An Analytical Study of Eco-Tourism and Pilgrimage Tourism Vendors in Erstwhile Nalgonda District.

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Abstract:

Eco-Tourism and Pilgrimage Tourism play a significant role in generating employment and supporting local livelihoods through vendor activities. Vendors at eco-tourism centers are largely dependent on seasonal tourist inflow and natural attractions, leading to fluctuating income levels. In contrast, pilgrimage tourism vendors generally experience stable demand throughout the year due to continuous religious visits and traditional practices. This study analyzes the dependency patterns, problems, and prospects of vendors associated with eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism. Using primary data and statistical tools, the study highlights differences in livelihood dependence and operational challenges faced by vendors. The findings suggest the need for improved infrastructure, skill development, and policy support to ensure sustainable livelihoods for vendors while promoting balanced tourism development.

Key Words: Eco-Tourism, Pilgrimage Tourism, Vendors, Seasonal Tourist Inflow, .Problems, Prospects, Livelihood, Operational Challenges, Infrastructure, Skill Development.

Introduction:

Tourism is an important sector that contributes significantly to economic development, employment generation, and regional growth. Among the various forms of tourism, **eco-tourism** and **pilgrimage tourism** play a vital role in supporting local livelihoods, especially through small vendors operating at tourism centers. Eco-tourism focuses on nature-based destinations and promotes environmental conservation along with community participation, while pilgrimage tourism revolves around religious and spiritual sites that attract visitors throughout the year.

In the erstwhile Nalgonda district of Telangana, both eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism centers attract a large number of tourists and pilgrims. Vendors at these centers provide essential goods and services such as food, refreshments, souvenirs, pooja items, and local handicrafts. These vendors act as a crucial link between tourism activities and the local economy, depending on tourist inflow for their livelihood.

However, the nature of dependency, income stability, and operational challenges vary between eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism vendors. Eco-tourism vendors often face seasonal fluctuations and infrastructure constraints, while pilgrimage tourism vendors generally experience more stable demand but face issues such as overcrowding and regulation. In this context, the present study attempts to analyze the socio-economic profile, problems, and prospects of eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism vendors in the erstwhile Nalgonda district, using primary and secondary data supported by statistical analysis.

Objectives:

1.To study the socio-economic profile of eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism vendors.

2.To analyze the level of dependency of vendors on eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism for their livelihood.

3.To identify the problems faced by vendors at eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism centers.

Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference in the mode of dependence of vendors between Eco-Tourism and Pilgrimage Tourism.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant difference in the mode of dependence of vendors between Eco-Tourism and Pilgrimage Tourism.

Methodology:

The study is based on both **primary and secondary sources of data**, collected from selected Eco-Tourism and Pilgrimage Tourism centers in the erstwhile Nalgonda District.

.1.The Socio-Economic Profile of Eco-Tourism and Pilgrimage Tourism Vendors.

Eco-Tourism vendors are mostly local residents from nearby rural or forest-fringe villages. They are generally involved in small-scale activities such as selling food items, refreshments, handicrafts, and providing guiding or transport services. Their income is largely seasonal and depends on tourist inflow during holidays and peak seasons. Most eco-tourism vendors belong to middle- or lower-income groups, have limited educational qualifications, and rely on tourism as a supplementary or seasonal source of livelihood.

Pilgrimage tourism vendors are commonly located near temples and religious centers. Many of them operate their businesses as a family tradition passed down through generations. They sell flowers, pooja materials, prasadam, souvenirs, and food items. Compared to eco-tourism vendors, pilgrimage vendors generally enjoy more stable income throughout the year due to regular religious visits. They tend to have longer business experience, stronger family involvement, and higher dependency on tourism for livelihood.

Overall, both groups play a vital role in local economies. However, eco-tourism vendors face greater income uncertainty due to seasonality, while pilgrimage tourism vendors show higher economic stability and long-term dependence on tourism activities

2. Dependency of vendors on Eco-Tourism and Pilgrimage Tourism:

Mode		Mode Fully Dependent	Partially Fully Dependent	Not dependent at all	It's afamily Tradition	Seanoally doing business	Total
Eco-Tourism	F	8	10	5	3	19	45
	%	18%	22%	11%	7%	42%	100%
Pilgrimage Tourism	F	21	7	3	5	9	45
	%	47%	16%	7%	11%	20%	100%

Source: Primary data

The table explains the **mode of dependence of vendors** on Eco-Tourism and Pilgrimage Tourism for their livelihood.

In **Eco-Tourism**, a large proportion of vendors (42%) are **seasonally doing business**, indicating that their income mainly depends on tourist inflow during peak seasons such as holidays and weekends. About **22%** are **partially dependent**, meaning tourism is a supplementary source of income. Only **18%** are **fully dependent** on eco-tourism, showing limited year-round reliance. A smaller percentage of vendors operate due to **family tradition (7%)**, while **11%** are **not dependent at all**, suggesting they engage in other occupations.

