

A Study on the Impact of the Involvement of Local Residents on Tourism: A Case Study of Gavi Village, Kerala

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Abstract: Tourism and Environment are intrinsically related with each other. The development and up gradation of the tourist sector depends on a clean environment, free from all hazards. Development of Thought: Environmentally responsible tourism is a new concept the world over. There are two aspects of the relation between tourism and environment. Tourism depends heavily on an unspoilt natural environment. The world over, location of scenic beauty and unspoilt natural splendor have replaced heritage monuments in tourism trends. Therefore for tourism to survive, protection of these natural environments becomes a pre-requisite. At the same time providing amenities of potable water and other infrastructure to tourists often become a cause for environmental degradation. Unrestrained commercialization has harmed many a fragile ecosystem. This study tries to envisage the involvement of local people and local government bodies in the development of a tourist center in Kerala called GAVI.

Introduction

Tourism and Environment are intrinsically related with each other. The development and up gradation of the tourist sector depends on a clean environment, free from all hazards. Development of Thought: Environmentally responsible tourism is a new concept the world over. There are two aspects of the relation between tourism and environment. Tourism depends heavily on an unspoilt natural environment. The world over, location of scenic beauty and unspoilt natural splendor have replaced heritage monuments in tourism trends. Therefore for tourism to survive, protection of these natural environments becomes a pre-requisite. At the same time providing amenities of potable water and other infrastructure to tourists often become a cause for environmental degradation. Unrestrained commercialization has harmed many a fragile ecosystem. This study tries to envisage the involvement of local people and local government bodies in the development of a tourist center in Kerala called GAVI.

Gavi, Kerala

Gavi is a village in Pathanamthitta district, Kerala, India. It is located 28 km southwest of Vandiperiyar, a town in Idukki on N.H 220, the highway connecting Kollam and Madurai. Gavi Eco-Tourism a project of the Kerala Forest Development Corporation has caught the attention of tourists, mostly from European countries. The project is exclusive in many respects and the majority who visited was nature lovers and adventure tourists. Over a short period of time visitors to Gavi gradually increased, especially after 'Alistair International' the world acclaimed tourism major listed it among the leading eco-tourism centres and one of the must-see places in India. A highlight of the Gavi eco project is the involvement of the local populace in its activities as guides, gardeners and cooks. This will provide livelihood for the locals and also will help to create awareness on conservation of nature. Gavi, located in Pathanamthitta district offers its visitors activities like trekking, wildlife watching, outdoor camping in specially built tents, and night safaris. The road leading to the picturesque Gavi is blanketed by tea plantations, which itself is a refreshing experience. En route to Gavi are places of interest like Mundakayyam, Kuttikanam, Peermedu and Vandiperiyar from where the road deviates to Gavi. Once you reach Gavi the serene eco-lodge 'Green Mansion' awaits you like a fairy to embrace you in its protective fold. From the 'Green Mansion', one can savour the spectacular view of the Gavi Lake and the adjoining forests. Besides the accommodation provided in 'Green Mansion' visitors can also try out the tree houses here and can even pitch tents amidst the wilderness. Here one can have outstanding trekking experiences, which are overseen by trained local people. Those who would love to be left alone can do so in the tranquil environs of Gavi or may even go canoeing in the placid waters of the lake or enjoy a breathtaking sunset. Visitors are usually provided vegetarian food and snacks, which further adds to the eco-friendly ambience of the place. The place is rich in flora and fauna. There are hills and valleys, tropical forests, sprawling grasslands, sholas, cascading waterfalls and cardamom plantations. Endangered species including the Nilgiri Tahr and Lion-tailed macaque are often sighted at the outskirts of Gavi. With more than 260 species of birds including the great pied hornbill, woodpecker, and kingfishers, Gavi is a heaven for birdwatchers.

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Some of the breathtaking viewpoints at Gavi like the Valley-View offer spectacular view of a deep ravine and the forest below. Gavi is bound to cast its magical spell on every visitor and is surely a place that should not be missed in one's lifetime. Gavi is pristine, and it belongs to the wild, which is a reminder that visitors are responsible for their intentions and actions, which will have a bearing on the upkeep of Gavi for a long time to come.

Active involvement of tribals in Gavi makes it a unique venture of its kind in the country. Traditional knowledge of the forest and its way of life helps Gavi to sustain its surroundings in its original state.

Activities

- Trekking
- Wildlife watching
- Bird Watching
- Stay at top tree huts
- Outdoor camping in forest around
- Safaris through jungle roads
- Visit to paradise cove at Ninnumulli
- Boating in the Gavi & Kochupampa lakes.
- Leisurely walks through spice gardens
- Visit to cardamom factory
- Climb to Sabarimala temple view

Western Ghats, the natural mountain barriers of the Arabian sea stretching right from the southern extreme of India i.e., Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu upto Pune in Maharashtra is home to all the flora & fauna typical to the tropical Evergreen Forests. In the Kerala sector these terrains are closely associated with the customs, traditions and social life of the Malayalee for centuries. The Forests in Kerala has indeed some of the most magnificent landscapes with all its bio diversity to be found anywhere in the world. For its size, Kerala has an amazing variety of wildlife spread across its vast expanse of forest land. With its bountiful nature and a superior and distinct cultural milieu and affordable holidays, the State of Kerala with its forests makes the ideal eco destination.

