

A STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECO TOURISM IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Tourism topography investigation of travel and tourism, as an industry and as a social and cultural activity, Tourism geology covers a far reaching assortment of premiums including the regular impact of tourism. Ecotourism is characterized as "responsible travel to characteristic territories that moderates the earth and enhances the prosperity of nearby individuals." It is a type of nature - based tourism that advantages neighborhood and destinations environmentally, socially and financially. Eco-tourism is a result of the worldwide condition cognizance that started around five decades back. These explorers design ahead of time and find out the social setting that they will connect in the most typical sightseers of the times. Kerala is one of the most famous eco-destinations. Tourism industry in Kerala ought to be eco-friendly and sustainable. Kerala ecotourism intends to give individuals a chance to have an understanding of the local culture.

Development and Marketing are the vital actions for any business which is competitive and successful. This is obviously the certain case in the quickly changing tourism industry. Therefore tourism destination marketers must continually audit, modify once in a while by their showcasing objectives, pictures, systems and plans. Marketing of tourism is a significant complex activity, because producer is marketing a thing that does not have any physical existence and to satisfy the consumer's request is a tedious task in such a context and the feeling that he cannot exhibit enough and this space differs from person to person. Tourism promoting can be characterized as the precise and composed endeavors applied by the National Tourist Organizations and the tourist enterprises at international, national and local levels to improve the fulfillment of voyagers, gatherings and people, in perspective of the managed tourism development.

Keywords: Development, Eco- Tourism, Nature, Tourist

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a practice with regards to visiting, going for joy or diversion from monotonous lifestyle. So the direction and administration of sightseers is now taken as a business. It is the totality of the relationship and marvel emerging from the movement and remain of strangers. Providing the stay does not imply the establishment of a permanent residence and is not connected with a remunerated activity. India is likely a main nation that offers different classifications of tourism. These incorporate history tourism, adventure tourism, medical tourism, spiritual tourism, beach tourism etc. Kerala is considered as God's own country to the extent that tourism is considered. In India, Kerala could be the main state where the urban and the provincial have no much disparity in terms of standards. The cutting edge and regular viewpoints have their equal and proportionate credence here. The most stunning grounds are secured with thick woodlands, while different areas lie under tea and coffee plantations or other forms of cultivation.

Tourism has risen as the couple of monetary contrasting options to build up the state economy. The state's potential for Tourism has been very much acknowledged. As a destination, Kerala draw in the free voyager with its one of a kind characteristics like the perfect condition, the rich and energetic culture and the high quality of life for the nearby occupants realized by the state's ventures since Independence in the fields of education, Eco care, institutions of democracy, social justice etc. The greater part of the foreigners are choosing eco-friendly areas for visit. The green excellence of Kerala is lavishly featured through the diverse ecotourism destinations. Tourism showcasing is characterized as the "efficient and facilitated endeavors applied by the national visitor associations and additionally the traveler undertakings at international, national and local levels to optimize the satisfaction of tourists, groups and individuals, in view of the sustained tourism growth." Tourism has likewise accepted immense extents, bringing about a variety of items and deals delegates attempting to get most extreme offer in the market.

Today, tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world and furthermore a standout amongst the most aggressive parts. This antagonism is constantly growing as more and more destinations pursue to attract visitors and more organizations and associations end up engaged with exceptionally talented business of destination planning, transportation, and accommodation and catering for the tourists. Hence

marketing in the tourism industry is greatly streamlined, as part of the process has already been completed by the need for travel in individuals. Tourism is an extremely complex industry in light of its multi-faceted exercises which together create the tourist product. It is also complex because of various subsectors that are in themselves complex industries, if thought about autonomously. Its complexity lies in the tourism promotion in its various forms coordinated everywhere number of individuals in different terrains of various financial structures, having diverse requirements, desires and personal conduct standards

1.1 Eco-Tourism avenues in Kerala

Eco-tourism is getting to be prominent in Kerala. Eco-tourism adds to the preservation of the natural areas by giving financial assistance and income to the administration to protect and oversee natural territories. It uses the common assets and gives employment opportunities to the local people. The implicit condition in training programs raises the attention to the local people and helps in conservation of the natural resources.

