

Environmentally– Sustainable tourists’ Behaviour and Environmental Sustainability at Eco-Tourism Destinations

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ABSTRACT

Environmental sustainability is the very fundamental topic to be addressed in the contemporary tourism industry. In order to achieve sustainability in the tourism destinations, tourists’ have to possess the environmentally sustainable consumer behaviour. From the review of various literatures, it was found out that green image, pro-environmental behaviour in every day, environmental knowledge, green product attachment, descriptive social norms, anticipated pride and guilt, environmental social responsibility, perceived effectiveness, connectedness to nature and green value are the key determinants of environmental sustainable consumer behaviour. The main consumers of tourism industry are tourists. To protect the nature from the hitch of the nature based tourism/ Eco-tourism, the tourists’ environmental sustainable behaviour is necessary. Therefore, the present paper tries to analyse the relationship between environmentally sustainable tourists’ behaviour and environmental sustainability in eco-tourism destinations.

Key Words: *Environmental sustainable tourists’ behaviour, environmental sustainability, eco-tourism, determinants, pro-environmental behaviour in every day.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry is considered as one of the major economic sources of a country. The tourism and hospitality sector creates new jobs and contribute a recommendable share in GDPs. Prior to pandemic, the travel and tourism industry contributed one in four of all new jobs and 10.3% of global GDP & the share decreased to 5.3% in 2020 due to on-going restrictions to mobility. (Economic Impact Report – World Travel and Tourism Council).

Travel and tourism plays a major contributor in India’ GDP also. India stands sixth position in tourism receipts in Asia Pacific region.(India Tourism Statistics 2020). In the World Economic Forum (WEF) travel and tourism development index 2021, India stood at 54 th position out of 117 countries. Though India is top scorer in South Asia, the index is 8 lower than in 2019. (India Times). One of the main reasons for the lowest rank compared to 2019 was India lost points in the criteria viz, enabling environment and policy. But, India’s rank increased by 8 in the TTDI criteria of natural resources. ((India TourismStatistics 2022).

Though there are different types of tourism prevailing in the country, eco-tourism is considered to be most significant in sustainable tourism (Kiper, T, 2013).The World Tourism Organisation defines ecotourism as: all nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas. So the impact on environment is low, the local community is get benefited and visitors get educated about the natural flora, fauna and local culture through eco-tourism. The eco-tourism promotes sustainable development in the country.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Sustainability is a social goal which focuses on meeting the current needs without compromising the needs of future generation. (UN Academic Impact). The availability of natural resources is diminishing; the air and environment become polluted, enormous use of toxic products etc. compelling us to think wisely and practically. One of the major elements of 2030 agenda of Sustainable development goals (SDGs) is to ensure lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. These days every nations try to fulfil the SDGs. Every year SDGs report is published by UN. This report provides a global overview of the implementation of Agenda 2030. (UN Department of Economic & Social Welfare).

The agenda 2030 focuses all aspects of human life. Overall sustainability can be achieved through this agenda. Tourism industries also have a significant role in achieving sustainability. The eco tourism and its allied sectors play a very crucial role in the sustainable development of our nation.

Eco-tourism fosters the local community and their economic conditions. The sustainable development through eco-tourism is an integrated, comprehensive and human oriented approach. (Rezaeinejad, I & Khaniwadekar, A, 2021). Therefore, the attitude and behaviour of human has a significant role in the sustainable eco-tourism destinations. These days, the environment is damaging, polluted, atmosphere is spoiling, the environmental values are degrading, external interference is a lot in the natural habitat which affect the eco system and flora, fauna, valuable species, dumping of waste and polluting water sources and overcrowding causes shortage of drinking water (Kumar, S and Ramasawamy, S. 2010). All these negatively affect the environment as well as the sustainable development. In this situation the tourists' behaviour in the eco tourism destinations will affect the environmental sustainability in those eco tourism destinations. Only environmental sustainable tourists can protect the natural resources of the tourism destinations and help to attain the sustainable environment in the ecotourism destinations. In this background, the researcher tries to analyse the relationship between the environmentally - sustainable tourists' behaviour and environmental sustainability at eco-tourism destinations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The current environmental issues like air/water/soil pollutions, excess use of natural resources etc. affect adversely on the sustainability of the environment. (Wang et al. 2020, Xu et al. 2020). These issues are mainly because of the insensible human behaviours (Hopkins, 2020; Steg & Vlek, 2009; Xu et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020). The scholars in the field of environmental sustainability argue that the issues related to environment can be minimised through the human being's environmentally sustainable behaviour (Han, 2020; Steg & Vlek, 2019). The human beings' consumption and behaviour patterns must be in a pro-environmental manner to attain environmental sustainability (Halder et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020).

The researchers in the area of environmental behaviour and consumer behaviour tries to establish the environmentally-sustainable consumer behaviour (Bridges & Wilhelm, 2008; Chan, 2001; Joshi & Rahman, 2015).

