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Economic Development of Tourism in the Western Ghats Region

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Abstract

The Western Ghats mountains, the world's biodiversity hotspot, span along India's west coast from the Taputi River in the north to the Krishna River in the south. The Western Ghats are rich in biology and biogeography due to their unique geographic position, making them rich in biodiversity. Tourism is critical to economic growth since it is the second greatest source of foreign exchange after agriculture. As a result, the economy benefits both the host country and the host country. The major purpose of the study is to determine how happy tourists are with the tourism amenities available in the Western Ghats. Several major results on economic growth in the Western Ghats were uncovered in this study. Because of its historical significance and attractiveness, it has a high potential for tourism and trade. The Western Ghats' distinctive biological traits should be maintained, and steps should be done to reduce the environmental effect of tourism operations. This involves implementing waste management practices, encouraging employment, and conserving the region's tradition and culture. WesternGhats can maximise tourism potential, give a better experience for travellers, and assist improve company and community health by investing in infrastructure development and applying sustainable practices.

Keywords: Biodiversity, Tropical Climate, Foreign Exchange, Marketing Strategies, Potential, Infrastructure, Heritage and Culture, Sustainability.

Introduction

The Western Ghats mountains, the world's biodiversity hotspot, stretch the length of India's west coast, from the Taputi River in the north to the Arabian Sea in the south. The Western Ghats are rich in biology and biogeography due to their unique geographic position, making them rich in biodiversity. Despite covering 180,000 square kilometres and accounting for only 6% of India's landmass, the Western Ghats are home to more than 30% of the country's vegetation, fish, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Many species exist, including the nilgiri monkey (*Hemitragus hylodrius*) and the lion-tailed macaque (*Macaca silenus*). In fact, the region is home to 50 percent of India's amphibians and 67 percent of its fish.

Western Ghats

The Western Ghats mountains, which are older than the Himalayas, have significant geomorphic characteristics as well as distinct biophysical and biological processes. The region's Alpine forest ecosystems have an impact on Indian climatic patterns. The place, which has adapted to the tropical environment, is one of the most magnificent representations of summer in the world. It is also rich in biodiversity and endemism, and it is one of the world's eight biodiversity "hotspots." The region's woodlands feature some of the greatest examples of nonequatorial tropical evergreen forests and are home to at least 325 animal and plant species, including birds, amphibians, reptiles, and fish. The Western Ghats have been designated as one of the world's eight biodiversity hotspots due to its high levels of biodiversity and endemism.

It is classed as an evergreen forest due to the 350 inches of rain it receives each year. This region is especially rich in biodiversity. Although the Western Ghats encompass less than 6% of India's land area, they are home to more than 30% of the country's flora, fish, reptiles, birds, and mammals. The Western Ghats, also known as Mount Sahyadri, are noted for their diverse and unusual vegetation and wildlife. In northern Maharashtra, the range is known as Sahyadri, while in Kerala, it is known as Sahya Parvatham. The Konkan coast is the northern section of the narrow shoreline between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea.

Kodaikanal is a well-known and popular tourist destination in South India. The hill village is located on Palani Hill, 7,200 feet above sea level, in Tamil Nadu's Western Ghats, near to the city of Madurai. In popular culture, Kodaikanal is known as the "Prince of Hill Stations." Visitors from all over the world will be captivated by the gorgeous rolling hills, deep trees, and year-round chill and humidity in and around Kodaikanal. You may ride your horse or bike around the lake, go boating on it, swim in the waterfall, take a walk in the woods, or simply enjoy the scenery. Dindigul is 95 kilometres away, Madurai is 117 kilometres away, Coimbatore is 169 kilometres away, Bangalore is 469 miles away, Cochin is 272 kilometres away, Munnar is 162 kilometres away, and Dindigul is 253 kilometres away, 528 kilometres from Chennai.

The station is located in the Tamil Nadu district of Dindigul. It is one of the greatest sites to visit in Tamil Nadu and one of the most unmissable stops in South India. Kodai is known as the "Princess of the Mountain Station" and is a favourite summer honeymoon resort. It is situated in the heart of the North Palani Hills at an elevation of approximately 7,000 feet (2,133 metres). It is a famous holiday location due to its numerous natural attractions.

