ECOTOURISM – A BOON TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Saleena A S
Research Scholar in Commerce, Kerala University Library Research Centre, Palayam, Trivandrum, Kerala.

Abstract
Kerala having a well-recognised tourism brand is popular for backwaters, mountain ranges and wild life sanctuaries. Man draw sustenance from the ecology without harming the factors that contributes to their maintenance. Responsible travel to natural areas that together conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people is eco-tourism. It is a phenomenon of travel activity that ensures direct financial support to local people where tourism activities are being generated and enjoyed. It discourages mass tourism, mass constructions of hotels, tourism resorts and mass activities in fragile areas. The principal tourism products of the state fall into six categories of heritage/ cultural/religious sites & events, of backwaters, of beaches, of hill stations, of wild life sanctuaries and of ayurveda, with the common cord of green environment harmonising them all together to form a Green Symphony. The present study attempts to have an evaluation of tourists' arrival and their job satisfaction with respect to the eco tourist destination at Gavi in Kerala. Significant economic benefits can accrue from tourism and negative socio-cultural impacts can be minimised through carefully planned and managed tourism development. The study reaches the conclusion that Gavi is a proper destination for the comforts offered by fragile nature.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Tourist Satisfaction, Tourism, Sustenance.

INTRODUCTION
Kerala Government realized the progress of tourism, without harming the ecology and natural balance of the site for sustainable development. Eco Tourism Projects that got started by government has gained immense popularity as they offer lot of facilities and in those places. True ecotourism conservers and improves the places of visit. There are many eco tourist destinations in Gods own Country and Gavi is one among them which the study is focussing. Any form of tourism that does not reduce the availability of resources and does not inhibit future travellers from enjoying the same experience guarantees sustainable development. The selection of tourist destinations should focus on the elements of adventure travel, eco-tourism, cultural travel and multi-sport.

Gavi, a village in Pattanamthitta district of Kerala, offers visitors to have boating, canoeing, bird watching, trekking, night-camping and adventurer hike to nearby Valley views. The most amazing stay in a tree-top house and pitch the tent in the wilderness is also permissible to boost the excitement of tourists. Realizing the significant advantages of environment friendly tourism and nature-oriented travel without decaying the traditions of natural resources, the State have made the destination a vulnerable one for tourist attraction. In and around there are various tourist destinations too.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
1. To analyse the satisfaction level of tourists visiting Gavi.
2. To assess the potentiality of Kerala to promote eco-tourism.

DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY
The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data are collected from the tourist's who visited Gavi by using an interview schedule. A sample of 50 tourists visited Gavi during the period of study was selected at random and information was collected from them. The secondary data are collected and compiled from various sources such as official publications of tourism department, District Tourism Promotional Council, journals, newspapers and various websites, research studies etc.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY
 People are eager to have a peace state of mind from the fast and furious activity oriented life. As a means of reviving mental stability they prefer to travel various modes of tourist destinations. A study of tourist satisfaction of Gavi has relevance at this juncture.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
The analysis deals with assessment of the attitude of visitors arriving at Gavi. The relative influence of the variables such as gender, marital status, purpose of visit, occupation of the respondent, income of the respondent, source of information, age and level of satisfaction etc are also analysed and the result is discussed in the following section:

1. Gender wise classification of the Respondents

The gender wise analysis of the respondents is indicated in Table No.1. On analyzing the table it is well established that male domination is prevalent in tourist destination. Up to 58% are male and the rest (42%) are female. It is inferred from the analysis that female penetration in the destination is low.

Table No.1   Gender Wise Classification

Gender	Number of respondents	
	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Male	29	58
Female	21	42
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data.

2. Classification Based on Marital Status of Respondents

The Table (Table2) attempts to assess the marital status of the tourists who visited the Gavi. On analysing these, it is well established that 56% of the tourists are married and 44% are unmarried. Divorce and Widows arrival to beach centres are very meagre. It is inferred from the analysis that married couple prefer to visit tourist destinations than other respondents.

