

YERCAUD TOURISM: TOURISTS' PERSPECTIVES AND IDENTIFICATION OF ESTABLISHED AND UN-ESTABLISHED SIGHTSEEING INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

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ABSTRACT

The Indian tourism industry has made good strides over a decade and contributes significantly to the growth of the economy. Both FTA and domestic tourist numbers have grown up. Considering the scope of tourism in India and more particularly with reference to Yercaud there is a need for the Government as well as implementing agencies to improve the facilities because quite a few studies have cited lack of infrastructure as one of the hindrances for tourism growth. This calls for an analytical identification of established and un-established sightseeing infrastructural facilities in Yercaud.

KEYWORDS: *Tourism, Perception, Established and Un-established, Sightseeing, Infrastructure*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most important economic segments of the Indian economy that contributes significantly to the country's socio-economic progress. Tourism has been declared as an industry in India. Tourism is the fastest growing and largest economic sector worldwide and over the period of 2011-12, international tourist arrivals reached over 1 billion (UNWTO 2013). It has grown over three times in 14 years from 2001¹. This is because India is advantageously placed as far as tourism is concerned. The Country is endowed with attractive tourist destinations of cultural, spiritual and natural richness. Abundant forests, beautiful beaches, wildlife, and landscapes make for ecotourism; snow, river and mountain peaks make for adventure tourism while technological parks and science museums make for science tourism. Besides, India offers a good platform for spiritual tourism, heritage tourism or health tourism. This rich diverse tourist attraction offers plenty for both the domestic as well as foreign tourists in India. Moreover, this rich tourist potential is spread over most of the States in India and within India; Tamil tops the list of states that attracts foreign tourist arrivals. In Tamil Nadu, though a spiritual and cultural tourism, leisure tourism has a role to play with three tourist spots immediately coming to one's mind. They are Ooty, Kodaikanal and Yercaud. The present study attempts to evaluate the visitors' perception about Yercaud tourism and identify the established and un established sightseeing infrastructural facilities in Yercaud because the Yercaud offers good natural atmosphere and climate, provides affordability and easily commutability for domestic tourists, It does not however, attract foreign tourists.

TOURISM IN INDIA

Tourism in India has grown over the years. According to the Report on India Tourism Statistics, the number of Foreign Tourists Arrivals in India (FTAs) was 2.54 million. It has been growing consistently year on year basis and in the

year 2011, it was 6.31 million. Over the next five years, it has gone up to 8.03 million. During the year, India received about 9 million FTAs in the year 2016 according to the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)¹. Thus, the data manifests the overall tourism potential. The United States of America and the United Kingdom are the top two source nations from where the tourists arrive. These Foreign Tourists Arrivals data are provided by the Immigration Department, Government of India. In terms of foreign exchange earnings, the value of foreign exchange earnings that was USD 3198 million in the year 2001 has grown to USD 21079 million in the year 2015. It marks a growth of 6 times that is phenomenal. President, WTTC states that “India is a tremendous Travel & Tourism economy and I am pleased to see the sector GDP is growing. However, we believe that these numbers could be even higher and that the positive impact of our sector could be more wide-ranging. India has a huge potential to increase its international visitors and, in doing so, it can create more jobs and drive economic growth”³. Tourism contributes significantly to the GDP of the Indian economy and is close to 9.6% of India’s GDP. Tourism and the economy tend to be integrated because of the former’s impact on job opportunities creation, According to WTTC data, tourism supports 40.3 million jobs in the year 2016 which places India 2nd in the world in terms of total employment supported by travel and tourism⁴.

TOURISM IN TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu is a State that offers a host of multidimensional tourist attractions, the foremost among them being ancient temples, monuments, and sculptures, depicting culture and heritage. Following that, the mountains, forests, hill stations. Verdant vegetation, sandy beaches and wildlife and sanctuaries provide a huge tourist attraction by way of sightseeing, pleasure, and leisure to the tourists. The State advantageously positioned geographically by way of the coastline of over 1000 Km in the eastern site uplands and hills in the west, arid plains in central and Southern parts and a mix of hills and plains in the northern parts. India Tourism Statistics provides data on tourist arrivals that portrays the promotion of tourism in Tamil Nadu.