But the relationship between the environmental -sustainable consumer behaviour and environmental sustainability in tourism sector especially in eco-tourism destinations is not much conceptualised by the researchers. Majority of the researchers tried to find out the way to minimise the negative impact of the environmental issues by considering various approaches (Kumar, S and Ramasawamy, S, 2010). Some researchers tried to investigate the effect of various factors on pro-environmental behaviour in the eco-tourism sites (Lee, Ki et al., 2021). There are some research works in the area of factors drives choices of eco-friendly tourism destinations. The finding of the study contributes to the pro-environmental planning and growing economy (Nowacki, M, et al. (2021).

There are some studies in the Indian context on the local residents perception on economic, social and environmental impact on tourism on various demographic variables (Rashid, I., 2020). Some studies focused on the indigenous communities in the effective implementation of community based tourism in the Periyar tiger reserve, Kerala (Arman, M et al., 2022).

So in the Indian context, especially in Kerala context, there were very little studies were conducted on the relationship between environmentally-sustainable tourists' behaviour and environmental sustainability at eco-tourism destinations.

Objective Of The Study

The main objective of the study is to analyse the relationship between environmentally sustainable tourists' behaviour and environmental sustainability in eco- tourism destinations.

Hypothesis Of The Study

There exist a positive relationship between environmental sustainable tourists' behaviour and environmental sustainability in eco- tourism destinations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive and analytical one. Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Secondary data were collected from Govt. And other websites, various journals, newspapers, articles, periodicals etc. Primary data were collected from the officials at the eco-tourism destinations and tourists visited the place. Structured Interview schedule was prepared for data collection. The data collected for the study was from Kodanad elephant training & its nearby eco-tourism destinations in Ernakulam district of Kerala state. Kodanadu elephant training centre is the first rescue and training centre in Kerala, Abhyaranyam eco-tourism project, Illithodu, panyeliporu, malayattoor church etc. are the other tourism destinations within the five kilometres surroundings of Kodanad elephant training centre.

Convenience sampling method is used for data collection. Sample size was of tourists were 400. Mean, standard deviation, correlation and regressions were used for analysis.

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSIONS

In the present study, the relationship between environmental sustainability at eco-tourism destination and environmentally sustainable behaviour of tourists' were analysed. For this purpose, first of all, eco-tourism destinations sustainability were analysed through various statements. The officials at the tourism destinations were asked to rate the statements at five point scale. Mean and standard deviations were calculated and presented in Table 1. From the Table 1, it is clear that, they foster healthy attitude and behaviour towards nature (Mean 4.5675) followed by Increases public environmental consciousness (Mean 4.4975).

Table 1: Environmental sustainability at eco-tourism destinations

Sl. No	ROLE	Mean	SD
(i)	Promotes environmental protection through impact assessment and environmental planning, construction methods and materials, visual impacts, water supply, air quality, waste minimisation and litter drainage and storm water, wastewater, water conservation, energy minimisation— buildings, energy minimisation— transport, minimal impact on wildlife	4.3325	0.85074
(ii)	Provides environmental education	4.3150	0.87618
(iii)	Increases public environmental consciousness	4.4975	0.91218
(iv)	Fosters healthy attitudes and behaviours towards nature	4.5675	0.99897
(v)	Encourages donations to contribute to the protection of local natural resources air quality	3.6225	1.32642

Source: Primary Data

From the review of various literatures, it was found out that green image, pro-environmental behaviour in every day, environmental knowledge, green product attachment, descriptive social norms, anticipated pride and guilt, environmental social responsibility, perceived effectiveness, connectedness to nature and green value are the key determinants of environmental sustainable consumer behaviour are the key determinants of environmental sustainable consumer behaviour. For the present study, 26 statements related to the key determinants were asked to tourists and asked them to rate the statements in a five point scale. Factor analysis was not performed and didn't grouped the statements under the above said variables in the present study because, the researcher assumed that the tourists' were not so familiar with the technical jargons and their responses may affect the quality of the entire study. Mean and standard deviations were calculated and presented in Table 2. From the Table 2, it is clear that, the tourists possess environmental sustainable behaviours as they opined that green products helps to minimise environmental pollutions (Mean 3.925) followed by According to my perspective green products are essential (Mean 3.82).

