

PERCEPTION OF THE RESIDENTS ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES OF SELECT NILGIRIS DISTRICT.

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the sustainable tourism practices followed by the residents of The Nilgiris, known for their rich ecological diversity, unique cultural customs and inheritance, and attractive landscapes, which have become a popular tourist point of disembarkation in recent years. With the increasing inundation of tourists, the region faces growing provocation regarding environmental preservation, cultural conservation, and the sustainability of local resources. This study aims to travel over the conservation of sustainable tourism practices in the Nilgiris and gain access to the awareness, attitudes, and productiveness of such practices from the standpoint of various participants, including residents, tourists, and line of work involved in tourism. The research looks over how residents become aware of the impacts of tourism on their daily lives, especially in terms of environmental humiliation, resource exhumation, and social supersede. It also explores the magnitude to which tourists are aware of sustainable implementation, such as eco-friendly understanding, waste management, and preservation efforts, and whether this enterprise influences their travel choices. Moreover, the study inquiries into the role of local businesses in the persuasion of sustainable tourism practices, including the assumption of eco-friendly services and collaborative tourism enterprises that benefit local companies Through an analysis of interested parties' conservation, this research features the importance of stabilizing tourism growth with environmental conservation and cultural honesty.

Keywords: *Sustainable tourism, Nilgiris district, Environmental conservation, tourism practices.*

Background of the Study

In recent years sustainability in tourism is gaining more importance. Sustainable tourism is limited to the appropriate utilization of natural resources and linked to the social, cultural and economic sustainability (Ajitkumar Singh et al, 2021) The Nilgiris, an attractive and picturesque mountain range which is located in Tamil Nadu, is named for its lush landscape, rich biodiversity, and vibrant cultural heritage. Home to Ooty, Coonoor, and several other hill stations, the region draws numerous tourists every year. However, besides of rising popularity of these destinations, the Nilgiris and people living in Nilgiris face highly significant challenges like deforestation environmental degradation, and plenty of exploitation of resources . The main factor of Sustainable tourism development in the Nilgiris focuses on preventing and promoting

ie. striking a balance between promoting tourism and preserving the forests for future local people and animals to survive and to prevent the delicate ecosystem. The literature on sustainable solid robust management in tea-manufacturing regions culmination in the intricate complex relationship between agriculture, tourism, and waste production. (*R. Sashmitha, R. Arunachalam, 2019*). Adding on, certain projects aim to preserve the unique biota (flora and fauna) of the Nilgiris and details about how to protect aboriginal species and prevent water and energy resources. Key challenges associated with the study include crammed full, rising costs of living, the loss of cultural recognition, and the strain on foundation and natural resources. While there is the remembrance of the economic gain of tourism, such as job creation and the advancement of local businesses, there are also deals with the long-term sustainability of tourism in the territory. These include encouraging greater awareness, carrying out stricter orders, encouraging local community participation, and ensuring that tourism development does not come at the expense of the region's natural and cultural heritage. In this background this study intended to understand the problems faced by the residents of select areas of Nilgiris District with the current tourism practices and the perception of them in sustainable tourism practices adopted in these areas.

Statement of the problem:

The district of Nilgiris is a famous tourist destination in Tamil Nadu India. People from different parts of the country and outside the country visit this district throughout the year. Due to these all-natural environments are affected. They majorly cause environmental damages like deforestation, large degradation, and waste management issues. Tourists generate a large amount of plastic waste. Which is often littered with forests, lakes, and hill slopes. Water bodies like Ooty Lake and Pykara Lake etc. suffer from pollution due to boating and improper waste disposal. To overcome these issues the government started to encourage sustainable tourism practices in Nilgiris. So, in this study, I intended to understand the problems faced by the residents of Nilgiris in connection to tourism practices, their Awareness level regarding sustainable tourism practices, and their perception of them related to the effectiveness of sustainable tourism.

Objectives

1. To understand the problems faced by the respondents regarding the current tourism practices in select areas in the Nilgiris district.
2. To Know the awareness level and perception of the respondents on adopting sustainable tourism practices in select areas of the Nilgiris district.

Research Methodology

Research Method	Both Exploratory and Descriptive
Sample and Area of the study	Residents of select areas of Nilgiris District (Ooty, Coonoor, Kotagiri)
Sampling Method	Convenience Sampling
Sampling size	176
Source	Primary Data
Tools used for collection	Questionnaire
Statistical Tools	Percentage analysis

Problems faced by the residents regarding the current tourism practices in select areas in the Nilgiris district.