The year 2001 records Foreign Tourists Arrivals of 7.73 million and that number has increased to 35.62 million in the year 2015. In terms of rate, it is close to 5 times. Thus, Tamil Nadu is the first among top 10 states in terms of tourism⁵. As regards domestic tourist arrivals, the growth is significant. In the abstract numbers, it has grown from 23.81 million in the year 2001 to 333.45 million in the year 2015; Rate of growth is close to 15 times. As far as Yercaud is concerned, the Foreign Tourists Arrivals in the year 2014 was a meagre 0.20 million while domestic visitors were 9.31 million. This accounts for close 4 times growth⁶.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is clearly the wisdom of the earlier experts which can be considered as a source of contribution to the present study. A basis that, the authors have reviewed a few literature. Beckons (2006) states that infrastructure can adversely impact the growth and development of the tourism industry and he particularly pointed out that, “India’s ability to develop as a tourist hotspot faces threat from wide range of geopolitical, security and infrastructural problems and risk of communal violence. The greatest disincentive for visitors to India is the lack of tourism infrastructure, insufficient airline capacity, old airports, inadequate hotels, poor roads, overstretched railway system, bureaucratic visa process”⁷. According to Management of Industry, Kerala (1990), the absence of strategic management made the growth of tourism in Kerala slow. Lack of systematic planning and its implementation, lack of coordination in a related department engaged in the promotion of tourism, the absence of basic facilities such as good roads, transportation, communication, hygiene,

public toilets, the adequate number of information centres contribute to the negative growth of tourism⁸. Morrison (2002) describes that lack of uniform standards of houseboats and small operator resource constraints may result in sub-standard eco-products⁹. Dimblebey (2005) states a travel writer from Holland “there is no country in the world where you can experience this amazing diversity of food and culture and festivals and the people. It is the natural warmth and immense hospitality of the Indian people that makes all the difference”¹⁰. According to Verma, (2004) the author highlighted the challenges and opportunities of promoting tourism in India and said that the time had come to promote leisure tourism in addition to cultural tourism. For long we have sold Taj Mahal, Red Fort and Jama Masjid, the Burning Ghats of Varanasi, our temples, history, culture and classical dances¹¹. Deivamani et al (2003)²⁰ in his study focuses on the growth of the tourism industry, analyze the growth in tourism revenue receipts and expenditure and portray the pattern of tourism in Tamil Nadu. According to him, a cross-section analysis of tourist arrivals in Tamil Nadu reveals that tourism flourishes only where the great majority of people enjoy some prosperity and security¹².

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Indian tourism industry has made good strides over a decade and contributes significantly to the growth of the economy. Both foreign and domestic tourist arrival has grown up. Considering the scope of tourism in India and more particularly with reference to Yercaud there is a need for the Government as well as implementing agencies to improve the facilities because Yercaud is a very much opt economical tourist sport for lower-income people in Tamil Nadu. During the period from 2001 to 2015, the growth level of domestic and foreign tourist arrival in Yercaud is considerably significant. The full-fledged infrastructure facilities improve the arrival of domestic and foreign tourists and this may support utilization of natural resources properly and improve the socio-economic condition of the area.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study takes on the following three specific objectives.

- To understand the progress of the tourists' in India.
- To understand the tourists' attitude and perspectives of Yercaud tourism and their view on the establishment of infrastructure facilities.
- To identify the established and unestablished sightseeing infrastructural facilities in Yercaud.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is ex-post facto nature and uses primary, secondary and physical verification data. While the secondary data has been collected from the statistics published by the tourism department of the Government of India and primary data has been collected from 123 respondents through interview schedule and adopted convenient sampling techniques to identify the attitude and perspectives of visitors at Yercaud and their view on the establishment of infrastructure facilities on there. On the other hand, the leading 12 tourist spots, namely, Rose garden, Big and Small lake, Botanical Survey of India, Children, Ladies and Gents seat, Deer, Lake and Anna Park, Pagoda point and Kiliyur falls were identified and made a physical verification about the present status of established and un-established infrastructures facilities in these spots. The period of study is 3 months from January to March 2018. The study applies the statistical tools such as Pearson Correlation, Regression Analysis and Cluster Analysis.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

No study is free of limitations. The findings, suggestions and conclusions derived from the analysis apply to Yercaud and cannot be universally applied to all the other tourist spots in Tamil Nadu. Secondly, the findings, etc. that is based on certain observations and derived from periods cannot be applied at all times.

YERCAUD AT A GLANCE

Yercaud is a tourist place which located in Salem, Tamil Nadu, India and which surrounded by lake and forest areas. Yercaud is called as a poor man's Ooty (hill station) and which has a bundle of natural potential. As per 2011 census, population size is 11,582. The total area is 383 km². The major crops are coffee, jack fruit, guava and spices such as black pepper and cardamom.