Table No: 2. Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	No. of respondents	
	Count	Percentage
Married	36	72
Unmarried	14	28
Divorced	–	–
Widowed	–	–
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

3. Occupation wise classification of the respondents

Travelling is a way to relieve the people from the clutches of tensions relating to their life. The occupation wise analysis is given below:

Table No. 3 Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	Kerala	
	Count	Percentage
Business	17	34
Professional	5	10
Private Employee	10	20
Govt Employee	13	26
Others	5	10
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

The Table (Table 3) shows that 34% of the tourists are from the business field. Professionals form only a 10% and private employees came only up to 20%. Government employee up to 26% while the others form 10% of the visitors.

4. Income based classification of the Respondents
Table 4 deals with the classification of the respondents based on income. A 14% of them earn less than Rs.10000 per month while 26% earn between Rs 10001 and Rs 20000. Another 28% of the tourists earn between Rs 20001 and Rs 30000. The income of 16% of the samples comes between Rs 30001 and Rs 40000 where as 4% of them have an income between Rs 40001 an Rs 50000.   Only 12% are having income above Rs 50000. Income determines and restricts the needs and leisure time activities of modern people. It was evident that the middle income group formed a major part of the respondents. Table No. 4 Income of the Respondents

Annual Income	No. of the Respondents	
	Count	Percentage
Below Rs.10000	7	14
Rs.10000-Rs.20000	13	26
Rs.20000-Rs.30000	14	28
Rs.30000-Rs.40000	8	16
Rs.40000-Rs.50000	2	4
Above 50000	6	12
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

5. Classification based on Age of the Respondents
The following table describes the age level participation of the tourists. Table 5 reveals that nearly half of the tourists are youth age 15-30(58%). Senior citizens hardly visit as their percentage is just 2%. People with the age group (30-45) visit regularly (26%). The participation of the visitors between the age group (45-60) is comparatively low (4%).

Table No.5 Age-Wise Classification of the Respondents

Age	No. of the Respondents	
	Count	Percentage
Below 15	5	10
15-30	29	58
30-45	13	26
45-60	2	4
Above 60	1	2
Total	50	100

Source: Primary Data

6. Satisfaction level of the Respondents
The satisfaction level of tourists who are at Gavi is depicted below:

Satisfaction Level

Less Satisfied 20%
Highly Satisfied 24%
Satisfied 56%

Source: Primary Data

The above diagram show that 24% of the tourist visited at Gavi is highly satisfied while 20% of the respondents are less satisfied. More than half (56%) of the visitors are satisfied. There are no dissatisfied visitors and points out that they are willing to have a visit to Gavi again.

7. Classification based on Information about tourist place.
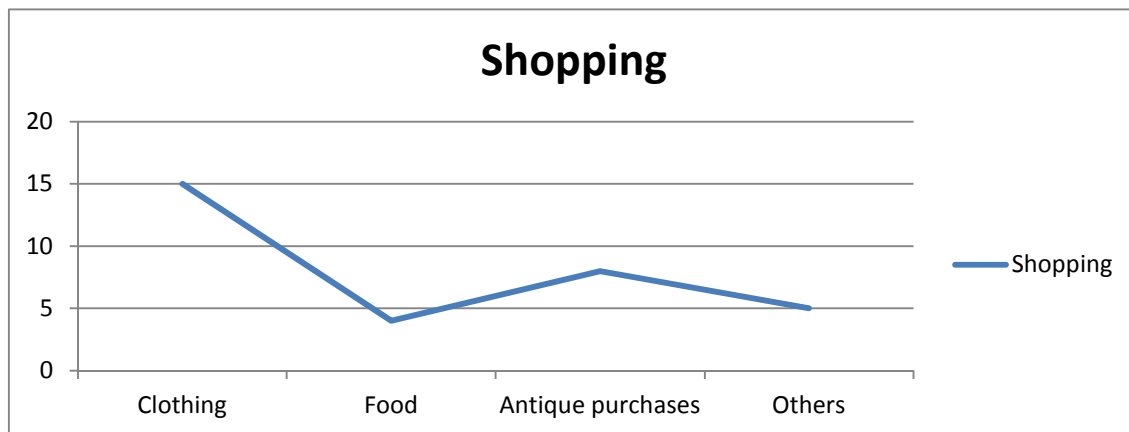Tourist gets information about the tourist place from Medias, sharing of tour experience from their friends, relatives or any other sources. The pictorial representation of the tourist place information is given below reveals that majority of the tourist gets information about the spot from their friends and 26% from their relatives and only 14% of the tourist received information from media.