Table 1: Problems faced in current tourism practices

Variable	Strongly Agree		Agree		Moderately agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Increase in all kinds of pollution (Air, Water, and Noise)	90	51.6	40	22.1	39	22.2	6	.6	1	.6
Deforestation and loss of Bio-Diversity	26	14.8	97	55.1	48	27.3	2	1.1	3	1.7
Littering and waste disposal are the major issues in tourist spots	34	19.3	53	30.1	72	40.9	14	8.0	3	1.7
Overcrowding and traffic congestion affecting day to day life of locals	42	23.9	63	35.8	43	24.4	20	11.4	8	4.5
Excessive tourism leads to the depletion of local water resources	40	22.7	65	36.9	44	25.0	22	12.5	4	2.3
Creates a negative impact on local traditions and culture and pushes toward Westernization	40	25.0	56	31.8	45	25.6	21	11.9	10	5.7
Increasing crime rates	39	22.2	57	32.4	55	31.3	17	9.7	7	4.0
The cost of living getting expensive	41	23.3	45	25.6	58	33.0	22	12.5	10	5.7
Seasonal tourism affects economic stability for local people	43	24.4	54	30.7	56	31.8	14	8.0	8	4.5
Government policies on tourism do not address residents' concerns	39	22.2	77	43.8	39	22.2	13	7.4	7	4.0
Healthcare services are overburdened due to the tourist population	43	24.4	60	34.1	49	27.8	17	9.7	6	3.4
Infrastructural facilities are poorly maintained due to heavy tourism	50	28.4	58	33.0	48	27.3	13	7.4	7	4.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 depicts the agreeability of the respondents with the problems faced by them in the current tourism practices. Majority of the respondents are agreed with the problems listed in the table. Nearly 52% of the respondents are strongly agreed that all kinds of pollutions including air, water and noise increased due to the conventional tourism practices. The respondents are agreed with the most of the problems listed in the table such as deforestation and loss of Bio-Diversity (55.1%), Overcrowding and traffic congestions affecting the day to day life of locals (35.8%) Depletion of water resources due to excessive tourism (36.9%), Creating negative impact on local traditions and culture due to the push towards the westernisation(31.8%), Increasing crimes rate (32.4 %), Government policies not enough for supporting local's concern (43.8%), Overburdened health services (34.1%) and Poor infrastructural facilities because of heavy tourism (33 %). The respondents are having a mixed opinion leads to the moderate agreeability for the issues such as Littering and waste disposal in the tourist spots (40.9%) Leads to expensive cost of living (33 %). Only very few respondents are only disagreed with the stated problems.

Awareness level of the resident on sustainable tourism practices adopted in select areas of Nilgiris District

Table 2: Awareness level of the resident on sustainable tourism

Variable	Highly Aware		Aware		Moderately Aware		Not Aware		Not at all Aware	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Sustainable tourism practices are followed	111	63.1	42	23.9	16	9.1	7	4.0	0	0.0
Eco-tourism initiatives (e.g., protected forests, eco-parks)	31	17.6	84	47.7	56	31.8	5	2.8	0	0.0
Waste management systems (e.g., recycling, proper disposal)	41	23.3	80	45.5	41	23.3	11	6.3	3	1.7
The use of single-use plastic is restricted in tourism zones.	35	19.9	72	40.9	48	27.3	19	10.8	2	1.1
Sustainable transportation options (e.g., electric vehicles, cycling paths) are available for tourists	57	32.4	50	28.4	56	31.8	12	6.8	1	.6
Eco-friendly practices such as energy conservation and rainwater harvesting are followed in hotels and resorts in Nilgiris	41	23.3	66	37.5	52	29.5	17	9.7	0	0.0
Cultural and heritage sites are well maintained to promote cultural and heritage tourism	60	34.1	60	34.7	39	22.2	16	9.1	0	0.0
Organizing programs and events to promote local customs, arts, crafts, and traditions. (Tribal festivals and celebrations)	50	28.4	69	39.2	48	27.3	9	5.1	0	0.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 reflects the awareness level of the respondents on the sustainable tourism practices adopted in the select areas of Nilgiris District. Most of the respondents are highly aware (63.1%) on the various sustainable tourism practices followed in their area and 32.4% are strongly aware on the sustainable transportation

options available in the area. Majority of the respondents are aware with the most of the sustainable tourism practices adopted in their area; 47.7 % of respondents are aware on eco- tourism initiatives taken in their area, 45.5% knows about the waste management systems they are following, 40.9% knows about the restriction of single use plastics , 37.5% are aware on the eco-friendly practices such as energy conservation and rain water harvesting in hotel and resorts in Nilgiris, 34.7% are aware about the promotion of cultural and heritage tourism by initiating the effective maintenance in cultural and heritage sites and 39.2% are aware on promotional activities through organising events and programs. Finally, all the respondents are aware on the sustainable tourism practices listed in the table in their areas in Nilgiris District.