ANALYSIS OF THE OBJECTIVES

Objective No.1: To Understand the Progress of Tourists' in India

To understand the progress of tourists in India, the data on tourists' arrival as well as domestic tourists has been considered which is considered as the proper indicator. For the purpose, all the above data have been collected in respect of India, Tamil Nadu and Yercaud. Firstly, considering the Indian data, foreign tourist arrivals have increased by 3 times over a period of 14 years. In terms of abstract numbers, it was 2 million in the year 2001 and 8 million in the year 2015¹³. In terms of foreign exchange, the value has grown from USD 4000 million in the year 2001 to USD 21000 million in the year 2015, implying a 6 times growth. Similarly, in the case of Tamil Nadu, the domestic tourists' arrival has grown by 12 times, from 23.81 million in the year 2001 to 333.45 million in the year 2015¹⁴. As far as Yercaud is concerned, foreign tourist arrivals are meagre while domestic tourists' data have significantly grown to 9.3 million over the 14-year period from the year 2001 to 2015.

Table 1: Growth level of Tourists in India, Tamil Nadu and Yercaud

| Period | Foreign Tourist Arrival (Million) | | | Foreign Exchange Earnings (USD Million) | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---|----------------|----------------|
| | India | Tamil Nadu | Yercaud | India | Tamil Nadu | Yercaud |
| 2001 | 2 | 23.81 | 0.7 | 4,000 | 0.77 | 3 |
| 2015 | 8 | 333.45 | 9.3 | 21,000 | 4.65 | 21 |
| Growth | 3 times | 12 times | 12 times | 6 times | 5 times | 6 times |

Source: India tourism

Result: it shows that the tourist palace of Yercaud, compare to India and Tamil Nadu level, equally played a significant role in earning of Foreign Exchange and attract the visitors.

Objective 2: To Evaluate Tourists' Attitude and Perspectives of Yercaud Tourism and their View on Establishment of Infrastructure Facilities

The objective has been analysis through a detailed evaluation of the various attributes forming up the attitude of the tourists.

Respondents' Details: Among the 123 respondents, male are 75 and female are 48. 32 are residing in Chennai, 16 are Coimbatore, 52 are Salem, 5 are Dharmapuri and 18 are Bangalore. 102 are the age between 18 to 30, 18 are 31 to 40 and 3 are 41 to 50. 66 are in the category of below income of Rs.15,000, 11 are Rs. 15,001 to Rs. 25,000, 5 are Rs.25,001

to Rs.35,000, 39 are Rs.35,001 to Rs.45,000 and 2 are Rs.55,001 to Rs.1,00,000. The occupation of respondents is concerned, 18 are government employees, 35 are the private employee, 37 are having own business, 11 are involved in agricultural work and 21 are the house wife. 5 are completed their school level education, 93 are undergraduates and 25 are postgraduates.72 respondents having joint family setup and 51 are nuclear family setup. 89 are married and 31 are unmarried.

Respondents' Visiting Habits: out of the 123 respondents, 38 are frequent visitors, 57 are moderately visitors and 28 are rare visitors. 83 respondents having visiting habit only on season time, 64 respondents having a frequent visit of 15 to 25 times per year. 62 respondents prefer single day to stay in Yercaud and 67 respondents prefer the month of May and June to visit. 98 respondents choose is Sunday to visit. 102 respondents' affordable spending level is Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 2,500. 73 respondents prefer friends as a visiting companion, 87 respondents prefer the bus to visit and 64 respondents are not willing to stay in Yercaud.

Reason for Preference: The most influencing factors to visit Yercaud is more convenient to visit (mean score 3.78) is secured the first rank followed by pleasant climate (3.68), economically viable (3.58), joy and safety (3.41), facilitation (3.35) and a variety of visiting spots (3.19).

Respondents' Level of Visiting and Established and Un-established Infrastructure Facilities: On the basis of physical verification, the identified established infrastructure facilities are 1) 1) Sustaining pleasant atmosphere, 2) Upkeep of clean natural ambiance, 3) Maintenance of variety of flowers and plants, 4) Arrangement of easy transport facilities, 5) Ensure safety and security, 6) Clean air 7) Entertainment show, 8) Guide arrangement and Communication, 9) Availability of hygienic food and water and 10) Neat and fair accommodation. And identified un-established infrastructure facilities are 1) Misadministration, 2) Poor maintenance, 3)Less responsiveness, 4) Cost of service, 5)Worst arrangements, 6) Off-road condition, 7) Rare accommodation facilities, 8) Meager shopping facilities, 9) Insufficient public toilets, 10)Inadequate emergency aid.

