is any noise made that is not heard in the normal day to day life of the wilderness. Some of the campers go to the nature places to keep away from the busy city. But campers or visitors still create considerable audible impact such as pots clanging, people talking and the rustle of the tent material in the wind make for an unnatural setting that impacts both social and wilderness level. Especially campers who stayed up late at night making loud noises such as playing guitar, play outdoor games and singing could effect other campers group who are trying to sleep. The things that happen also scares away wildlife.

1.3 Physical Impact

Physical impact is the result of damage to the wilderness. Anything that does not leave with the visitors is physical impact. Fires are the largest culprits of physical impact but fault should not be placed on the fires as much as the people who use them incorrectly.

2. WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IMPACT

It is not difficult to minimize impact on the wilderness when visiting. According to Mason (2004) impacts are perceived as positive or negative depends on the value position and judgment of the observer of the impacts. A set of rules and regulations is not the greatest way to reduce impact. Most of the time that unnecessary impact is placed on the outdoors, is from simple lack of knowledge.

2.1 Campsites

Selecting a good campsite is the most important part of the camping activities. According to Ibrahim and Cordes (1993) the campsite should be able to accommodate the people without any damage to the area and also must consider about the wild life in the area. The campsite must be a good place such as easy to obtain water for cooking, washing and others. But sometimes people are interested with campsites which have a nice view because they feel good and comfortable with the nice condition.

When selecting a campsite we must concentrate just in one area. If we use to many place to build our tent, this creates problem to others when they want to use the same place. So a good choice is to try to limit the space and let others have the space they wanted. The second thing is, when you are at the campsite try to not cut the trees and be careful of the young plants which are growing because it is not an ethical action to cut them down. It is an irresponsible action if the trees were damaged and one is never allowed to cut trees in natural areas which are protected.

Another thing to take in mind is, selecting camping site near a lake will scare off the wild life that uses the lake as source of water. The impact could cause the wild life by while they had to choose another place to get water source. The final thing to remember is to be sure when you leave your campsite, you may have to clear all the trash especially around the cooking area and around the tent.



Picture 2 : camping activities

2.2 Campfires

When we go camping, the campfires are the most important thing. However, it could be a lot of fun and a lot of trouble too. The camp commander must be sure that he has already briefed all participants with the rules and regulation of handling campsites. According to Jaffry and Norazlina (2007) they stated that if usage of fuel is not handled and controlled carefully, forest burning could happened. While Ibrahim and Cordes (1993) stated that campfires should be built away from overhanging branches, steep slopes, rotten stumps or logs and dry grass and leaves.

2.3 Sanitation

Every outdoor people that goes into the forest will have to deal with this one time or another. There are two areas that are covered under sanitation which are human waste and food waste. When urinating in the woods, there is a few things for us to consider. Firstly, we need to be at least 50 ft away from the trail. Why? It is easy, we do not want people to see us when we are doing our business, and we do not want to leave the wastes

just laying next to the trail because some other people maybe using the same trail or maybe they are camping near by and all these matter must be considered seriously.

Along this line, Douglas (2000) stated that human waste is a normal product of life and as such needs to be addressed by anyone seriously interested in recreation management and environmental protection. Secondly, if we are close to the water source do not do the business too close to the water source at least 100 – 200 ft away from it. According to Ibrahim and Cordes (1993) washing and disposal human waste must be done carefully so as not to pollute the environment.

CONCLUSION

Outdoor recreation is the best way to build relationship between people and nature. But if people disobey the rules and regulations on preserving the nature, they will be blamed by the future generation for damaging the entire biodiversity. So, from now on we must work together for our nature and save our environment. According to Jaffry, Md Amin and Benderi (2005) environment could be damaged when human being do not have the awareness and care towards maintaining the whole green ecosystem.

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