The strong point of Kerala Tourism is its superb characteristic assets as back waters, hill stations and beaches. Having comprehended the requirement for investigating the economical advancement of destinations, Kerala Tourism focuses on the conservation of ecology to reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment and expect to advance improvement of tourism based on the carrying capacities of the destination. Ecotourism ventures incorporate the idea of sustainability in tourism.

1.2 DETAILS OF THE PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECO-TOURISM

1.2.1. Eravikulam National Park

Eravikulam is just 16 km away from Munnar. Eravikulam national park is well-known for NilgiriThar, Elephants, Sambar, Gaur, Lion tailed Macaque etc. The highest peak in South India – The Anamudi (2694 meter) – is located at Eravikulam.

1.2.2. Thommankoothu Eco-Tourism

Thomankoothu is not one single fall but comprises series of 12 falls over a distance of 5km. Thomankoothu waterfalls is located 20 kms from Thodupuzha in Idukki District. All the 12 falls or Kutthu (locally Known) passes through lush evergreen forests. This adds to the beauty of the whole system. Currently there is not much infrastructure to cater to the needs of the people. DTPC Idukki has made some basic facilities, such as toilets and information desk, but a lot more need to be done to enrich the experience of the visitors.

1.2.3. Pythalmala Eco-Tourism Project

This place is 65 km from Kannur town. This charming slope station, arranged 4,500 ft. above ocean level close to the Kerala – Karnataka border, is rich in flora and fauna. It is a six-km trek to the highest point of the slopes. This is the Highest Peak in the Kannur District. Countless are pulled in to this place.

1.2.4. Nilambur Eco-Tourism Project

Nilambur in Malapuram District is renowned for teak estates. The most established teak estate on the country - "Conolley's Plot" is arranged here. The old DFO Bungalow arranged at the ridge close woods rest house can be a perfect area for directing nature camps.

1.2.5. Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary

With the help of the Department of Tourism the ecotourism Programs relating to the Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary, Kannur District was initiated by the Honorable minister for Tourism in February 2005. The quantity of guests has expanded and the aggregate guests have multiplied amid the year contrasted with a year ago. There are heaps of enquiries from local and worldwide vacationer on the ecotourism Programs at Aralam.

1.2.6. Palaruvi Eco-Tourism

The Palaruvi forests is a attractive picnic spot. Palaruvi is a waterfall 75 kms from Kollam in the Kollam District. Large number of people visits this eco-tourism place every year especially from the southern districts of Kerala and Tamilnadu. Meanwhile the water fall is within the forest area only forest department will be able to make ecotourism interference in a meaningful way in view of the permissible and policy concerns involved.

1.2.7. Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary

Periyar Tiger Reserve, generally known as Thekkady is one of the famous tourist destinations in India. It is the best place to observe wild animals at close quarters while cursing in the safety of a boat in Periyar Lake. The exclusive rainforest habitat inter spread with progressing grass lands and periyar lake stretches an attractive atmosphere to thekkady attracting thousands of tourists from all over the globe. A lots of tourists visit thekkady every year contributing significantly top the economy of Kerala. Over the last five years, Kerala forest Department has been struggling hard to the advancement towards the visitor

facilities of the park and a number of community based ecotourism programmes were introduced during this period.

1.2.8. Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary

Chinnar is a significant wild life sanctuary, which is very much near to the Munnar Hill Station. A significant fauna are Elephant, Gaur, Panther, and Deer etc. This sanctuary is famous for Giant Grizzled Squirrel.

1.2.9. Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary

Parambikulam is one of the finest sanctuaries in the country for viewing the savage attractiveness of Gaur and the awesome majesty of Elephant. Tiger are also far-sighted here. With three artificial lakes within the sanctuary accelerates boating and animals can be viewed closely from the boat and minibus.

