

A STUDY ON HILL TOURISM – WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PONMUDI HILL STATION

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Abstract: Kerala brings to you a magical tryst with nature through its various hills and hill stations. A majority of these places in Kerala are situated on the windward side of the majestic Western Ghats. Enjoy the long chain of lush mist-clad hill stations of Kerala and explore the various plantations, wildlife, flora and fauna that comprise an integral part of this experience. Hill stations have ecological, recreational, and scientific values which need to be utilized in a sustainable way. Various tourist activities and facilities need to be diversified in order to achieve multiple benefits including scientific field excursion, recreation in natural and cultural areas, community festivals and soft adventure tourisms. The present study titled “A STUDY ON HILL TOURISM – WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PONMUDI HILL STATION” has been undertaken to assess the opinion of tourists and host community on the facilities provided in the hill destinations and assess the perception of host community on the impact of tourism in the hills of Kerala.

Key Words: Green tourism, hill station, sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Hill stations in Kerala are a traveler’s paradise and are gifted with cooler and comfortable climate, verdant mountains, green valleys, dense and misty woods, frothing rivers, waterfalls, azure lakes and flower-filled meadows and are a part of Western Ghats. Misty, Mystical and serene hill stations of Kerala are a perfect holiday option for any traveler. Although many of us have been "tourists" at some point in our lives, defining what tourism actually is can be difficult. Tourism is the activities of people traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business or other purposes for not more than one consecutive year. Tourism is a dynamic and competitive industry that requires the ability to adapt constantly to customers' changing needs and desires, as the customer’s satisfaction, safety and enjoyment are particularly the focus of tourism businesses.

Locals in the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram will declare that a weekend drive to Ponmudi is among the best ways to spend time in the city. Families and friends alike are known to go on long drives up the winding paths for a view they insist rivals any other in the State. The slopes shrouded in mist fill one with a feeling of wonder and amazement. A large amount of rare flora and fauna can be seen here including mountain flowers, wild orchids and exotic butterflies. The temperature is equable throughout the year and the three hour drive from the city is justified once the valley comes into view. One can always stopover at the breath-taking Kallar River on the way, which flows parallel to the road in the opposite direction, with the picturesque Meenmutty Waterfalls only a little distance ahead. A large number of cottages and resorts have come up in the area. Trekking and camping options are also available for those interested in exploring this natural wonder on foot. The tree house view tower is another great place to visit. Ponmudi is indeed a rising hotbed of tourist activity. A hill so close to the city, yet nestled so near the protective arms of the sea.

2. OBJECTIVES:

- To find out the potential benefits and costs of green tourism
- To reduce the biophysical and human vulnerability in hills
- To understand the problems and their solutions in the hill tourism.

3. METHODOLOGY:

The present study is empirical in nature based on both primary research methods such as field study and interview with local people and secondary data. This study is to understand the green tourism concepts which are necessary to promote tourism in hill stations.

4. GREEN TOURISM:

Green tourism is a term that can be applied to any form of tourism that relates to the natural environment and cultural heritage of an area or that undertakes good environmental management (or green) practice. There are three

methods included by which a tourism practice would have to demonstrate practices for preventing or minimizing impacts to the environment if it were to be considered a green operations as follows:

- The wise use of resources such as raw materials, water and energy.
- The prevention of pollution (air, land, and water).
- The protection and where possible the enhancement of biodiversity.

5. PRINCIPLES OF GREEN TOURISM:

- It should be initiated with the help of broad based community inputs and the community should maintain control of tourism development
- It should provide quality employment to its community residents and a linkage between the local businesses and tourism should be established
- It contributes to the conservation and management of legally protected and natural areas
- Education and training programs to improve and manage heritage and natural resources should be established.
- A code of practice should be established for tourism places

Green tourism activities

- Conservation NGOs working in partnership with private tour operators are ideally placed to provide the ecotourist technical guidelines which upgrade a nature tourism operation into a green tourism operation
- Inbound tourist operators
- Local service providers

Though the estimation of the growth of green tourism is rare due to particular problems most observes that green tourism has grown faster than tourism generally during the past years. Green tourism's growths are due to

- Increasing the environmental awareness
- Increased the media support
- Above two, a desire to see natural areas before they disappear
- Increasing dissatisfaction with traditional tourism destinations and products and a desire for more educative and challenging vacations

6. BENEFITS AND COST OF GREEN TOURISM

Green tourism is growing in many parts of the world. As the number of tourists grows, so does the interest in seeing new places and seeking new experiences and some of these locations show how tourism can have negative impact. It may damage the same wildlife, natural or cultural resources that draw the tourists. It is difficult to evaluate the benefits and costs of green tourism.

