

A Study on Awareness of Tourists Visiting Environment Preserves in Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is the fastest growing and the second largest industry of the world and has tremendous potentials for earning foreign exchange, yielding tax revenues, providing employment, promoting the growth of auxiliary industries and development of industrially backward regions. Tourists bring wealth into a country in the form of goodwill and understanding, in the form of foreign exchange, and in the form of financing for future tourism infrastructure and other economic development. The history of tourism clearly indicates that the environment of places has contributed to the birth and progress of tourism. Scenic sites, amenable climates and unique landscape features have had an important influence upon the patronage of specific localities, regions or countries. The environment of the host region exerts an attraction so that the tourists visit the place. Many nations have established their tourism sector around their natural wildlife. India is home to many national parks and wildlife sanctuaries showing the diversity of its wildlife, much of its unique fauna, and excels in the range. The present study attempts to analyze the role of wildlife sanctuaries in Tamil Nadu.

KEYWORDS: Wildlife Sanctuaries, Tourism in Tamil Nadu

1. INTRODUCTION

India is a land of contrasts from tropics to snows. It is vast varied and strikingly beautiful. Being the second largest population and the seventh largest country in the world, India has the most ancient cultural heritage. The variety of its scenery, its big cities, its intensive, equally varied agriculture, its extremely diversified industry, its ports and thickly populated areas, its vast open country side, its variety of languages and finally its manifold relations with other nations of the world all of these make India an exciting and fascinating destination.

Tall palms and taller gopurams, the towering, intricately carved temple towers amidst a land of oriental lushness greet the traveler to Tamil Nadu, a land that is truly the soul of the south itself, a land of sun and warmth, of temples and legends, and of silver lined beaches. Tamil Nadu, lush and colour drenched, sunburn and romantic, offering the essence of the eastern life style, is inexpensive with the best of accommodation available to suit every pocket and every taste. Tamil Nadu is a window to the modern south as much as it is a wider open archive of ancient legacies. Yet amazingly, for all its modernity, Tamil Nadu retains its old-world charm. The

blend of the ancient and the new and the picturesque is truly remarkable. It is the land that has seen the rise and fall of many ancient kingdoms viz., the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Cheras, the Pallavas and many others each leaving behind incredible cultural treasures.

Forests and Sanctuaries untouched by man, Mudumalai, Anaimalai, Vedanthangal and Point Calimere, where the deer and the bison roam and the stork and the flamingo and egret nest where tourists can enjoy a thrilling elephant ride into a forest of antelopes, monkeys, tigers and leopards will stay in memory. The Mudumalai wildlife sanctuary is on the Ooty - Mysore road. Tiger, leopard, sloth bear, elephant, bison, Sambar, Chital and barking deer wander on its terrain in wild abandonment. The Madras aquarium displays a wide variety of aquatic life. The National deer park at Guindy, Chennai is the only one of its kind in the country and the snake park is a showcase for reptilian wildlife. Cool forests everywhere provide refuge to myriads of species of animals and birds. Tamil Nadu is also the home of Carnatic music and Bharathanatyam, a legacy of temple songs and dances handed down through the centuries, the home of many a stately schools of art and architecture and of great cultures and philosophies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the extent and the growth trend in wildlife tourism in TamilNadu.
- To study the problems and prospect of wildlife tourism in TamilNadu.
- To study the importance of wildlife sanctuaries and eco-tourism.
- To offer recommendations to solve the problems of wildlife tourism.

PARAMETER

Since the subject for the research is role of and prospect of wildlife tourism in Tamil Nadu 15 wildlife reserves and bird sanctuaries have been taken as the parameter.

LIMITATIONS

- Tourist people are not at all interested in filling up the questionnaire on the spot.
- Due to the lack of time and money the researcher can't visit all the places.
- The officials are not co-operating with the researcher at the time of collecting information.

SOURCES OF DATA

The research has been done by collecting primary and secondary data. The researcher has adopted interview schedule and questionnaire for collecting primary data. The secondary data regarding wildlife sanctuaries, area, location, arrival of domestic tourist, foreign tourists and other important information was collected directly from the statistical records of Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC). Some other relevant data has been retrieved from magazines and books. Informal discussions were also held with the tourism department officials, local, people, shopkeepers, friends and relatives for getting some more information and ideas pertaining to this study.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CONSTRUCTION OF TOOLS

The interview schedule and questionnaire used for the purpose of this study have been prepared by the researcher.