Information

[Bar chart showing Information values for Friends (~42), Relatives (~28), Media (~16), Others (~22)]
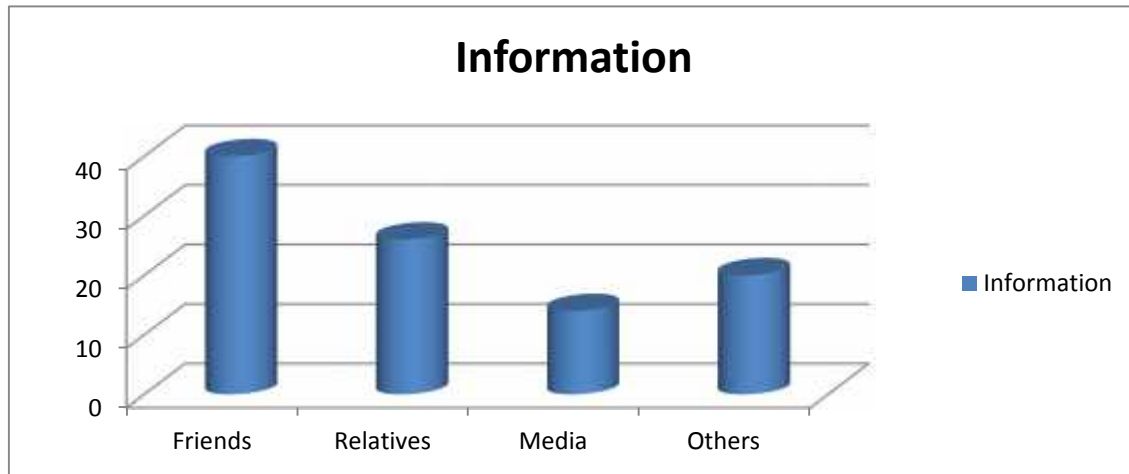
Source: Primary Data

8. Classification of the Respondents based on Shopping Habits
Tourists who are at Gavi may or may not be interested in shopping. The study indicates that 64% of tourists are willing to have a purchase and 36% are not interested in shopping. Out of the 64%, 47 %spends on clothing and around 13%spend on purchase of food items. And another 25% spend on purchasing antique items while 15.63% spend on purchasing other items. People have a shopping atmosphere at Gavi that initiate them to purchase and most spending is on clothing than others.

Shopping

[Line chart showing Shopping values for Clothing (15), Food (4), Antique purchases (8), Others (5)]

Source: Primary Data

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY
1. Male domination is very high at the tourist destination.
2. Married couples are attracted mostly by the centre.
3. The tourist spot is one of the favourites of the middle income group.
4. Visitors are willing to visit Gavi again which in turn further promotes eco tourism.
5. A majority of the tourists get information about the destination from their friends.

6. Most of the respondents arriving at Gavi spend for the purchase of clothing materials in comparison with other items.
7. Gavi is a proper place for the comforts and pleasures offered by nature.
8. Eco tourism provides economic benefits to other related sectors of the destination.

SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY
1. Awareness campaign about the destination by tourism department should be increased through brouchers, media and advertisements.
2. Enhancing infrastructural facilities like hospitals, restaurants etc have to be made.
3. Participation of civilians should be allowed to get better support for sustainable development.
4. Boating, canoeing, bird watching, trekking, night-camping has to be popularised effectively.
5. Tourist destination should be made clean for attracting and retaining a healthy visitors' clientele.

CONCLUSION
Kerala is one of the most preferred tourist destination in the world has transformed the entire tourist industry into eco-friendly mode. Tourism which is an environment dependent industry is a boon for sustainable development. The present study reaches the conclusion that the present eco-tourism centres are facing several problems and the suggestions recommended can rectify the situation. Gavi eco-tourism has done various activities to keep the tourists satisfied and refresh them both mentally and physically.

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