

Tourists Attitude Towards Eco Tourism Promotion in Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world. Due to industrial revolution greater disposable income and addition to the mode and purpose of travel, tourism has grown to be a major dynamic component of the world economy and one of the highly developed and dynamic industries with a major contribution to income and employment. While countries are benefited due to this growth of tourism industry, on the other side, it destroys the beautiful nature and the environment which are considered as important attractions for the tourists. Ecotourism has emerged as an alternative form of sustainable tourism. Tamil Nadu is one of highly potential state for promoting Ecotourism, but Ecotourism in the state is in its infant stage.

Keywords: Ecosystem, Tourists, Attitude.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world. Due to industrial revolution, greater disposable income and addition to the mode and purpose of travel, tourism has grown to be a major dynamic component of the world economy and one of the highly developed and dynamic industries with a major contribution to income and employment. While countries are benefited due to this growth of tourism industry, On the other side, it destroys the beautiful nature and the environment degradation, a responsible form of tourism promotion which ensure sustainable use of natural attractions and conservation of these valuable assets to the next generations is needed. Eco tourism has emerged as the fastest growing segment of international tourism. Tamil Nadu is one of the highly potential state for promoting Ecotourism but Ecotourism in the state is in its infant stage. This paper aims to highlight on the eco tourism potential of the state of Tamil Nadu. The attitude of tourists visiting Tamil Nadu towards Ecotourism and influence of selected demographic variables on attitude of tourists towards Eco Tourism. The findings of the study will be useful to the Ecotourism planners and other agencies involved in Eco Tourism promotion. Ecotourism appeals to a good variety of travelers, of all ages and interests. Travelers World Health Organization select tourism area unit accountable customers curious about social, economic and environmental property. Eco Tourists seeking local experiences and opportunities to give back to the communities they visit. Increasingly, eco tourists are also seeking to minimize the carbon footprint of their travel, travelling with climate in mind by planning wisely and choosing consciously. Due to emerging evidence in recent years of global warming, Ozone –layer depletion, extensive pollution, loss of biodiversity and related issues, efforts have been taken at international level to make all the industries eco-friendly. In this context, Ecotourism appeared to be a new buzz –word and accepted by many countries. ‘tourism’ primarily means that promoting the serene natural habitats as commercial enterprise product with associated degree inherent component of nature education, it's aimed toward creating the guests conscious of the protective, productive and regulatory function of the environmentally sensitive areas.

ECOTOURISM POTENTIAL OF TAMILNADU

Ecotourism in Tamilnadu is yet to be unleashed to its full potential. The sheer diversity of landscape and abundant natural wealth found in Tamilnadu, its range of animal and plant life, hill stations, waterfalls, forest, bird sanctuaries etc. makes it a favourable destination for tourists having keen interest in nature. Ideal for Eco-Tourism, over 18 percent of the land is covered by forest and blessed with beaches and hill stations. The Cauvery river is another natural gift that sustains the land, Vaigai and Thamiraparani being the other rivers that traverse the state. The western Ghats and a few cooler regions are endowed with moist, delicious, wet evergreen forest and grass lands. Although TamilNadu is most often noted for its splendid architectural heritage, its rich flora and fauna also play a role in capturing visitors due to its rich diversity. The forest is home to nineteen species of trees, many of which have medicinal properties. As sunlight filters through the branches that form a canopy over the waterways, tourists come face with a raw, uninhibited beauty of the outdoors. The fauna includes flamingo, spot-killed sandpiper, Asian ditcher, white-bellied sea Eagle, species and the singularly barbed flower, the koradji, which blooms once in twelve years,

grows in the hill station of kodaikanal cinchona, from which the anti-malarial drug quinine is extracted, grows abundantly in the Nilgiri hills. Forests of other medicinal herbs are found in Palani hills and Courtallam. Palmyra trees grow profusely in Triunelveli and its products are used as raw materials for several cottage industries. Rubber is the main plantation crop in Kanyakumari and the endangered sandalwood grows in the Javadhu hills of Vellore district. Elephants, Tiger, Bison, Monkeys and Deer are just some of the animals that wander the forest. The state is intent on preserving its natural resources with five national parks and nineteen wildlife sanctuaries and reserves. The Elephant camp at Teppakadu is popular with visitors who like interacting with the elephants particularly at feeding time at dusk.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Flora and Fauna. Tamil Nadu is rich in flora and fauna and some of its major wildlife sanctuaries like Mudumalai and Annamalai (or Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary), are situated in the Western Ghats. These hills are ideal havens for elephants, tigers, bison, monkeys and deer. Forests of other medicinal herbs are found in Palani hills and Courtallam. Tamil Nadu is rich in flora and fauna and some of its major wildlife sanctuaries like Mudumalai and Annamalai (or Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary), are situated in the Western Ghats. The state is home to more than 3000 plants.