SAMPLE SIZE

A list of the wild life sanctuaries in Tamil Nadu was obtained from the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation. It was ascertained that in total 13 sanctuaries are functioning well in the Tamil Nadu state. Precisely these units constituted the population from which the sample for this study has been taken.

SAMPLE UNITS

In the selection of sample units, due to lack of time, money and for the sake of convenience and simplicity I have adopted convenient sampling. According to this technique 5 wildlife sanctuaries were taken as sample.

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

Tamil Nadu has been divided into several districts. For the sake of convenience the present study covers the wildlife sanctuaries in the western and southern districts of Tamil Nadu. Those are,

- Anamalai (Indira Gandhi) wildlife sanctuary, Coimbatore District
- Kalakadu wildlife sanctuary, Tirunelveli District
- Mudumalai Wildlife sanctuary, Udhagamandalam
- Mundanthurai Tiger sanctuary, Tirunelveli District
- Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The present study attempts to analyze the role of wildlife sanctuaries in Tamil Nadu and it is found that studies on wildlife sanctuaries and eco tourists are only very few and more over no comprehensive study has been under taken from the tourism point of view. Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) has given more details about wildlife tourism in Tamil Nadu. It points out the wildlife sanctuaries and their impact on Tourism development in Tamil Nadu. It also provides information about the location, wildlife population, accessibility and the best time to visit these places. The book 'Tourism Development and Practices' written by A.K. Bhatia reveals the latest development in tourism in India and the emerging trends in Tamil Nadu tourism.

WILDLIFE IN TAMIL NADU

The topography of Tamil Nadu is delightfully varied and diverse. of the 1, 30,058 Sq. kms land area, 17.6 % is covered with forest area. Those spread over the plains and on mountains slopes. Dry lands are bestowed with dry deciduous forests, thorn forests, scrubs and mangroves. The Western Ghats and a few cooler regions are endowed with moist deciduous, wet ever green forests and grass lands. There are five national parks and 15 wildlife sanctuaries in Tamil Nadu. The famous wildlife sanctuaries are the Anamalai (Indira Gandhi) wildlife sanctuary, Calimere wildlife sanctuary, Kalakadu wildlife sanctuary, Mundanthurai tiger sanctuary, Kunthakulam bird's sanctuary, Mudumalai wildlife sanctuary and National park, Vedanthangal bird's sanctuary and viralimalai sanctuary. The gulf of Mannar marine National park and the Guindy National Park are the most

Visited National parks in the state. Anna zoological park in Chennai is one of the latest and modern

Zoos of India. The snake park and the crocodile bank also located in Chennai are known for their collection of reptiles.

IMPORTANT WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES IN TAMIL NADU

- Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park
- Kalakadu Wildlife sanctuary
- Mudumalai Wildlife sanctuary and National Park
- Mundanthurai Wildlife sanctuary
- Guindy National Park
- Point Calimere wildlife and Birds sanctuary
- Vedanthangal Birds sanctuary
- Kunthakulam Birds sanctuary
- Viralimalai sanctuary
- Anamalai (Indira Gandhi) wildlife sanctuary
- Crocodile Bank, Chennai
- Snakes Park, Chennai
- Anna Zoological Park

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WILDLIFE TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT

All human activities will inevitably lead to some changes in the environment. Tourism is no exception. Man's pursuit of leisure time activity has been much aligned as a destroyer of environment more than any other human activity. Tourism has been accused of destroying the forests, destabilizing the mountain ecology and disrupting wildlife. Tourism does make changes in the environment. But it is possible for tourism and environment to have a harmonious relationship. The history of tourism clearly indicates that the environment of places has contributed to the birth and progress of tourism. Scenic sites, amenable climates and unique landscape features have had an important influence upon the patronage of specific localities, regions or countries. The environment of the host region exerts an attraction so that the tourists visit the place.

