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# ***Sustainability in the tourism sector: Assessing ecotourist's willingness to pay for ecotourism offerings in Trinidad and Tobago***

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## **Abstract**

*The tourism sector in the Caribbean has been a significant contributor towards the region's GDP, contributing 13.8% in 2005. Ecotourism has been identified as a low impact means to provide income generating opportunities that are complementary to nature conservation as well as the welfare of the local population. These goals are sometimes not met, however, and environmentally unfriendly or economically unsuccessful ecotourism tends to prevail in many developing countries, questioning the validity of its original concept. Therefore, careful assessment of cultural, environmental, and economic aspects is necessary when introducing ecotourism to a region.*

*A discrete choice conjoint analysis of international and local tourist preferences for ecotourism is undertaken to analyze the decision to participate in ecotourism activities and to identify characteristics of the market segments that comprise the market for ecotourism offerings, the market attitudes towards ecotourism and the ecotourism products that could attract the market segments. Tests of market segmentation by nationality, age, and experience of traveller are conducted in a multinomial logit estimation procedure. The study also analyzes preferences of tourists to assess tourists' willingness to pay (WTP), and to assess the financial potential of ecotourism offerings.*

*This study provides practical planning direction to all ecotourism stakeholders to increase tourism-generated income for rural communities, and thus contribute to the sustainable development of the region more generally.*