Lake Kodai, Silver Cascade, and Coaker's Walk are all must-sees. The nearest airport to Kodai is in Madurai. There are no direct trains from Bangalore to Kodaikanal. The nearest station is Kodai route, which is on the Madurai-Dindigul route. The station has excellent connections to major Indian cities. Madurai, Coimbatore, Palani, Dindigul, Ooty, and more cities. From the cities, there are

direct bus connections. Arappalayam Station serves as the departure point for buses from Madurai to Kodaikanal. The summer months of April to June are ideal for visiting Kodaikanal. The monsoon season, which lasts from September through October, also has an impact. Kodaikanal's initial residents were the Palea tribe. In 1845, American missionaries and British authorities created today's Kodaikanal to shield it from the plains' sweltering summers and tropical illnesses. Some rich Indians began to relocate to this lovely mountain in the twentieth century. In comparison to Ooty, Kodaikanal is less commercialised and offers a better visitor experience. Aside from its lovely environment, Kodaikanal is home to a number of tourist attractions, including Lake Kodai, Bryant Park, Coaker's Walk, Bear Shola Falls, Silver Cascade, and Pillar Rocks. The views from all across the mountain are spectacular, especially from Coaker's Walk.

Tourism is critical to economic growth since it is the second greatest source of foreign exchange after agriculture. As a result, the economy benefits both the host country and the host country. The primary economic consequences of tourism are increased government income, increased foreign exchange revenues, job creation, and business creation. Kodaikanal is a significant location with significant tourist and activity potential. Tourist perceptions of employment infrastructure in Kodaikanal were examined in this study. With the number of international travellers approaching one billion dollars each year and growing, the potential in the tourism industry are limitless.

However, many locations and tourism industries have failed. Why are there so many locations to fight in a tourist-friendly climate? Work is both a crucial component of the answer and a significant part of the issue.

Today's tourists may discover the nation with the tap of a finger, speak with isolated islands on their way to work, and produce entertainment using easy online tools. Many travel companies are frustrated by their inability to communicate and engage with this internet audience. As a result, don't send it. Begin advertising once you've established a goal. Your travel firm will be unable to acquire new consumers if you do not use a combination of travel marketing

advice, tools, and technology. Worse, potential customers will be unable to locate you.

Travel marketing necessitates items that appeal to their target audience, content that attracts potential consumers, and customer support that is focused on their requirements. Inbound marketing, as opposed to outbound marketing (such as paid web advertising or direct mail), focuses on making it easier for your company to locate and attract prospects. Similar International offers complete, creative commercial marketing services and business consultancy to the tourism sector and destinations. Terzi produces marketing strategies based on their own consumer preferences, competitive advantage, and unique goals, from strategic planning and product creation to website analysis and customer relationship management.

Scope of the Study

The major purpose of the study is to determine how happy tourists are with the tourism amenities available in Kodaikanal. The research’s goal is to find solutions to challenges and gaps in tourist infrastructure development in the study region, as well as tourism support services such as the number and quality of public transit, hotel, food, banking, park amenities, retail, and medical facilities. The replies from the visitors who took part in this survey are provided here, and their thoughts and suggestions serve as guides for future action in Kodaikanal.

Objectives of the Study

This study has developed the following objectives.

- Review the construction industry in Kodaikanal.
- Evaluation of infrastructure development related to tourism products and services in Kodaikanal.
- To make suggestions and recommendations to improve the marketing of products in Kodaikanal.

Methodology

The tourist industry of Kodaikanal in Dindugarh district is presented in this paper. Researchers are encouraged to use the sampling approach because a census is not practicable. I chose the Kodaikanal Tourism Centre. In an area with 15 tourism centres, 5 tourism centres were chosen for this study: Lake,

Pillar Rock, Kurinji Andavar Temple, Silver Falls, and Fine Forest. These tourist centres typically sell out the entire city. A sample of 100 visitors from each place was taken at random, and 500 visitors were chosen. In this study, two tests, the “F” test (Analysis of Variance), the “Z” correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analysis were used.