Table-1: List of National Parks in Tamilnadu. Name of National Parks, Year of Notification and Total Area is as follows...

S NO	NAME OF NATIONAL PARK	Year of Notification	Total Area km
1	Guindy National Park	1976	2.82
2	Gulf of Mannar Marine national Park	1980	6.23
3	Indira Gandhi Annamalai National Park	1989	117.1
4	Mudumalai national Park	1990	103.23
5	Mukurthi National park	1990	117.1

HILL STATION OF TAMIL NADU

The beautiful state of Madras is widespread for its vibrant culture, exotic arts and sporadic culinary art. It represents an excellent travel destination with several places to suit all kinds of travel demand. Tamil Nadu has scenic beaches, charming hill stations, agricultural fields and temple cities. Here is a look at some of the popular hill stations in Tamil Nadu. The state has many famous travel destinations, where people can head to for a cool and relaxing holiday. The pleasant weather is that the main crowd-puller along with the bounty of natural beauty and life. While a number of these hill stations seem in most travel guides, a couple of others are a little lesser proverbial destinations which will give a singular expertise cut-away from the crowds.

Attitude towards ecotourism The term 'attitude' means 'the way of thinking or behaving towards somebody or something'. It may vary from person to person. A favourable attitude is very much required for the promotion of ecotourism product also. For measuring the attitude of tourists towards ecotourism ten statements supporting ecotourism promotion in the state were given in the questionnaire and the respondents were asked to select any one of the five options given, for each question. The statements and scores allotted for every choice are shown in table-2.

Table-2: Statements and scores on the choice to measure the attitude level of respondents

S.no	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Ecotourism is the most suitable form of tourism in Tamilnadu					
2	Ecotourism helps to preserve the natural habitats of Tamilnadu					
3	Tamilnadu has enough potential for ecotourism development					
4	Tourists should be prevented from littering and bringing disposable plastic items etc. into the ecotourism destinations.					
5	More publicity is needed for promoting ecotourism in Tamilnadu.					
6	Tourists visiting ecotourism destinations should use the vehicles operated by the tourism or forest departments only					
7	Only local people should be allowed as tourist guides in ecotourism destination					

8	Tourists should be fined heavily for violating environmental rules.					
9	You are willing to pay high fees for contributing the conservational efforts of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries					
10	You welcome and exclusive ecotourism package covering entire Tamilnadu.					

SA- Strongly Agree; A-Agree; N-Neither Agree nor Disagree; D-Disagree; SD- Strongly Disagree

For every statement, five choices, namely, strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree were given to the respondents for measuring their responses. If a respondent has given his opinion as 'strongly agree' for all the ten statements in each case, the respondent's total score will be 50 (10*5), in each case. If the respondent 'disagrees' with all the statements the total score of that respondent will be 10 (10*1) in each case. Hence, the total score of a respondent varies from 10 to 50 for each case. Table-3 classifies the respondent's attitude into high, medium and low level towards ecotourism.

Table-3: Attitude scores of the respondent

Particulars	Attitude
Sum of score	5838
Number of respondents	200
Mean	29.19
Standard deviation	7.72
Mean + standard deviation	36.91
Mean – standard deviation	21.47
Low level	<21
Medium level	22-37
High level	>37

INDEX FOR MEASURING THE LEVEL

The term attitude means the way of thinking or behaving towards somebody or something. A favourable attitude is very much required for the promotion of ecotourism product also. So the research in order to measure the level of attitude of tourists towards ecotourism ten statements supporting ecotourism promotion in the state were given in the questionnaires and the respondents were asked to select any one of the five options given for each question. Scoring scheme is presented in appendix. Taking into consideration the ten factors, the researcher has assigned scores to each factor. In the present study, the total scores achieved by the 200 sample respondents is 5838. The mean scores therefore earned by the sample respondent is worked out to 29.19. The computed value of standard deviation score is 7.72.