Tourism and conservation of environment may enjoy a mutually supportive or symbiotic relationship where they are organized in such a way that each benefits from the other. From the perspective of the conservationist, environmental features and conditions are left as close as possible to their original state but, at the same time they provide benefit to the tourists who view and experience them. Tourism and conservation can be in conflict, particularly when tourism induces detrimental effects to the environment. Most documented relationships between tourism and environment fall into this category. On certain occasion, effects of tourism have stimulated conservatory measures in order to protect fragile eco systems. More commonly, the damage has already reached irreparable proportions.

ECOTOURISM

It is a purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing economic opportunities that make conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people. With in international tourism, it is a fast growing segment. Eco-tourism is also defined as a nature based

tourism that involves education and interpretation of natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable. The state of Tamil Nadu is a land of sun and warmth, of temples and legends and of silver lined beaches. These natural geographic advantages give ample scope for development of eco-tourism in Tamil Nadu. Eco tourism contributes to the conservation of natural areas of providing economic incentives and revenue for the Government to preserve and manage natural areas. It utilizes natural resources without harvesting them and provides employment for the local people. It also provides for environmental education opportunities to raise awareness and supports conservation efforts, especially at local level. Compared to conventional tourism, eco tourism requires less tourism infrastructure facilities and services as eco tourists demand less accommodation and material comforts. Thus eco tourism would entail reduced impact on environment. Eco tourism should be truly a form of environmentally conscious tourism and not just a pursuit of remote pristine locations. It has to be sustainable with the continuous capacity to safeguard natural environment, the very basis of tourist attraction. It must provide and maintain the quality of tourist experience and satisfaction. Eco tourism should benefit the local people in the area. For eco tourism to be sustainable, it has to be small scale in terms of tourist numbers, physical infrastructure and facilities. It is not a product for mass market as it appeals to a narrowly defined market to specialized nature interest groups. The search for balance between visitor enjoyment and conservation needs, characterizes the whole concept and philosophy of ecotourism.

ECOTOURISM IN THE WILDLIFE RESERVES OF TAMIL NADU

Modern wildlife conservation practices recognize the far reaching effects of eco-tourism and education in achieving the desired goals of positive attitudinal changes among the public. Tamil Nadu, a land of vivid, vibrant colours and fascinating wildlife, is a paradise for wildlife enthusiasts and lovers of wilderness and it attracts a lot of international, national and regional visitors to its wildlife protected areas.

Conservation, tourism and recreation are the three arms of the triangle of wildlife management practices. Conservation ideology fosters tourism which in turn, to a greater extent complements conservation and recreation. Tourism in wildlife areas attains the level of a social value, Where in a strong appeal is made for positive attitudinal changes among public, towards the cause the conservation. As the wilderness is essentially meant for the conservation and management of the endemic, endangered or the rare species the concept of an active recreation in protected area is now subjugated to one of control there by ensuring the very minimum disturbances to the wild species and ecosystem. Here the mirth of tourism in wilderness transforms to one of controls and is now known as eco-tourism or regulated tourism.

Eco tourism or controlled wildlife tourism has a very intricate relationship with wildlife areas the world over, and our country is no exception. In the present day socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental conditions, eco tourism is an essential instrument for creating conservation awareness among the target groups and hence a desirable and legitimate activity in the wildlife preserves. Any programme of conservation of the wildlife heritage can be successful in the long run of the people in general are persuaded to appreciate, understand and respond positively to the conservation endeavor.

Uncontrolled and excessive tourist activities constitute a major stress for the eco-system and serious disturbance to the wild animals. The adverse impact of wildlife tourism is broadly due to the crowing of visitors at a given point of time and in their appropriate and unregulated activities in

the protected area. In order to win over the unpleasant situation, care is taken to predetermine the visitor carrying capacity. There are certain dos and don'ts for the visitors in the sanctuaries, so as to preserve the wildlife sanctity. Alternate satellite tourism areas are also identified to manage the crowd during peak days. The visitor activities has to be closely monitored in the area set aside as the tourist –zone in the sanctuary and attempts of vandalism is avoided.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Primary data and secondary data were processed manually. The first step in processing of data is editing. After getting edited, the data are classified and coded.

Then a 'Master table' was prepared for the whole data. For further processing, data has been transcribed on the transcription cards. Then tables were prepared for statistical analysis of the data. Then data collected were analyzed with the help of statistical tools like average, percentage, etc.