Table 1 Reasons for the Preference of Infrastructure Facilities Among the Tourist Products through Kodaikanal

Reasons	No.of tourister Supporting the reason	Percentage On Total No. Of tourister	Rank
Public transport	201	83.75	II
Accommodation	154	64.17	VI
Peaceful time	213	88.75	I
Food	189	78.75	III
Price	172	71.67	IV
Safety	144	60.00	VII
Shopping	160	66.67	V
Medical facilities	136	56.67	VIII

Source: Primary Data

The tourist business in Kodaikanal, Dindugarh district, is presented in this paper. Researchers are encouraged to adopt the sampling approach because censuses cannot be done. I chose the Kodaikanal Tourism Centre. There are 15 tourism centres in Kodaikanal, and 5 of them were chosen for this study: Lake, Pillar Rock, Kurinji Andavar Temple, Silver Falls, and Fine Forest. These tourist centres often sell all of the city’s attractions. A simple random sample of 100 visitors was taken from each site, for a total of 500 tourists. In this study, two tests, the “F” test (ANOVA), the “Z” correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analysis were used.

In Kodaikanal, there are several tourist attractions as well as attractions for local items. Istrank Lake is located in the city, and the fall level is Gümüş Waterfall. The tourism region’s information has been examined and written about. Table 2 shows the reasons for this choice among 240 business visits, in addition to conducting business from Kodaikanal. Sixty-six travel sector firm owners said they squandered monies received from other

companies to fulfil earlier debts. This one stands out due to the beginning level and a variety of additional characteristics.

Table 2 Reasons for the Preference of Marketing of Tourist Products Through Kodaikanal

Reasons	No. of tourister Supporting the reason	Percentage On Total No. Of tourister	Rank
Lake	201	83.75	I
Pillar rock	154	64.17	V
Kurinji-Andavar Temple	213	88.75	II
Silver Falls	189	78.75	V
Fine forest	172	71.67	IV

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 Classification of Sample Tourister on the Basis of Opinion Score

Classification	Number of sample tourister	Total Score	Mean Score
Dissatisfied	277(55.40)	8555	30.89
Neutral	148 (29.60)	6360	42.97
Satisfied	75 (15.00)	6125	82.20
Total	500 (100)	21080	42.16

Figures in parentheses are percentage.

Socio Economic Conditions of the Tourister

The transfer coefficient was used to assess the strength of the association between socioeconomic variables and knowledge levels. As a result, correlation coefficients are only employed when the framing null hypothesis is not accepted. The following formula is used for this.

$$C = \sqrt{\frac{\sum d^2}{\sum d^2 + n}}$$

Where,

C = Value of Contingency Co-efficient

N = Number of respondents

When the value of ‘C’ is equal to or close to one, it indicates that the two qualities are highly associated.

‘C’ has a value of 0.23. The letter ‘C’ implies that there is little correlation between age and viewpoint. Based on chi-square, it is established that there is a substantial relationship between age and viewpoint. The contingent co-efficient of 0.23 indicates that there is a modest degree of correlation between age and viewpoint.

Table 4 Age and Opinion: X² Test

Age	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
Young	23 (41.10)	28 (50.00)	5 (8.90)	56 (100)
Middle	100 (57.50)	60 (34.50)	14 (8.00)	174 (100)
Old	154 (57.10)	60 (22.20)	56 (20.70)	270 (100)
Total	277 (55.40)	148 (29.60)	75 (15.00)	500 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentage. D.f:4 x² = 29.498 ‘C’ = 0.23

Table 4 shows that 270 (54% of) the passengers are adults. Also found to be unsatisfied with the existing business are 57.50% of visitors in their middle years and 57.10% of tourists in their senior years. The frame’s null hypothesis was rejected since the computed chisquare value (29.498) was greater than the table value (9.488), and it was discovered that there was a significant association between the age of the tourist model and its attitudes on tourism and current employment. The probability coefficient was used to examine the strength of the relationship between health factors and knowledge level. Table 5 displays the results.

Table 5 Age and Opinion Score: F – Test

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degress of freedom	Mean Square	F – Value	Result
Between Samples	348.768	2	174.384	3.573	Significant
Within Samples	24500.652	497	49.297		
Total	24849.420	499			

The estimated value of ‘F’ (3.573) is more than the table value (2.99), as shown in Table 5. As a

result, it is possible to conclude that the relationship between the mean score of different age groups and the viewpoint of the sample tourist is significant.