In contrast, Pilgrimage Tourism shows a higher level of dependency. Nearly **47%** of vendors are **fully dependent** on pilgrimage tourism, reflecting steady demand throughout the year due to continuous religious visits. About **20%** are **seasonal vendors**, while **16%** are **partially dependent**. Vendors following **family tradition** account for **11%**, indicating long-established businesses near religious centers. Only **7%** are **not dependent at all**.

Overall, the data reveals that **eco-tourism vendors are largely seasonal and less dependent**, whereas **pilgrimage tourism vendors show greater and more stable dependence** on tourism for their livelihood. This highlights the need for policy support to reduce seasonality effects in eco-tourism and improve vendor sustainability.

Chi-Square Test for Dependency of vendors:

Chi-square value (χ^2)	Degrees of freedom (df)	p-value
10.93	4	0.027

Source: Primary data

The chi-square test was conducted to examine whether there is a significant difference in the **mode of dependence of vendors** between eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism.

- The **chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 10.93$)** indicates the extent of variation between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies. A higher value suggests a greater difference between the two groups.
- The **degrees of freedom (df = 4)** are based on the number of categories of dependence considered in the study.
- The **p-value (0.027)** is less than the standard level of significance (0.05).

Since the **p-value is less than 0.05**, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means there is a **statistically significant difference** in the mode of dependence of vendors between eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism.

Conclusion:

Vendors associated with eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism differ significantly in how they depend on tourism for their livelihood, with pilgrimage tourism vendors showing higher and more stable dependence compared to eco-tourism vendors.

3. Problems faced by vendors at Eco-Tourism and Pilgrimage Tourism Centers:

1. **Seasonal Business:** Eco-tourism vendors in Nalgonda depend heavily on weekends and holiday seasons, resulting in irregular income.
2. **Lack of Proper Infrastructure:** Many centers lack permanent stalls, drinking water, toilets, electricity, and storage facilities.
3. **Absence of Designated Vending Zones:** Vendors often operate on roadsides or open spaces, leading to safety issues and frequent relocation.
4. **Regulatory and Licensing Issues:** Many vendors do not have formal licenses, making them vulnerable to eviction and harassment.
5. **High Competition:** At pilgrimage centers like temple areas, large numbers of vendors reduce individual earnings, especially during festivals.
6. **Poor Waste Management:** Inadequate garbage disposal facilities affect cleanliness and discourage tourists.
7. **Limited Training and Awareness:** Vendors lack training in hospitality, hygiene, pricing, and eco-friendly practices.
8. **Low Financial Support:** Limited access to loans, subsidies, and government welfare schemes restricts business growth.
9. **Environmental Restrictions:** Eco-tourism sites have restrictions to protect nature, which limits vending activities.
10. **Dependence on Tourist Inflow:** Both eco-tourism and pilgrimage vendors are highly dependent on tourist numbers and religious calendars, causing income instability.

Findings of the Study:

1. Eco-tourism vendors in the erstwhile Nalgonda district are mostly local residents and depend largely on **seasonal tourist inflow**, leading to fluctuating and uncertain income.
2. Pilgrimage tourism vendors show a **higher level of dependency** on tourism as a primary source of livelihood due to year-round religious activities.
3. A significant proportion of eco-tourism vendors (42%) are engaged in **seasonal business**, whereas nearly half of the pilgrimage tourism vendors (47%) are **fully dependent** on tourism.
4. The chi-square test results reveal a **statistically significant difference** in the mode of dependence between eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism vendors.
5. Eco-tourism vendors face greater challenges related to **infrastructure deficiencies, seasonality, and environmental restrictions**.

6. Pilgrimage tourism vendors face issues such as **high competition, overcrowding, regulatory challenges, and lack of organized vending spaces**.
7. Both groups of vendors suffer from **limited access to financial support, training, and government welfare schemes**.
8. Vendors play a crucial role in enhancing tourist experience and supporting the local economy, yet their contribution remains largely informal and under-supported.

Conclusion:

The study reveals clear differences in the dependency patterns, income stability, and challenges faced by eco-tourism and pilgrimage tourism vendors in the erstwhile Nalgonda district. Eco-tourism vendors are predominantly seasonal and experience income uncertainty due to fluctuating tourist inflow, while pilgrimage tourism vendors demonstrate higher and more stable dependence owing to continuous religious visits. The chi-square analysis confirms a significant difference in the mode of dependence between the two groups. Despite their vital role in tourism development and local employment generation, vendors face several problems such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of organized vending zones, regulatory issues, and limited institutional support. The study concludes that focused policy interventions, improved infrastructure, skill development programs, and financial inclusion are essential to enhance vendor sustainability and promote balanced and inclusive tourism development in the region.

Recommendations:

The study recommends improving infrastructure and creating organized vending zones at eco-tourism and pilgrimage centers to support vendor activities. Skill development programs, easy access to financial assistance, and simplified licensing procedures are necessary to strengthen vendor livelihoods. Promoting year-round eco-tourism activities can help reduce seasonal income fluctuations, while encouraging the sale of local products will enhance income opportunities. Proper waste management, environmental protection measures, and active participation of local communities in tourism planning are essential for achieving sustainable and inclusive tourism development in the erstwhile Nalgonda district.

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