Perception of the resident on sustainable tourism practices adopted in select areas of Nilgiris District

Table 2: Perception of the resident on sustainable tourism

Variable	Strongly Agree		Agree		Moderately agree		Disagree		Strongly agree	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Sustainable tourism initiatives have improved environmental conservation efforts	100	56.8	49	27.8	17	9.7	9	5.1	1	.6
Eco-friendly accommodations (e.g., green hotels, homestays) have reduced negative environmental impacts.	44	25.0	84	47.7	34	19.3	14	8.0	0	0.0
The ban on plastic usage in Nilgiris is effective in reducing waste.	36	20.5	78	44.3	42	23.9	16	9.1	4	2.3
Sustainable tourism has helped preserve the traditional culture and heritage of Nilgiris.	53	30.1	73	41.5	30	17.0	17	9.7	3	1.7
Sustainable tourism provides opportunities for local artisans and craftsmen.	51	29.0	65	36.9	40	22.7	19	10.9	1	.6
Cultural festivals and events have been effectively used to promote sustainable tourism.	44	25.0	65	36.9	41	23.3	22	12.5	4	2.3
Sustainable tourism has improved employment opportunities for residents.	61	34.7	60	34.1	34	19.3	19	10.3	2	1.1
Tourism revenue is reinvested in community development and conservation.	58	33.0	53	30.1	42	23.9	22	12.5	1	.6
The government and private sector support eco-tourism businesses in Nilgiris.	55	31.3	70	39.8	32	18.2	17	9.7	2	1.1
Sustainable tourism practices help control overcrowding and maintain ecological balance.	46	26.1	69	39.2	45	25.6	14	8.0	2	1.1
There is sufficient public awareness regarding sustainable tourism practices.	54	30.7	73	41.5	25	14.2	22	12.5	2	1.1
Tour operators and travel agencies follow sustainable tourism guidelines.	56	31.8	65	36.9	32	18.2	21	11.9	2	1.1

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 portrays the perception of the residents of the select areas of Nilgiris District on sustainable practices adopted in Nilgiris. Even though all the respondents are all aware on the sustainable tourism practices adopted in their area but it is necessary to understand their perception on those practices to know the impact which may help the strategy planners to formulate the policies to incorporate effective sustainable tourism practices in Nilgiris. All the respondents agreed with the sustainable tourism practices adopted in their areas. Most of the respondents are strongly agree with environmental conservation efforts (56.8%), Improved employment opportunities for residents (34.7%) and reinvestment of tourism revenue in community development and conservation (33%). For all the other initiatives the respondents show their agreeability; Reduced environmental degradations through eco- friendly accommodations (47.7 %), ban on plastic usage (44.3%), preserving the traditional culture and heritage of Nilgiris (41.5%), providing opportunities for the local artisans and craftsman(36.9%), Effectively promoting cultural festivals and events (36.9%), support from government and privates in developing eco-tourism based businesses(39.8%), controlling overcrowding and maintain ecological balances (39.2%), public awareness from both locals and tourist (41.5%) and tour operators and travel agencies following sustainable tourism guidelines (36.9%).

SUMMARY

This study tries to picturize the notable struggles faced by the residents of Nilgiris due to the sudden increase of tourism, such as habitat destruction, resource diminishment, and the impact on native practices. Notwithstanding these issues, there is a growing realization of the importance of sustainable tourism practices among the neighbourhood community, tourists, and businesses. The identification shows that while there is an acknowledgment of the animal reserves preservation, waste management, and cultural conservation efforts, most of the respondents identify the constructive characteristics of eco-logical tourism but also community concerns about the competence of current policies and the protracted sustainability of the tourism process in the region. Continually, a bigger community, responsibility for mandatory administration of expectations, and better strengthening of sustainable practices are essential to foundational that the Nilgiris can continue to thrive across ecological and environmental proportions while maintaining its unique cultural and natural heritage. The study portray that the respondents (residents) are well known about the problems faced in conventional tourism practices already in practice and they are all aware about the sustainable tourism initiative adopted in their area. All the respondents are agreed with the effectiveness of sustainable tourism practices but continuous effort and more improved strategies are required to convert the agreed residents to strongly agreed residents.

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