

# THE DYNAMICS OF ECOTOURISM: EVOLUTION, DISRUPTION, AND REGENERATIVE PATHWAYS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY (2001-2025)

Nuttharin PARIWONGKHUNTORN<sup>1</sup>, Prapakorn MANKHONG<sup>2</sup>, Sudarat  
RODBOONSONG<sup>3</sup> and Qun LIAO<sup>4</sup>

1 College of Management, University of Phayao, Thailand; nuttharin@up.ac.th

2 Association of Legal & Political Studies, Thailand; mada.prapakorn@gmail.com

3 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Uttaradit Rajabhat University, Thailand;  
sudaratu@up.ac.th

4 School of Southeast Asian Languages and Cultures, Guangxi University of Foreign  
Languages, China; 1670156551@qq.com

## ARTICLE HISTORY

**Received:** 9 January 2026

**Revised:** 23 January 2026

**Published:** 8 February 2026

## ABSTRACT

This article offers a comprehensive review of ecotourism's evolution, challenges, and transformative pathways during the first quarter of the 21st century (2001-2025). Rooted in principles of responsible travel, community engagement, and the circular economy, ecotourism initially experienced significant growth until 2019, driven by increasing environmental awareness and the desire to mitigate the impacts of mass tourism. The COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021), however, caused unprecedented disruption, revealing industry fragilities while simultaneously accelerating digital adoption and fostering a critical shift towards resilience and regenerative practices. Analyzing the economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and technological dimensions, this documentary study reveals that while ecotourism significantly contributes to local economies and conservation, it faces persistent challenges such as overtourism, inequitable benefit distribution, and environmental footprint concerns. The post-COVID era (2021-2025) is marked by uneven recovery, sustained demand for nature-based experiences, and a growing adoption of regenerative tourism philosophies aimed at actively restoring natural and social capital. Future success depends on balancing conservation with development, ensuring genuine community participation, integrating technology responsibly, and embedding circular-economy principles to foster a truly sustainable and equitable ecotourism industry for generations to come.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, Sustainable Tourism, Regenerative Tourism, Regenerative Tourism, Environmental Conservation

**CITATION INFORMATION:** Pariwongkhuntorn, N., Mankhong, P., Rodboonsong, S., & Liao, Q. (2026). The Dynamics of Ecotourism: Evolution, Disruption, and Regenerative Pathways in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2001-2025). *Procedia of Multidisciplinary Research*, 4(2), 31.

**Data Availability Statement:** The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.



**Copyright:** © 2026 by the authors. This is a fully open-access article distributed under the terms of the Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).