1.2.10. Thenmala eco-tourism

Kerala has commissioned an high-class eco-tourism project at Thenmala in the Western Ghats. Thenmala offers products for both general tourists as well as for eco-tourists. The conveniences as part of the eco-friendly general tourism are culture zone with musical dancing fountain, information center, amphitheater shop courts etc. the adventure zone accommodates elevated walkway, nature trail, adventure activities like river crossing rock climbing mountain biking etc. Activities such as trekking through rain forests and wild life sanctuaries, staying in tree top huts etc are also gaining popularity. Thenmala eco-tourism India's first strategic Ecotourism destination in the foothills of Western Ghats in Kollam District.

1.2.11. Konni Eco-Tourism Project

Konni is located in Pathanamthitta district and forms part of forest tracts of Western Ghats. The place has been prominent since time immemorial as the abode of the majestic wild elephants and as a training centre of elephants. This region is at an altitude of 500-1000 m above sea level. Ecotourism activities such as trekking, rock climbing, elephant safari, wilderness camping, river cruise by rafting, flora and fauna watching, bird watching etc. have ample scope in Konni.

1.2.12. Cheyyapara Waterfalls

Cheyyapara is a cascade in the Neriamangalan scope of the Munnar division. At introduce bunches of voyagers visit the falls. An ecotourism program is proposed for the guests to the falls. The formation of essential facilities to see the falls is proposed. The same is implemented by the forest development agency Munnar.

1.2.13. Eco-Tourism Programmes At Rajamalai

Rajamalai, 15 kms from Munnar in Idukki district is the natural habitat of the NilgiriThar. Rajamalai, as part of the Eravikulam National Park and attracts a large number of nature lovers.

1.2.14. Modernisation of periyar tiger reserve.

As part of the ecotourism initiatives in the sanctuary it is decided to modernize the understanding center at the Periyar Tiger reserve with addition of more internal and external exhibits.

1.2.15. Eco-Tourism Programmes at Munnar

Kerala Forest Development Corporation is an open area undertaking enlisted in 1976 under organizations Act for taking up business ranger service exercises like raising and overseeing pulpwood and trade edit ranches out woods arrive. KFDC has wandered into the field of ecotourism since 2001. By and by KFDC offers guided treks and outside camps at Munnar.

1.2.16. Eco-Tourism Programmes at PanialyPorr in Kodanad

PanialyPorr is a small cascade in the Kodanad range. The place pulls in a loads of visitors. The basic facility at the fall is restricted. With a specific end goal to elevate tourism and to encourage the voyagers to the fall it is chosen to start certain program of upgrading the facilities.

1.2.17. Eco-Tourism Programmes at Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary

Muthanga is one of the ranges contiguous to the Bandipur National Park and the Mudumalai Sanctuary. It has a degree of potential for ecotourism essentially as a result of its alluring Wildlife sightings there is an elephant camp with four tuskers, a watch tower and an understanding focus at Muthanga, which require promote changes to provide food the necessities of the eco-travelers.

1.2.18. Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary

Aralam wildlife sanctuary is the only protected area in Kannur District and is the northern most sanctuary in Kerala. This sanctuary is supporting a variety of animal and plant communities exhibiting unbelievable variety. The magnificent Meenmutty waterfalls which is similar to the Athirapally waterfalls of Kerala is an additional attraction to the sanctuary.

1.2.19. Kallar Eco-Tourism Project

Kallar near Ponmudi is in Thiruvananthapuram district. This is a valley of the Vamanapuram River. Lots of tourists on the way to Ponmudi choose Kallar as a recreation spot. The facilities envisaged were

bathing ghats, tree huts as watch tower, toilets change rooms, trek path to the falls, signage's, cafeteria etc. as this area was under the Thiruvananthapuram forest division the Divisional forest officer was the implementing agency for the project.