The respondents' observation of the overall established and un-established facilities are classified below.

Table 2: Level of Visiting Vs. Established and Unestablished Infrastructure Facilities (In Percentage)

| Level of Visiting | Very high | | High | | Moderate | | Low | | Very low | |
|-------------------|------------|--------|------------|-----------|------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|--------|
| | <i>Esd</i> | Un-Esd | <i>Esd</i> | Un-Esd | <i>Esd</i> | Un-Esd | <i>Esd</i> | Un-Esd | <i>Esd</i> | Un-Esd |
| Frequently | 8 | 4 | 25 | 40 | 45 | 21 | 16 | 22 | 6 | 13 |
| Moderately | 11 | 3 | 24 | 45 | 47 | 24 | 13 | 16 | 5 | 12 |
| Rarely | 15 | 4 | 18 | 39 | 44 | 19 | 18 | 24 | 5 | 14 |

Esd – established; Un-Esd – unestablished

The above table revealed that all levels of visiting respondents are highly observed that the established infrastructures are moderately arranged and unestablished infrastructures are highly arranged.

The Respondents' Admire Level at Yercaud Location: Out of the 123 respondents, 44 are highly admired about Yercaud location, 64 are moderately admired and 15 are lowly admired. Their admired spots in Yercaud among the 12 spots, the Rose garden secured first rank (mean score 7.02) followed by Botanical Survey of India (7.00), Big Lake (6.96), Children's seat (6.70), Deer Park (6.51), Anna Park (6.44), Ladies seat (6.43), Small Lake (6.36), Kiliyur falls (6.33), Pogoda point (6.28), Gents seat (6.08) and Lake Park (5.88).

Table 3: Visiting Frequency VS. Level of Admiring and Level of Attraction Spots

| Visiting Frequency | Level of Admiring | | Level of Attraction | |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|
| | r | p | r | p |
| | 0.721 | <0.001** | 0.692 | <0.001** |

Result: The different level of visiting tourists is significantly correlated with the different level of admiring on Yercaud location and attraction on different visiting spots in Yercaud. It shows that, the increasing level of admiring level of Yercaud location and attraction on different visiting spots in Yercaud improves the visiting frequency.

Do the specific established infrastructure facilities improve the admire level of respondents?

For this purpose the overall 23 infrastructure facility variables are classified into 6 factors is given in the table:

Table 4: Summary of Infrastructure Facility Factors

| | Factors | Related Facility Variables |
|---|---------------|---|
| 1 | Primary | Transport, road, sanitation, environment condition, instructions and communication. |
| 2 | Necessary | Food, water, accommodation, public toilets, medical, safety and security. |
| 3 | Magnetism | Park, plant and trees, gardening, entertainment and maintenance. |
| 4 | Support | Vehicle park, riding, shops, birds and animals, fruits and herbs. |
| 5 | Desires | Cost of services, arrangements and administration. |
| 6 | Modernization | Hi-tech infrastructure facilities |

Table 5: Influence of Established Infrastructure Facilities on Admiring Level

| Sum of Square | df | Mean Square | F | R Square | Sig. ^b |
|---------------|-----|-------------|--------|----------|-------------------|
| 88.556 | 6 | 14.759 | 30.232 | .610 | .000 ^b |
| 56.631 | 116 | .488 | | | |
| 145.187 | 122 | | | | |

Result: There is a significant influence of established infrastructure facilities on the admiring level of Yercaud location.

The identification of the most influencing established infrastructure facilities factors on the admiring level of Yercaud location is a significant one.

Table 6: Influencing Infrastructure Facilities Factors on Level of Admiring

| Model | Un-standardized Coefficients | | t | Sig. |
|---------------|------------------------------|-----------|--------|----------|
| | B | Std.Error | | |
| (Constant) | 4.827 | .284 | 17.018 | <0.001** |
| Support | .174 | .073 | -2.380 | 0.019* |
| Modernization | .079 | .077 | 1.037 | 0.302 |
| Desires | .155 | .068 | -2.262 | 0.026* |
| Magnetism | .241 | .076 | -3.191 | 0.002** |
| Primary | .728 | .081 | 9.000 | <0.001** |
| Necessary | .578 | .072 | -8.010 | <0.001** |

* Significant at 5%, ** Significant at 1%

Result: Except modernization infrastructure facilities, the remaining five factors is influencing on the level of admiring. The highly influencing factors are primary, necessary, magnetism, support and desires facilities. It shows that, the tourists are expecting the modernized infrastructure facilities and they believe that the Hi-tech infrastructure facilities are admiring more.