LOW ATTITUDE LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS

Any respondent who has got a score less than the value of the difference of mean score and standard deviation score as a low level attitude respondent.

Low level utilization = Mean score – standard deviation score.

$$= 29.19 - 7.72$$

$$= < 21.47$$

MEDIUM ATTITUDE LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS

Any respondent who has got a score in between low and high level attitude is classified as medium level attitude.

Medium level utilization = Between [Mean score – standard deviation score and mean + standard deviation score]

$$= 29.19 - 7.72 \text{ and } 29.19 + 7.72$$

$$\text{Medium level} = 22-37$$

HIGH ATTITUDE LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS

Any respondent who has got a score greater than the value of >37 score is classified as high attitude level of respondents

High level = >mean score + standard deviation score

=29.19 + 7.72

=>37

The above table shows that the attitude score of respondents above Mean + standard deviation ie, greater than 37 is considered as respondents with high level of attitude , below Mean- standard deviation ie, <21 are considered as respondents with low level of attitude and the attitude score of respondents lying between 22 to 37 is considered as medium level of attitude towards ecotourism. Table -4 shows the classification of respondents on the basis of their level of attitude.

Table-4 Classification of the respondents based on attitude level

S.no	Level	Attitude	
		Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Low	57	28.5
2	Medium	82	41.0
3	High	61	30.5
	Total	200	100

Source: Survey data

It could be assessed from table – 4 that 57(28.5 percent) respondents are having low level of attitude, 82(41 percent) respondents are in the medium level and 61(30.5 percent) respondents are having high level attitude towards ecotourism. For knowing the relation of other selected demographic variables like gender, nationality, age, education background, occupation, income level, tourist type and tour expenditure with attitude level, these factors are cross tabulated with attitude level separately.

Table-5: Relation between selected demographic variable and level of attitude :-

S.no	Variables		Level of Attitude			
			Low	Medium	High	Total
1.	Gender	Male	35(27.6)	39(30.7)	53(41.7)	127(100)
		Female	22(30.1)	43(58.9)	8(11.0)	73(100)
2.	Nationality	Domestic(Indian)	44(35.2)	57(45.6)	24(19.2)	125(100)
		Foreign	13(17.3)	25(33.3)	37(49.3)	75(100)
3.	Age	15-30	6(26.1)	9(39.1)	8(34.8)	23(100)
		31-45	23(23.5)	41(41.8)	34(34.7)	98(100)
		46-60	12(33.3)	14(38.9)	10(27.8)	36(100)
		Above 60	16(37.2)	18(47.9)	9(20.9)	43(100)
4.	Education	School	9(25.0)	15(41.7)	12(33.3)	36(100)
		Under Graduation	18(38.3)	16(34.0)	13(27.7)	47(100)
		Post Graduation	10(25.6)	17(43.6)	12(30.8)	39(100)
		Professional Degree	12(23.5)	22(43.2)	17(33.3)	51(100)
		Diploma	8(29.6)	12(44.4)	7(26.0)	27(100)

5.	Occupation	Government Jobs	10(29.4)	17(50.0)	7(20.6)	34(100)
		Private Employees	18(23.7)	23(30.3)	35(46.0)	76(100)
		Businessmen	13(48.1)	9(33.3)	5(18.6)	27(100)
		Professionals	8(20.5)	24(61.5)	7(18.0)	39(100)
		Unemployed	8(33.3)	9(37.5)	7(29.2)	24(100)
6.	Monthly Income	Up to 10000	6(33.3)	5(27.8)	7(38.9)	18(100)
		10000-25000	10(27.0)	9(24.3)	18(48.7)	37(100)
		25000-50000	22(35.5)	24(38.7)	16(25.8)	62(100)
		50000-100000	11(21.6)	28(54.9)	12(23.5)	51(100)