1.2.20. Nelliampathy Eco Tourism

Nelliampathy hills are located in Palakkad district above mean sea level and is an attractive hill station. The area has great extent of cardamom plantation in this hill station one can experience the panoramic sights of spice gardens. Nelliampathy hills are usually known as poor man's Ooty.

1.2.21. Neyyar and Peppara Wildlife Sanctureries

Neyyar and Peppara are the two untamed life asylums in Thiruvananthapuram District. Ecotourism exercises at introduce in these places are restricted to directing nature camps, going by crocodile recovery focus, lion safari stop, deer restoration focus and sculling in the repositories in both the havens. To make an ever increasing number of individuals to cooperate and comprehend the woodlands, their significance and their practical administration for present and who and what is to come, a couple of trekking programs have been visualized.

1.2.22. Eco-Tourism Facilities at Peruvannamuzhy and Kakkayam

Peruvannamuzhi is the water spread zone of Peruvannamuzhi supply in Kozhikode District. This is a phenomenal zone for understanding the preservation benefits gave by backwoods. Wealthy in wildlife, bird life and butterfly population, the territory is a perfect area for the nature lovers. The water system dam and the garden adjacent will likewise be another fascination.

1.2.23. Eco-Tourism Programmes in Kulamavu

Idukki is a standout amongst the most nature rich territories of Kerala. High ranges and lush valleys are fixed by three primary streams - Periyar, Thalayar and Thodupuzhayar - and their rivers. The River Pamba additionally has its starting point here.

1.2.24. Eco-tourism programmes at shenduruney wildlife sanctuary

The eco-tourism programs in Shenduruney Wildlife Sanctuary the main Wildlife Sanctuary in Kollam District is restricted to directing nature camps by the office and boating in Sanctuary Reservoir by TEPS.

1.2.25. Eco-Tourism Programmes in Marayoor

Marayoor is located in the north-eastern corner of Idukki region in Kerala. Munnar-Udumalpet State high path goes through the region. In spite of the fact that Marayoor is situated in the midst of woodland regions and far from different parts of the state, adequately great facilities are accessible in the region for the guests.

1.2.26. Eco-Tourism Programmes in Kuruva Island

Kuruva Island is an island inside waterway Kabini in Wayanad District. This island has an extraordinary biological system, which comprise of all the woods writes, which are found in Wayanad District. The island is a hold woodland and guests are permitted to without making any harm the vegetation. This island can turn into an amazing ecotourism spot by presenting some extra fundamental frameworks.

1.2.27. Eco-Tourism Programmes in Thusharagiri

Thusharagiri is the water shed zone of the Chalipuzha situated at about the rise of the Wayanad Plateau in the Kozhikode District. The territory is amazing for understanding the protection benefits gave by woodlands. The zone is likewise magnificent to study the evergreen backwoods biological community.

1.2.28. Eco-Tourism Programmes in Jankikad

Janakikad in the Kuttiady scope of Kozhikode timberland division falls under Vadakara Taluk of Kozhikode income region. The undertaking zone Janakikadu is 5Km far from Kuttiady town. The task region is drawn closer by street. It is a delightful common timberland region having great biodiversity of plants and creatures.

1.2.29. Chimmony Wildlife Sanctuary

Chimmony Wildlife Sanctuary is in Mukundapuram taluk in Thrissur region in Kerala. The Sanctuary is 36 kms from the Thrissur town. It is 60 kms from the Cochin global air terminal and 25 km from the national parkway NH 47. The Chimmony Lake of 10.10 sqkms is likewise part of the Sanctuary. This Sanctuary is a super biodiversity zone.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Tourism is the entirety of all tasks which are straightforwardly identified with the entry, stay and movement of foreigners inside and outside of a certain country, city or region. Tourism can be considered as the development of individuals from their ordinary place of residence. Eco tourism is the sort of tourism in which the principle motivation of visitors' journey is to improve or take care of his or her own wellbeing.