Table 6 Educational Level and Opinion: X² Test

Educational level	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
Illiterate	108 (74.50)	31 (21.40)	6 (4.10)	145 (100)
School level	158 (50.15)	88 (27.95)	69 (21.90)	315 (100)
College level	11 (27.50)	23 (57.50)	6 (15.00)	40 (100)
Total	277 (55.40)	142 (28.40)	81 (16.20)	500 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentage. D.f: 4 $X^2 = 84.255$ 'C' = 0.37

According to Table 6, 315 (63%) of the sample tourists had a high school diploma. Furthermore, 74.50% of illiterate sample tourists and 50.15% of school level sample tourists are unsatisfied with the current marketing method.

Table 7 Educational Level and Opinion Score

Educational level	Number of sample tourist	Total Score	Mean Score
Illiterate	145 (29.00)	5658	39.03
School level	315 (63.00)	13643	43.31
College level	40 (8.00)	1779	44.48
Total	500 (100)	21080	42.16

Figures in parentheses are percentage

According to Table 7, the average score of university visitors (44.48) is greater than the average score of other tourist samples. The "F" test was employed to determine the significance of the difference in average scores based on education level and tourist views. Table 8 has detailed questions.

Table 8 Educational Level and Opinion: X² Test

Educational level	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
Illiterate	108 (74.50)	31 (21.40)	6 (4.10)	145 (100)
School level	158 (50.15)	88 (27.95)	69 (21.90)	315 (100)

College level	11 (27.50)	23 (57.50)	6 (15.00)	40 (100)
Total	277 (55.40)	142 (28.40)	81 (16.20)	500 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentage. D.f: 4 $X^2 = 84.255$ 'C' = 0.37

According to Table 8, 315 (63%) of the sample F have a high school diploma. Furthermore, 74.50% of illiterate sample tourists and 50.15% of school level sample tourists are unsatisfied with the current marketing method.

Ranking of Problems Faced in Popular Tourist Destinations

Environmental pollution, taxi drivers, rowdy hotel staff, a lack of hygiene, retail competitiveness, connections with tour guides and bank accounts, transit, and parking are just a few of the challenges that travellers face. Data from travellers was collected to establish the most common issues. Table 9 lists the challenges that travellers face at their destination.

Table 9 Problems Facing in the Visiting Places - Garretts Ranking Technique

Problems facing in the visiting places	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
Environmental pollution	23923	60.56	III
Exploitation by taxi drivers	24539	62.12	II
Impolite behavior of hotel staff	19336	48.95	IV
Lack of cleanliness	26052	65.95	I
Problem caused by shop owners	17968	45.48	V
Poor relationship with guide	16846	42.64	VI
Inadequate banking facility	15768	39.91	VIII
Insufficient transport facilities	15549	39.36	IX
Inadequate parking facilities	16841	42.63	VII

As seen in Table 9, tourists are particularly worried about the cleanliness standards of prominent Kodaikanal locations. The following

table reveals that the taxi driver's behaviour is ranked second in the tourist case. According to the research, environmental contamination ranks third among tourists. Furthermore, data reveal that the character of tourists may result in a shortage of final transportation choices.

Ranking of Many Kodaikanal's More Popular Tourism Products

Data from travellers was gathered to determine which tourist goods have been the most popular. Table 1.10 shows the rating of Kodaikanal's tourism product advertising.

Table 10 Popular Tourism Products - Garretts Ranking Technique

Problems facing in the visiting places	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
Lake	32185	64.37	I
Natural park	31115	62.23	II
Natural museum	26954	53.90	IV
Pilgrimage	21601	43.20	IX
Green valley view	26484	52.96	V
Pine forest	27972	55.94	III
Homemade products	24541	49.08	VI
Pillar Rock	22890	45.78	VII
Guna gave	21898	43.79	VIII
Silver cascade	19272	38.54	X
Hotels	12939	25.87	XI

Table 10 clearly reveals that the most popular product in Kodaikanal was labelled "Lake" by the majority of the tourist samples. The table on the right shows that it is the second most visited "Nature Park" in terms of tourists. According to the book, the "pine forest" evaluation was done using the third tourist model. It is also obvious from the chart that the hotel ranks lowest among the tourist sample.

Ranking of Kodaikanal Residents' Favourite Tourist Attractions

Tourist data has been collected in order to establish which tourism goods are most popular with vacationers. Table 11 shows the rating of visitors' choice for tourism.