		Above 100000	8(25.0)	16(50.0)	8(25.0)	32(100)
7.	Tourists Type	Ecotourists	---	9(39.1)	14(60.9)	23(100)
		Probable Ecotourists	6(17.1)	11(31.4)	18(51.5)	35(100)
		Adventure Tourists	5(27.8)	5(27.8)	8(44.4)	18(100)
		General Tourists	46(37.1)	57(46.0)	21(16.9)	124(100)
8.	Expenditure Per Trip	Up to 5000	8(27.6)	15(51.7)	6(20.7)	29(100)
		5000-10000	19(55.9)	11(32.3)	4(11.8)	34(100)
		10000to15000	15(22.1)	36(52.9)	17(25.0)	68(100)
		Above 15000	15(21.7)	20(29.0)	34(49.3)	69(100)

Souces: Survey data

It is assessed from table-5 that male respondents have higher level of attitude towards ecotourism than female respondents. Foreign tourists have a favourable attitude towards ecotourism. Respondents from the age group of 31 to 45 years show a higher level of attitude. Respondents obtained professional degree are comparatively having a higher level attitude. The relationship between occupation and attitude level of respondents towards ecotourism reveals that professionals are having a favourable attitude towards ecotourism promotion.

Income plays an important role while selecting tourist destinations to visit. When the income is fixed and limited , they expenditure of tourists also will be less in tours and entertainment activities. Since the ecotourism activities generally demand high fees towards contribution to conservation , only high income group will prefer these activities. The relationship between the monthly income and attitude level shows that the respondents whose monthly income is Rs.50001 to 100000 have a favourable attitude toward ecotourism. It is seen from the table -5 that ecotourists show a higher level of attitude towards ecotourism than the other tourists. The table also discloses that the respondents spending more than Rs.15000 have a higher level of attitude towards ecotourism.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ATTITUDE AND SELECTED VARIABLES

To determine whether there is any significant association between the selected demographic variables and the attitude of the respondents towards ecotourism, Chi – square test is applied. The results are shown in table-6.

Table-6: Chi- square test results for association between attitude and selected variables

S.no	Variable	df	Chi-square value	Significance level	Table value	Remarks
1	Gender	2	23.489	1%	9.210	Significant
2	Nationality	2	20.926	1%	9.210	Significant
3	Age	6	4.522	1%	16.812	Not Significant
4	Educational Qualification	8	3.601	1%	20.090	Not Significant
5	Nature of occupation	8	23.057	1%	20.090	Significant
6	Monthly Income	8	14.615	1%	20.090	Not Significant
7	Type of tourist	6	34.283	1%	13.277	Significant
8	Tour Expenditure	6	30.755	1%	13.277	Significant

It is evident form table 5 that there is significant association between the variables gender, nationality, nature of occupation, types of tourists, tour expenditure and the attitude level of the respondents towards ecotourism. But there is no significant association between the variables age, educational qualification, monthly income, and the attitude level of the respondents towards ecotourism.

FINDING OF THE STUDY

1. The study reveals that the state of Tamilnadu has more natural attractions and potential resources to promote ecotourism as a sustainable form of tourism to contribute to the cost of environmental protection.
2. Foreign tourists, middle age tourists, highly educated tourists, professionals, high income group, ecotourism and tourists spend more on tour may be set as the target group for ecotourism than their counterparts.

3. There is significant association between the variable gender, nationality, nature of occupation, type of tourists, tour expenditure and the attitude level of the respondents towards ecotourism.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Ecotourism is in its infant stage in Tamilnadu. But the study reveals that the state has sufficient potential resources to develop and promote ecotourism as a sustainable form of tourism. The tourism and forest departments of Tamilnadu may conduct campaigns to create awareness about ecotourism product of Tamilnadu and create the favourable attitude towards ecotourism among the tourists. Advertisement highlighting the ecotourism product of Tamilnadu should be widely given in internal and international TV channels to give publicity. This will help to attract international tourists towards Tamilnadu. One of the secret of the success of Kerala ecotourism is its worldwide advertisements. Moreover, ecotourism product may be developed by keeping the target groups in mind. If the targeted groups are satisfied that will definitely create more publicity through word of mouth. The authorities should be more conscious while developing ecotourism destination as the areas are environmentally sensitive. Otherwise it will be difficult to attain the objectives of ecotourism.

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