Promotion of Eco Tourism is a precise and composed effort extended by the natural tourist organizations and tourist undertakings in local, national and international level to maximize the satisfaction of tourists, groups and people particularly which are identified with Eco tourism related factors.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The important objectives of this study include the following

- To analyze the marketing opportunities for Eco tourism products in Kerala.
- To analyze the major factors which influence the eco-tourism.
- To identify the various eco-tourism activity centres in Kerala.
- To assess the various problems faced by the tourists who are visiting Kerala’s Eco tourism centres.
- To assess the potentiality of Kerala to promote eco-tourism.

3. METHODOLOGY

To unravel the above stated objective the road map for methodology was adopted. The population is the eco-tourism business providers in Kerala. The study is descriptive in nature. The perceptions of the eco-tourism providers were determined and analyzed using statistical techniques.

• **Sample Size**

Major Eco-tourism centers in Kerala are considered while selecting the sample. The sample consisted of 80 respondents related to the eco-tourism business.

• **Tools for Data Collection**

The tool employed for data collection was a questionnaire having three parts: the first part designed to determine the demographic profile of the respondents in relation to the various demographic factors, the second to assess the perception of eco-tourism providers and the third, statements to evaluate the major influencing factors.

(1) Primary Data

Primary data are also collected from samples of eco-tourism providers of Kerala.

(2) Secondary Data

The study also made use of various types of secondary data including studies, reports and data collected by government and non-governmental organizations.

C. Data Analysis - Tools

Statistical tools such as percentage, Mean score and Garrett ranking Test were used for analyzing the data.

4. ANALYSIS AND INFERENCE

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Eco-tourism business providers

Demographic distribution		Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	44	55.00%
	Female	36	45.00%
Total		80	100.00%
Age	Less than 25 years	9	11.25%
	26 – 35 years	16	20.00%
	36 – 45 years	15	18.75%
	45 – 60 years	34	42.50%
	Above 60 years	6	7.50%
Total		80	100.00%
Marital status	Single	28	35.00%
	Married	52	65.00%
Total		80	100.00%
Nature Business	First Generation	46	57.50%
	Second Generation	34	42.50%
Total		80	100.00%
Business Turnover	Rs.6,00,000 – Rs.10,00,000	20	25.00%
	Rs.10,00,000 – Rs.30,00,000	18	22.50%
	Rs.30,00,000 – Rs.50,00,000	29	36.25%
	Rs.50,00,000 and above	13	16.25%
Total		80	100.00%
Educational	School	7	8.75%

qualification	Intermediate	9	11.25%
	Higher secondary	14	17.50%
	Graduation	20	25.00%
	Post-graduation	22	27.50%
	Technically qualified	8	10.00%
Total		80	100.00%

Inference

Out of the 80 respondents about 55 percent of the respondents are men and rest are female, 42 percent of the respondents are coming under the age group of 45 to 60 years, 65 percent tourism providers are married, 57 percent of the ecotourism providers are belongs the business group of first generation business and others belongs to the second generation. 36 percent of the eco-tourism providers are coming under the business turnover of Rs.30,00,000 - Rs.50,00,000, 27 percent of respondents are with educational qualifications of Post-graduation.

Table 2

Factors which are Dictate the Success of the Eco Tourism Places								
Sl No.	Particulars	SA	A	N	D	SDA	Total Score	Mean Score
1	Capital employed in the business	111	124	44	16	2	297	4.24
2	Affordable pricing policies	76	220	11	7	1	315	4.50
3	Skilled staffs	88	106	66	20	4	284	4.06
4	Better business management skills and development	159	147	19	6	2	333	4.76
5	Tourism industry understanding and experience	120	89	38	12	7	266	3.80
6	Marketing skills	154	92	40	7	1	294	4.20
7	Customer-focused business orientation	123	103	14	8	6	254	3.63
8	Ability to cope with or acquire changing technology and information systems	99	177	26	8	1	311	4.44
9	Market capturing	88	106	66	19	4	283	4.04
10	Professional Business approach	118	169	12	5	3	307	4.39

Inference

From the above table it is evident that the factors that dictate the success of the eco-tourism places, 'Better business management skills and development' is on higher side with 4.76 mean score, followed by 'Fair pricing policies' and 'Ability to cope with or acquire changing technology and information systems' with the mean scores of 4.50 and 4.44 respectively.