PROFILE OF THE CLIENTELE

S.No.	Profession	Percentage
1.	Students	58 %
2.	Others	42 %

TABLE NO 1

58 % of the client table students and 42 % others were the majority of the visitors who were attracted to the wildlife centre. 73 % of the clientele was of the age below 30, 19 % of them were between the range of 30 and 50, only 8 % of them were above 50.

POPULARITY AND VISITING WILDLIFE RESERVES

No.	Name of the Sanctuaries	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Anamalai	76.33%	23.67%
2	Kalakadu	67.25%	32.75%
3	Mudumalai	82.35 %	17.65%
4	Mundanthurai	64.25 %	35.75%
5	Gulf of Mannar	36.67 %	63.33%

TABLE NO 2

Madumalai wildlife sanctuary has a good popularity but only 82.35% of the people have visited Mudumalai sanctuary and 17.65 % of the people have never visited even though they are well aware about the place. 76.33 % of people have visited Anamalai wildlife reserve and 23.67 % of people have never visited. This shows a lack of interest about visiting the place. Kalakadu has a popularity of 67.25% that visited the place. 64.25% of people have visited Mundanthurai. Gulf of Mannar is having the lowest popularity among these sanctuaries; almost 63.33% people never visited the place.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION REGARDING WILDLIFE RESERVES

For the visitors the major source of information about the wildlife reserves was through friends and relatives that constitute 46.16% 21% of them got information through guidebooks. 18.8% of the visitors through news papers/magazines. Only 12.24% got information through travel agents. Only 1.8 % of them got through other sources.

S. No.	Source	%
1.	Newspaper Magazines	18.8%
2.	Guide books	21 %
3.	Travel agents	12.2 %
4.	Friends relatives	46.2%
5.	Others	1.8 %

Sources of information regarding wildlife reserves

TABLE NO 3

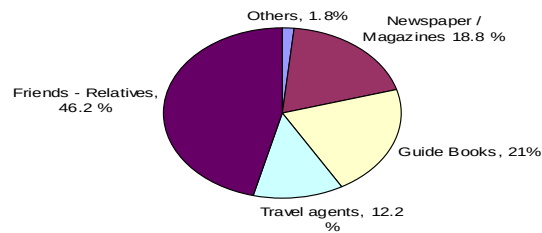


FIG NO 1

PURPOSE OF VISIT

S. No.	Purpose of visit	%
1.	Study	14 %
2.	Leisure	24 %
3.	Nature watch	36 %
4.	Adventure tour	26 %

TABLE NO 4

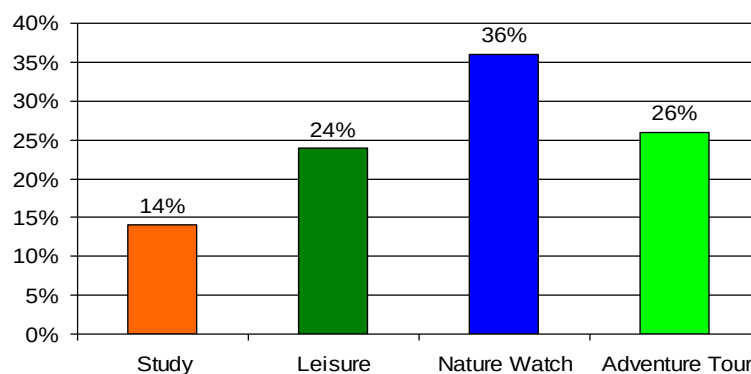


FIG NO 2

The study about the purpose of visit shows 36 % of the visitors visit for leisure 26% of them are interested in nature watch. 24 % of them are interested in adventure tour. 14 % are interested in studying about the wildlife reserves.

EXPECTATION FROM WILDLIFE RESERVE

S. No.	Expectation	%
1	Scenic beauty	41.36 %
2	Originality of nature	32.23 %
3	Peace of mind	26.41 %

TABLE NO 5

It shows that 41.36 % of the visitors expect scenic beauty from the wildlife reserves 32.23 % of the visitors expect the originality of nature and 26.41% seek peace of mind.

TYPE OF ENTERTAINMENT

S. No.	Entertainment	%
1	Trekking	37 %
2	Elephant riding	30 %
3	Roaming by walk	22 %
4	Boating	11 %

TABLE NO 6

It shows that 37 % of the visitors are interested in trekking in the reserves 30 % of them are interested to visit the sanctuaries by elephant riding 22 % of them are interested in roaming by walk and only 11 % are interested in boating (available only in Gulf of Mannar).