In the next, the identification of does the level of admiring and attraction determining the visiting frequency of respondents?

Objective 3: To Identify the Established and Un-established Infrastructure Facilities in Yercaud

For this purpose, the physical verification is done in the popular 7 tourist spots in the Yercaud

- **Rose Garden:** the established Infrastructure facilities are 1.variety of rose flowers is planted, 2. gardens are segregated, 3. sufficient landscapes provided, 4. available enough water facilities, 5. neat and pleasant view, and 6. refreshing facilities. The un-established Infrastructure facilities are 1. Single toilet facility, 2. No manpower assistance, 3. Dustbins improperly arranged 4. unconditional waterfalls and 5. unmaintained farming room.
- **Big Lake:** the established Infrastructure facilities are 1. Sufficient number of boats to meet the crowd, 2. providing sufficient life safe instruments, 3. Sufficient manpower, 4. Enough rescue teams and 5. First aid arrangements. The un-established Infrastructure facilities are 1. Poor maintenance of boats and lake and 2. Poor arrangements to meet high demand.
- **Botanical survey of India:** the established Infrastructure facilities are 1. Different kinds of medicine property plants and trees and 2. Sufficient name boards and landmarks. The un-established Infrastructure facilities are 1. Lack of human guidance and 2. No refreshment shops.
- **Children, Ladies and Gents seat:** the established Infrastructure facilities are 1. Excellent arrangements for different viewpoints, 2. Excellent landscapes and 3. Supported infrastructure facilities. The un-established Infrastructure facilities are 1. Poor management (Many visitors bring cigarettes and alcohol products and throw it in open places) and 2. Insufficient safety measures were taken.
- **Deer Park:** the established Infrastructure facilities are 1.sufficient landscapes, 2. refreshment shops available, 3. instant photoshops available, and 4. children playing equipments too. The un-established Infrastructure facilities are 1. meager deers are available, 2. Poor maintenance, 3. No sufficient manpower, 4. Poor neatness and 5. Unconditional waterfalls.
- **Anna Park:** the established Infrastructure facilities are 1. Excellent landscapes and infrastructure facilities, 2. Good maintenance, 3. Proper arrangements of playing facilities for children and adults, 4. Croton plants and flowers are sufficiently planted and 5. Entertainment arrangements. The un-established Infrastructure facilities are Poor cleanliness.
- **Kiliyur Falls:** the established Infrastructure facilities are nature oriented. The un-established Infrastructure facilities are 1. Poor parking facilities, 2. Very risky to move, 3. Very poor cleanliness, 4. No medical and rescue facilities, 5. No separate dressing room for gents and ladies and 6. Insecure.
- **Overall Findings:** the progress of tourists in India, Tamil Nadu and Yercaud are considerably significant. The establishment of anticipated infrastructure facilities in Yercaud location is increasing admire and attraction level of the tourists and which are motivating them to visit Yercaud frequently. Though some extend the infrastructure facilities are moderately arranged, there is a lacuna in maintenance and arrangements and there is no Hi-tech infrastructure establishment.
- **Suggestions:** the following suggestions are based on the observation and opinion expressed by the respondents.

- The tourism department should fulfill the gap between established and un-established infrastructure facilities located in Yercaud.
- To sustain the level of tourist visit that is based on the establishment of modernized infrastructure facilities the tourism department should take necessary steps to ensure it.
- The tourism department frequently makes a survey and inquiry about the expectation level of tourists to improve the establishment level of infrastructure facilities.
- The joint hand's performance is more important for improving tourism activities in Yercaud.
- The tourism department should establish the following infrastructure facilities and regulation in Yercaud to promote the tourism.
- Swimming, fishing, cycling, trucking, ballooning, biking, craft and art and cultural programs.
- Regulate the street vendors' trade practices.
- Arrangement of cheap accommodation facilities for lower-income tourists.
- Create a modernized unpolluted environment.

CONCLUSIONS

The tourism department should promote the features of Yercaud through the advertisements in National and International media so that the tourist arrival can be improved. It not only develops the socio-economic condition of the area, but also supports economic gains of the Nation.

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