Table 3

Major demand factors for Eco tourism				
Sl No.	Main factors	Total Score	Average	Rank
1	Eco-tourism products	4740	59.25	I
2	Promotional measures	4405	55.06	VI
3	Seasonal demand	4130	51.63	X
4	Market demand for Ecotourism	4585	57.31	III
5	Information availability	4340	54.25	IX
6	Improvement of Quality	4410	55.13	V
7	Physical Design	4345	54.31	VIII
8	Satisfaction towards Eco tourism	4445	55.56	IV
9	Govt Support	4395	54.94	VII
10	Protects flora and fauna	4615	57.69	II

Inference

The scores provided by the eco-tourism providers are summed using the Garrett method and the average scores for each factor is obtained. The average scores are converted into rank and it is evident from the above table 'Eco-tourism products' (Rank I) was the major satisfactory factor with the average score of 59.25 followed by 'Protects flora and fauna' (Rank II) with the average score of 57.69. Market demand for Ecotourism (Rank III) which had an average score of 57.31 is the other demand factor which relates to the demand of eco-tourism in Kerala.

FINDINGS

- Majority of the business providers are male and when compared with other age group, 45 - 60 age groups plays a major part in eco-tourism providing.
- Most of the eco-tourism business providers are in the industry, as in the form of first generation.
- Most of the eco-tourism business providers are getting a turnover of Rs. 30,00,000 to Rs. 50,00,000.
- There are no signage boards and guides in certain eco-tourist spots.
- As per the analysis, the number of eco-tourism providers with post-graduation is on higher side.
- Based on the analysis, it is evident that the factors that dictate the success of the eco-tourism places are 'Better business management skills and development' and followed by 'Affordable pricing policies'.
- As per the analysis major demand factors of eco-tourism business are 'Eco-tourism products' and 'Protects flora and fauna'.

SUGGESTION

- The larger portions of the business providers are only belonging to male category, So Govt. should take some initiative to bring more.
- Presence of tour guides were not noticed at all the sites, but the few that were available had little knowledge about the sites. So it is suggested that more trained guides to be recruited in all these sites for the better development of eco-tourism.
- Majority of the business providers are post-graduates, certain measures should be taken to bring more people with less educational qualification.
- As per the opinion of tourism providers infrastructure developments also need more attention from the part of the government.
- From the study it is observed that majority of the eco-tourism places are having less Seasonal demands and information availability. So more concentration to be given in regards to these areas for the better development of the eco-tourism.

CONCLUSION

Eco-tourism is all about being sensitive to one's environment and the need to save nature. In Kerala, ecotourism has now been misconstrued. It is not appropriately comprehended by many tour operating companies. Tourism project developers may jump on the ecotourism bandwagon and hence in the project an environmentally conscientious image get separated their business promoting techniques. Along these lines ecotourism can be confounded and misused to legitimize the tourism advancement areas, which may be sacrificed to maximise tourist numbers and profits. As the number of tourists' increases, ecotourism winds up mass tourism and creates comparative infrastructural requests and proportionate effect on condition as ordinary tourism. This requires the requirement for characterizing the ecotourism legitimately to pass on the message to all. At present, there is little organized framework/channel through which we can see the backwoods and have a chance to enjoy quality and enduring background of nature. In Short, tourism in these nature-based areas should be environmentally reasonable. There ought to likewise provision for learning process for a visitor. The financial advantage of such an activity should accrue to local population to ensure sustainability.

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