Table 2: Mean and SD of environmentally sustainable tourists' behaviour

Sl. No	Behaviours	Mean	SD
a)	I use only eco-friendly products	3.7650	1.20141
b)	According to my perspective green products are essential.	3.8200	1.16662
c)	I always tell my friends about the features and benefits of green products	3.7400	1.20874
d)	Green products helps to minimise environmental pollutions	3.9250	1.24831
e)	I always respect the natural resources	3.4275	1.10807
f)	I always turn off lights and fans when I live a room	3.5600	1.07438
g)	Alternative energy sources are vital for environmental protection	3.2975	1.10773
h)	I always Recycle the plastic bottles and plastic wastes	2.9975	1.06316
i)	I uses screen guard for my mobiles	3.5250	1.04264
j)	I always Use transport that minimizes the impact on the environment	3.5425	1.14956
k)	When I visit tourist places I always ask the officials for written codes of conduct to guarantee protection of the environment in the destination	3.5500	1.21292
l)	I always concern about limiting the production of garbage in the tourist places	3.6475	1.22964
m)	I always ask for Favouring environmentally friendly accommodation	3.6625	1.31641
n)	I try to avoid disposable products	3.5725	1.22617

o)	I always take steps to conserve water, energy	3.4950	1.16978
p)	I am attached to green products and I am always search only green brands	2.5200	1.01349
q)	I am always trying to be an environmental responsible person	2.8675	1.01366
r)	I always ask the hotels and restaurants where I visit during my trips about their environmental social responsibility.	3.4575	0.98774
s)	I always think that my respect for the natural resources of the destination& limited usage of natural resources in the destination will help to maintain environmental sustainability	3.6525	1.18966
t)	I feel , I am so much connected to the environment	3.5950	0.92092
u)	This tourism destination protect the real value of the nature	3.5350	1.27914
v)	I always keep a bio diversity register and ask my fellow travellers to do the same	3.3450	0.96088
w)	I persuade others to sort waste.	2.9625	1.03865
x)	I participate in conducting surveys on animal and plant-related activities in the vicinity of the community.	3.0575	1.04014
y)	I always follow the instructions in the destination place to protect that environment	3.7325	1.12432
z)	I feel my own personal behaviour can bring about positive environmental change	3.7000	1.40889

Source: Primary Data

In order to know the relationship between environmental sustainable tourists' behaviour and environmental sustainability in eco- tourism destinations, the following tests were performed.

Table 3: Correlation between environmental sustainable tourists' behaviour and environmental sustainability in eco- tourism destinations

Variables	r value	Sig. value	N
Environmental Sustainability in Eco- tourism Destinations	0.766	0.000	400

Source: Primary Data

The Table 3 clearly depicts the correlation coefficient (r) value of the environmental sustainability in eco- tourism destinations with environmentally sustainable tourists' behaviour. Correlation is used to measure the extent of relation between these two variables. Since, the p value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there exists a significant relationship between environmental sustainability and environmentally sustainable behaviours

The r shows a value of 0.766 for environmental sustainability in eco- tourism destinations and environmentally sustainable tourists' behaviour which indicates a high correlation between two variables.

Relationship between Environmentally Sustainable Tourists' Behaviour And Environmental Sustainability in Eco- tourism Destinations

The effect of relationship between Environmentally Sustainable Tourists' Behaviour and Environmental Sustainability in Eco- tourism Destinations can be measured using regression analysis. Correlation tells us something about the predictive power of variable. In regression analysis, a predictive model is fitted to our data and use that model to predict values of dependent variable from one or more independent variable. How much one variable is explained by another variable is explained through regression. The table shows the results of regression analysis of Environmentally Sustainable Tourists' Behaviour and Environmental Sustainability in Eco- tourism Destinations.

Table 4: Regression between Environmentally Sustainable Tourists' Behaviour and Environmental Sustainability in Eco- tourism Destinations

Independent variable	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate	Std. Coefficients	Sig.
Environmentally Sustainable Tourists' Behaviour	0.766	0.586	0.585	14.13743	0.766	0.000

Source: Primary Data

Here, in The Table 4, the environmentally sustainable tourists' behaviours taken as independent variable and the environmental sustainability in eco-tourism destinations was taken as dependent variable. From the table 4, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is 0.766, which shows a high correlation between environmental sustainable tourists' behaviour and environmental sustainability in eco-tourism destinations. R square tries to explain the proportion of variance. Here, R square is 0.586 that is, 58.6 % of the Environmental Sustainability in Eco-tourism Destinations is done through the Environmentally Sustainable Tourists' Behaviour and remaining by other factors.

Hence, the hypothesis stated "There exist a positive relationship between environmental sustainable tourists' behaviour and environmental sustainability in eco-tourism destinations" is proved.

CONCLUSION

Consumers/tourists considerably contribute to attain environmental sustainability through their environmental sustainable consumption pattern and their eco-friendly behaviour (Dong et al., 2000; Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017). From the study, it is clear that the tourists' environmental sustainable behaviour has a positive influence on the environmental sustainability at eco-tourism destinations. By creating more awareness on green products, pursuing people more on environmental concern, educating them to recycle or reuse plastic bottles and wastes, insist them to sort the gradable and degradable wastes, motivate them to use alternative source of energy, insist them to keep a biodiversity register with them etc. will create more responsibility among consumers/tourists. The present study help the authorities to know where to concentrate more to attain sustainability. Thus, the paper give a birds' eye view on the relationship between environmentally-sustainable tourists' behaviour and environmental sustainability at eco-tourism destinations.

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