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Ecotourism's Contributions to Conservation: A Case Study of Nilambur

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Abstract

Ecotourism to natural pocket areas of interest offers an eco-friendly and pleasurable voyage, taking care to conserve the local environment causing least disturbance to the well-being of the local people. Blessed with rivers like Chaliyar, Kanzhirampuzha and Karimpuzha, and its extensive forests with bamboos, teak, rosewood, mahogany, etc., Nilambur offers the best of nature and wild life for the tourist. The present study revealed that eco-tourism can significantly contribute to environmental protection, conservation and restoration of biological diversity and sustainable use of natural resources of Nilambur. The data also exposes that despite its positive outcomes, ecotourism has some negative impact also on the locales of Nilambur.

Keywords: *Ecotourism, Conservation, Local Community, Nilambur*

Introduction

Ecotourism is a type of tourism with reference to visiting flimsy, immaculate, and relatively uninterrupted natural areas, anticipated as a low-impact and often small scale alternative to standard marketable mass tourism. It means accountable voyage to natural areas, preserving the environment, and humanizing the well-being of the local people. Its purpose may be to educate the traveller, to provide funds for ecological conservation, to directly benefit the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, or to foster the respect for different cultures and for human rights.

Eco friendly tourism has its impact on the tourist region of Nilambur. Nilambur offers the best of nature and wild life for the tourist. It abounds in nature's blessings which manifests in a variety of ways in its extensive forests teeming with bamboos, teak, rosewood, Ven teak, choropid, mahogany, etc. This beautiful town on the bank of the Chaliyar River is at a distance of 70 km from Calicut (Kozhikode), 100 km from Ooty (Udhagamandalam) and 40 km from Malappuram town. Located on the eastern side of Malappuram district, Kerala, this small sleepy town has a surprise in store for its visitors.

The Conolly Plot, renowned for the oldest teak plantation in the world, is just 2 km from Nilambur town. The

place is noted for its tribal settlements, the world's first Teak Museum, vast rain forests, waterfalls and ancient residences of maharajas called as Kovilakoms famous for their beautiful frescoes and artworks in wood. It is an important halting place for tourists en route to Ooty. Presently Nilambur taluk comprises 19 villages. Situated at a distance of 18 km from Nilambur town, Nedumkayam is noted specially for its rich rain forests. The wooden rest house built here by the British offers a panoramic view of the elephants and deer grazing in the forest nearby. Adyanpara in Kurmbalangod village of Nilambur Taluk is famous for its waterfalls and the splendor of the wooded jungle surrounding it. This cascade is a spectacle of unrivalled grandeur. The wild beauty of this place is a rare treat for the eyes and minds of the travelers.

Aruvancode is a small village near Nilambur that has become famous for the presence of its potters. Today "Kumbham" is hailed as a rare instance of a traditional artisan community rehabilitating itself through the very craft they have been alienated from. Over the last few years many a product has come out of their kilns which are notable for their form as well as function. Kumbham products now find wide acceptance in households, corporate offices, hotels and resorts.

Rationale of the Study

In Nilambur, ecotourism is an immaculate and relatively uninterrupted step which enables the tourists to enjoy the beauty of Nilambur without interrupting its natural worth. Blessed with rivers like Chaliyar, Kanzhirampuzha and Karimpuzha, Nilambur is home

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to the golden teak which is unsurpassed in its beauty. This charismatic ecotourism spot in Malappuram district has two-territorial divisions viz. Nilambur division and south forest division. Nilambur is famous for the super quality teak it produces. It is our responsibility to promote tourism of Nilambur without destroying its beauty. As environmental welfare and sustainability have become more important to people over the last decade (especially so in the last couple of years), travel companies around the world are trying to cash in on people's willingness to spend abundant money in the name of environmental protection. Much of it is green washing though, or insincere and over-hyped attempts to be viewed as "green." The travel industry has not been immune to this trend and many companies now tout their environmental credentials in an effort to lure customers and create a positive image. The present study was undertaken to gather insight regarding the development of tourism in Nilambur, its impact and the aspects of effective use of ecotourism for protecting the environment.

Methodology

Primary data have been collected using the sample questionnaire of 'The Interview Schedule on Ecotourism in Nilambur', from a sample of 50 households in Nilambur. The secondary data sources include Kerala tourism statistics and other books, journals and internet sources. The data collected have been subjected to statistical study employing statistical tools like Percentage analysis, Bar diagrams etc.

Observations

The Tourism Development in Nilambur

The tourism development in Nilambur was assessed by collecting data on the yearwise visit of tourists in Nilambur during the period from 2012 to 2018, as shown in Table 1 and Fig. 1 given below.