The study intends to look at the involvement of the local residents in the maintenance and upkeep of the purity of the place so that the tourists who come over to Gavi experiences the real natural serenity and ecological balance. Study focuses on three important elements such as the awareness of the local people regarding the importance of the place, the involvement of both local people and local government bodies in the maintenance of the ecological balance of the place.

Literature Review

Becoming aware of the intense growth in tourism in the modern world and taking into account the interaction between the tourism and the environment, the use of environment as a part of the basic tourism resource, is increasingly growing in importance. (Grgona Jadranko, 2006). Among myriad definitions in contemporary theory and practice of development we went for the following: Sustainable development implies that every generation on the Earth has the right to choose appropriate model of living and will economic activity that not destroy the ecological ecosystem that secures for future generations untouched living resources (Grgona 2006). There is growing interest in ecological analysis in aiding the understanding of societal demands upon biosphere. Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and can play a major part in encouraging more consumerist life style. It is widely accepted that tourism development may have profound inputs on local environment. (Hunter Colin 2002). With the development of the tourism, it's also bringing a lot of problems, such as tourism resource excessive development, tourism management backward, and the ecological environment quality is becoming worse and more worse, which is a serious threat to the sustainable development of tourism industry. In this context, many visitors start paying attention to return to the natural ecological tourism (You, Zhou; Chen, Xuan; Song, Liu, (2011)

OBJECTIVES

- To study the importance of Eco Tourism and the level of awareness of the locals in General
- To study the responsibility to develop and maintain Eco Tourism from the perspectives of the local government bodies.
- To study the advantages derived due to involving the locals in the development, maintenance and growth of Gavi.

Hypothesis

- H₀₁: Eco Tourism in Gavi is not important to the local residents
H₁₁: Eco Tourism in Gavi is important to the local residents
H₀₂: Local Govt. bodies are not taking responsibility for Eco-Tourism in Gavi
H₁₂: Local Govt. bodies are taking responsibility for Eco-Tourism in Gavi
H₀₃: Involvement of Local residents is not adding to the development, maintenance and growth of Gavi.
H₁₃: Involvement of Local residents is adding to the development, maintenance and growth of Gavi.

Research Design

The study has a survey design and it is descriptive in nature. The descriptive research was undertaken to analyze the impact of the involvement of local residents on the development of Tourism: A case study of Gavi in Kerala. The data collected from the respondents were primary in nature. The data used for the study was from the respondents, collected using survey method through questionnaire.

Primary Data: The primary data for the study was collected from the samples using questionnaires. Information from the secondary data and observations made by the researcher also has been used as a background for the study.

Population: All the customers of various products across various age, income, occupation and education level belong to the population.

Sample Size: Sample size is 100 which included tourists, locals and local govt. officials were chosen for the study.

Sampling Method: Purposive sampling method includes both a purpose in choosing the sample at the same time a judgment. The researcher had the purpose of choosing the samples from Gavi, who could respond to a questionnaire either in English or Malayalam.

Method of Data Collection: The data were collected through survey method using a Questionnaire.

Data Analysis

H₀₁: Eco Tourism in Gavi is not important to the local residents

H₁₁: Eco Tourism in Gavi is important to the local residents

To study importance of Gavi as Eco Tourism information is collected based on Natural Beauty, Climatic condition, Silent area. Information is collected from 100 Villagers.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean score in per cent	Std. Deviation
Score of importance of Gavi	100	35	94	83.56	13.35702

Above table indicate that mean score of importance is 83.56%. Which is significantly high? Hence It is concluded that Eco Tourism in Gavi is important to the local residents.

H₀₂: Local Govt. bodies are not taking responsibility for Eco-Tourism in Gavi

H₁₂: Local Govt. bodies are taking responsibility for Eco-Tourism in Gavi

To test this hypothesis information is collected by same 100 respondents about responsibility taken by Local Govt. bodies and by local residents.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean score in per cent	Std. Deviation
Score of responsibility by Local Govt Bodies	100	25	75	59.46	9.43
Score of responsibility by Local residence	100	25	85	65.38	11.23

Mean score of responsibility of Local Govt Bodies is 54.46 which is less than score of responsibility of local residence 65.38.

To test is there significant difference between mean score T-test is applied. Results of Test are as follows.

Calculated Value of T-test = 1.32

Table value of T-test = 1.96

Result of Test = Non-Significant

Conclusion: Local Govt. bodies are not taking responsibility for Eco-Tourism in Gavi.

H_{03} : Involvement of Local residents is not adding to the development, maintenance and growth of Gavi.

H_{13} : Involvement of Local residents is adding to the development, maintenance and growth of Gavi.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean score in per cent	Std. Deviation
Score of involvement by Local Govt Bodies	100	15	85	48.46	9.43
Score of involvement by Local residence	100	20	95	75.38	11.23

To test is there significant difference between mean score T-test is applied. Results of Test are as follows.

Calculated Value of T-test = 4.35

Table value of T-test = 1.96

Result of Test = Significant

Conclusion: Involvement of Local residents is adding to the development, maintenance and growth of Gavi.

Conclusions

Eco Tourism in Gavi is important to the local residents. Local Govt. bodies are not taking responsibility for Eco-Tourism in Gavi. Involvement of Local residents is adding to the development, maintenance and growth of Gavi.

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