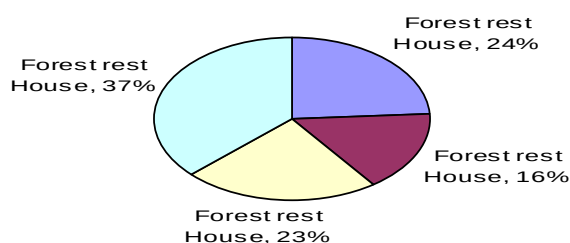
PREFERENCE OF STAYING

S. No.	Accommodation	Percentage
1	Forest rest houses	24 %
2	Guest house	16 %
3	Cottages	23 %
4	Local Accommodation	37 %

TABLE NO 7

It shows that 37 % of them prefer local accommodation, 24 % prefer forest rest houses. 23% of people prefer to stay in cottages and only 16 % of them in guest houses.

Preference of Staying

**FIG NO 3**

From the study it has been found that the accommodation facilities were good for 24.67 % of the visitors, 44.33 % feel satisfactory and 31% of them felt poor. The transport facilities to these places were good for 31% and satisfactory for 33%

3. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

From the discussion, it is very clear that the development of wildlife tourism in Tamil Nadu could be achieved provided the existing problems are solved. The better remedies would be, Abolish the surcharge on aviation turbine fuel to make domestic flights cheaper. Lift the freeze on leave-travel allowances for Government servants. Slash the expenditure tax in hotels to make Tamil Nadu a competitive and cheaper destination for tourists. Appointing guides who

are trained to communicate in major foreign languages to the tourists explaining about the wildlife centers. Promoting eco-friendly wildlife tourism, which could contribute promotion in harmony with the measures for pattern of eco system.

- Close co-operation between officials in various departments especially the forest and tourism department in order to develop wildlife tourism in the state.
- Development of the wildlife reserves into tourist destinations.
- More accommodations facilities in the wildlife tourist centers.
- Implementing an efficient marketing strategy which also involves hotels and other private firms in the state.
- Sign boards showing way and other information should be kept on appropriate languages.
- Necessary action should be taken to avoid scribbling on the walls of monuments and other places.
- Public should be educated more about the positive impacts of tourism.

4. CONCLUSION

From the study it has been found that the general problems of wildlife tourist destinations in Tamil Nadu are,

- Due to the latest of the central government regarding privatizations of ITDC, Staff is forced to take voluntary retirement scheme (VRS). Because of the lack of job security the staff of ITDC is not concentrating on promoting tourism in their respective areas.
- Lack of connecting flights to that nearby airports. There is a lack of air transportation capacity. Almost 95 % of international tourists travel by air, therefore expansion of air transportation is required.
- The foremost problem is that enough investment funds are not available for providing strong infrastructure facilities. Lack of adequate infrastructure in majority of the tourist spots that is facilities such as accommodation in tents, tree top houses, etc in interior forests are not available.
- Inadequate safety and security measures.
- Lack of good communication and food facilities.
- Lack of involvement from hotels and private firms in promoting wildlife tourism. The Government monopoly is there and it leads to the no-competition.
- Lack of guides who are trained to communicate in explaining about the wildlife reserves in Tamil Nadu.
- Lack of co-operation between forest officials and Tourism department.
- Budget class accommodation will prove to be boon to domestic tourist.

Wildlife information centre should cater to the multifarious needs of the wildlife enthusiasts. Interpretation programmes has to be well designed to educate the visitors on the biological heritage and the need for its conservation. Nature education camps for various target groups, handled by professionals has to be arranged in the wilderness free of cost on advance booking so as to enlist the goodwill support and participations of the public in biological conservation. Conservation also refers to the wise and sustained utilization of the resource for the increased regional and national welfare. Eco-tourism therefore in the wildlife protected area, is a

permitted form of land use. Tamil Nadu, with the most spectacular wildlife and its natural habitat, has the best potential for a meaningful holidaying in the wilderness. The wildlife protected areas in Tamil Nadu encompassing a particular area is attracting the visitors from far and near.

5. REFERENCE

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