Table 1 :Year wise Tourist Visit in Nilambur

Year-wise	Number of tourist who visited Nilambur	% of tourists in Nilambur
2012	2034	0.67
2013	2182	0.71
2014	51335	16.80
2016	74398	24.35
2017	85210	27.90
2018	90322	29.56

* Kerala Tourism Statistics

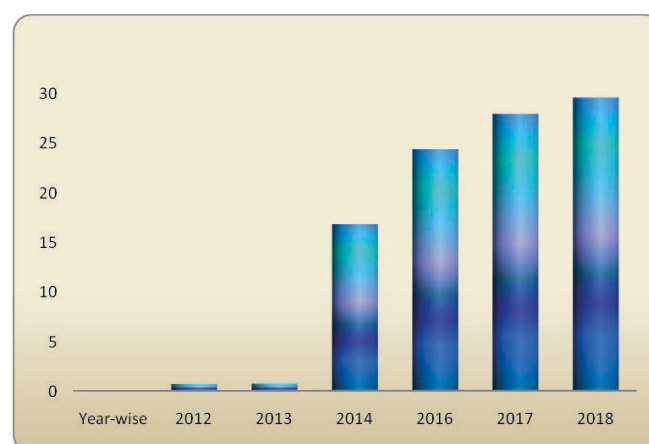
Fig. 1:Year wise Tourist Visit in Nilambur

The perusal of the data reveals that there is an increasing trend of tourist visit in Nilambur. So the government should take necessary steps to protect and promote Nilambur, "the king of teak gardens" among the tourists by promoting the concept of ecotourism.

The Impact of Tourism on Nilambur

The impact of tourism in Nilambur was assessed by collecting data pertaining to various types of possible impact areas, as shown in Table 2 given below.

Table 2 :Impact of Ecotourism in Nilambur



The data revealed that even though the concept of ecotourism has been implemented, there exists some negative impacts of tourism on Nilambur.

The Aspects of Effective Use of Ecotourism for Protecting the Environment

The study revealed that the following protective measures should be focused upon to ensure environmental protection in Nilambur, while adopting and executing developmental strategies to promote tourism.

- Policies for community-based tourism should be adopted by the public sector to promote the active participation of the local community in protecting the environment during the process of sustainable tourism development
- Creating awareness among the local communities about the importance of tourism for them in terms of increase in source of income, improved living standard and overall development of the area
- Government should take necessary policies for minimising the cost and maximising the benefit of tourism

Environmental consequences	Sl. No	Components	Yes	%	No	%
	1	Degraded water quality	42	84	8	16
	2	Degraded air quality	38	76	12	24
	3	Litter pollution	40	80	10	20
	4	Fumes from burning	48	96	2	4
Ecosystem impact	1	Entanglement of marine life	40	80	10	20
	2	Resource depletion	37	74	13	26
	3	Loss in non-tourism production capacity	34	68	16	32
	4	Increase demand on sources of resource	32	64	18	36
Human health and welfare impacts	1	Public health risk	16	32	34	68
	2	Clean-up cost	48	96	2	4
	3	Overburdening of infrastructure	47	94	3	6
	4	Lifestyle changes	38	76	12	24
	5	Dependence on import	34	68	16	32
	6	Housing shortages	30	60	20	40
	7	Disruption of traditional family values	16	32	34	68
	8	Aesthetic losses	18	36	32	64
	9	Cultural conflict	22	44	28	56

- d) Promote local arts, cultural, handicrafts etc to generate livelihood in the identified region
- e) Government should follow a comprehensive area developmental approach for ensuring all the facilities required by the tourist in the identified region
- f) Waste management is an important aspect for promoting ecotourism. The tourist spots should be 'plastic free'. Adequate waste boxes should be kept in all tourist areas to keep the surroundings clean. These wastes should be collected and disposed in a scientific manner.
- g) The central and state governments should allocate necessary funds from time to time for the purpose of improving roadways and transportation, ensuring clean and hygienic environment and provision of safe and secure conditions at tourist spots. The annual budget shall include yearwise separate budget for ecotourism development programs.

Conclusions

Ecotourism aims at the conservation of natural resources through socio-economic development of the indigenous communities. The present study reveals that eco-tourism is making positive impact on environment, and can significantly contribute to environmental

protection, conservation and restoration of biological diversity and sustainable use of natural resources of Nilambur. The data also exposes that despite its positive outcomes, ecotourism has some negative impact also on the locales of Nilambur. Ecotourism could be a contrivance for poverty alleviation, environmental conservation, local empowerment, and so on. Accountable ecotourism programs include those that reduce the unconstructive aspects of conservative tourism on the environment and enhance the cultural reliability of local people. Therefore, to evaluate environmental factors, an essential part of Ecotourism is the endorsement of recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and creation of economic opportunities for local communities. For these reasons, ecotourism often appeals to advocates of environmental and social accountability. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that ecotourism progress and protection of environment can be made possible with the careful planning and execution by the government departments, tourist officials along with the co-operation of the public. In future, ecotourism will continue to grow in several parts of the world as a profitable way of life.

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