Table 11 Ranking of Tourism Products in Kodaikanal - Garretts Ranking Technique

Ranking of Tourism Products	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
Weather condition	26240	52.48	III
Water sources	24104	48.20	V
Forest	28522	57.04	II
Mountain	29175	58.35	I
Natural beauty	24878	49.75	IV
Religious festivals	16161	32.32	VI

Table 11 reveals that the "international" product was the most popular among the sample tourists in Kodaikanal. The chart also reveals that the tourist model "wood" is ranked second. The following table provides an assessment of the "climatic conditions" of the third tourist sample. The table shows that the tourist sample is at the "religious holiday" end.

A View on the Potential Growth of Kodaikanal Should be Expressed

To find out what travellers think about future development in Kodaikanal, data were collected from tourists and given in table 12.

Table 12 Opinion about Further Development to be made in Kodaikanal

Opinion about further development to be made in Kodaikanal	No. of Tourists	Percentage
Yes	470	94
No	30	06
Total	500	100

Source: Primary data

According to table 12, 470 (94%) of visitors believe that more development is required in Kodaikanal, while the remaining 30 (6%) believe that no such development is required.

Ranking of development of facilities in Kodaikanal

Data from visitors was collected in order to determine which amenities should be created in Kodaikanal. The rating of facility development in Kodaikanal is shown in table 13.

Table 13 Ranking of Development of Facilities - Garretts Ranking Technique

Ranking of development of facilities	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
Improve travel facility	26753	56.92	III
Reduce over taxi charges	14115	30.03	VI
Clean up the tourist places	27691	58.91	II
Better entertainment facility	21868	46.52	IV
Better services in the information centers	21618	45.99	V
Development of accommodation	28261	60.12	I

According to Table 1.13, the majority of the sample visitors awarded the highest rating to “Real Estate Development” in Kodaikanal. The tourist model is also ranked second in “tourist care” according to the chart. The table on the right illustrates that the tourist model places “tourism development” third. The table plainly shows that “discounted taxi fares” is the final position offered by the tourist sample.

Findings & Suggestions

This study identified several key findings regarding economic development in Kodaikanal. These are: Because of its historical significance and appeal, Kodaikanal has considerable potential for tourism and trade. Kodaikanal’s strategy to tourist growth should be distinct and distinct from other areas, with a concentration on the metro tourism model. Cleanliness is an essential concern in tourist areas, and visitors should not litter in order to attract visitors. The city’s attractiveness, upkeep, and cleanliness should be upgraded to benefit all tourists. To achieve a pollution-free environment, the government should prioritise road cleaning and widening, as well as the development of subterranean water lines.

Based on the Findings, the Following Recommendations Were Made

Create a strategic strategy: Implement a distinctive

economic development plan for Kodaikanal, taking into account its unique characteristics. This strategy should concentrate on providing a metro tourism experience that distinguishes Kodaikanal from other destinations. Promoting Cleanliness and Responsible Tourism: Raising visitor awareness of the significance of keeping tourist destinations clean. Organise activities and programmes to encourage visitors to properly dispose of rubbish and keep their surroundings clean. Improve City Infrastructure: Invest in the aesthetics, upkeep, and cleanliness of the city. This includes regular pavement maintenance, street and road expansion, and adequate drainage across the city. Heritage and Culture Preservation: It is concerned with the preservation and promotion of Kodaikanal’s heritage and culture. To take steps to conserve the environment, natural resources, and cultural tourism. Collaborations with stakeholders: Participate in the growth and upkeep of the tourist sector by involving local governments, commercial firms, and community organisations. To encourage collaboration in order to secure the long-term growth and development of tourist infrastructure and services.

Conclusion

The unique ecological characteristics of Kodaikanal should be maintained, and steps should be done to reduce the environmental implications of tourism activity. This involves using waste management techniques, encouraging employment, and conserving the region’s traditions and culture. To summarise, while Kodaikanal offers enormous promise as a tourism destination, the growth of the tourism sector is the most vital. The study’s conclusions emphasise the significance of ongoing efforts to improve tourist experience, transportation, and service quality while preserving the conservation and preservation of Kodaikanal’s natural and cultural resources. Kodaikanal can maximise tourism potential, provide a better experience for visitors, and assist improve company and community health by investing in infrastructure development and following sustainable practises.

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