BENEFITS

- Increased funding from authorities for protected areas and local communities.
- Employment opportunities for local residents by direct and indirectly.
- Most ecotourism programs include educational components about environment preservation. The tourists can help spread environmental awareness by taking the information they've learned and apply it to their daily lives.
- It provides the opportunity for not only environmentalists, but also tourists to learn more about the ecosystems, biology, and geology of a specific location. Knowing the components of an ecosystem can lead to a better understanding of how to conserve different species and natural formations.
- It also promotes and preserves traditional practices. Locally grown food and crafted goods creates a direct economic and cultural connection between the tourist and citizen.
- In a global economy where many businesses exploit natural resources for personal gain, green tourism introduces the idea of natural resource management.

COSTS

- Environmental degradation
- Economic inequality and instability
- Socio cultural changes in the tourist places
- Waste management

National measures to encourage good environmental practices in tourist destinations

- **Buy local products:-** Supporting locally-grown food reduces the need to import goods, thus creating less travel waste with boats and other modes of shipment while pouring money back into the local community.
- **Stay at green lodging services:-** Stay at hotels that implement green policies, like providing eco-friendly soap or encouraging their guests to reuse towels.
- **Reuse anything you can:-** Towels, water jugs, plastic silverware anything that can be reused should not be thrown away.
- **Reduce your carbon footprint:-** If you can book a nonstop flight, you should do it. Also consider taking public transportation over renting a car. Always try to travel on foot or with non-motorized vehicles when possible.
- **Bring eco-friendly toiletries:-** Chemicals found in common toiletry items might be hazardous to the exotic environment, depending on the country's waste and water treatment. Purchase eco-friendly shampoos, soaps, deodorants, and cosmetics to help eliminate this potential problem.
- **Recycle always:-** If there are recycle services available, make an effort to implement that into your waste reduction strategy.
- **Adhere to regulations:-** If you're on a trail that says "Do not leave marked path," stay on the trail. If a town has a no littering policy, don't litter. In other words, follow the established environmentally-conscious rules.

6. PROBLEMS:

- It leads to degradation of forests through increased traffic
- Leads to climate change
- Leads to destruction of forests
- Leads to increased pollution of air, water etc.
- Leads to scarcity of water and electricity to locals
- Leads to drainage and sanitation problems
- damage bio-diversity and quality of the landscape
- Results an increase in the cost of living
- Prevents the creation of other productive industry in the area
- Results increase in the prices of land, house and commodities necessary for daily life
- Leads to shortage of consumables
- Increases the number of crime in the area
- Commodities culture and traditional ways of life
- Results in more vandalism in the area
- Increased tourists arrivals result in friction between local residents and tourists
- Increased tourists arrivals negatively affect the community's way of life
- Results in displacement of community
- Causes change in the art, craft and festivals in the region
- Leads to demonstration effect in the life style of the region
- Community are being exploited by tourism
- Leads to drug use and alcoholism
- Leads to sex abuse and prostitution
- Spreads the intensity of disease
- Degradation of local language

7. SOLUTIONS:

- Increase the infrastructure facilities to the spot
- Increase the available local facilities
- Proper timing for maintenance on each fixed periods
- To protect the cultural values
- Priors the local products, this will encourage local producers
- If necessary Anti medicines will gives to local people
- Strict policies for various waste manages
- Creates awareness programs to local community
- To control the products which are harm to environment
- Government also takes steps to protect the tourists from crimes
- To take proper steps to rainwater harvesting

8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Raise awareness to tourists regarding positive and negative impacts.
- Development steps are taken with the support of all stake holders.
- Monitor the biodiversity impacts of tourism development.
- Encourage private parties to promote green concepts
- Develop mini projects to study about hill tourism
- Understand and clear the problems affected by tourists

9. CONCLUSION:

In this paper, green tourism it is also called ecotourism, which is a kind of tourism in which low Impact to environment but contributing or protecting to the environment and culture inherently. As we can see from the criteria for ecotourism set up by the United Nations, green tourism has a wide range of conditions and standards, but which also means there are many possibility and potential development for green tourism worldwide. Green tourism is a on the rise intended for the potential development of tourism. With the increasing number of tourists, there are lots of environmental problems. So, it is compassionately good to encourage and promote green tourism concepts. However, it has two aspects, contributing not only to the ecology but also the local economy thriving. In other words, green tourism, it helps to balance the relationship between people and environment in all sense. It focus on avoid future negative impacts on biodiversity.

On the last years major loses of virtually every kind of natural habitat have occurred and decline and extinction of species has emerged as a leading environmental problem. Biodiversity is must wanted for the continuous development of green tourism; this study indicated an apparent lack of awareness of the links, positive and negative between tourism development and biodiversity conservation. Biodiversity factors are important for local people and tourism development. In future it's important for the tourism spot to promote green tourism. Well being of local people also helps for the tourism. The emphasis is on the need to increase the benefits from tourism for host communities, while enhancing the protection of natural heritage and ecologically sensitive areas.

With the coming of green tourism principles and sustainable tourism guidelines important evolution has been made among stakeholders both in terms of strategies for tourism development and is terms of group effort to form more effective partnerships that consider environmental and human factors in designing tourism development plans and policies. Tourism continues to expand with greenness, its helps to getting more economic benefits. I hope this paper helps to understand more about green tourism and other concepts related to make sustainability.

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