

Sustainability In The Tourism Of Western Ghats Of Karnataka-A Roadmap Approach To The Policy Makers

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ABSTRACT

The focal point of sustainability in the tourism of Western Ghats of India is the crystal-clear water, healthy and wealthy eco-systems, well-maintained destinations, tourist attractions, and natural resources. The ratio of visitors has seen an increased path since, western Ghats records for innumerable beauty of scenic nature, wild animals, a variety of species of birds, animals, and insects, built-in structures, architecture, and heritage temples which creates an obvious curiosity in the minds of research-oriented visitors, educationalists, pilgrims, Anthropologists, architects, designers, engineers, families in general and children in specific and, nature lovers. Thus, tourism in the Western Ghats has drawn international attention and become inherently competitive since the tourists visiting to these places vary in culture and show relatively supportive or non-negotiating kind of attitudes towards the expenses involved in exploring the natural scenic places and other famous attractions like heritage temples, monuments, mosque, rivers, beaches, homestays, resorts, lodges and guest houses. The trade-related investments in the tourism of Western Ghats also have seen tremendous changes since it attracts an investment portfolio form both domestic and international for the development of tourism and related activities since the probability of making profits out of tourism in these destinations are relatively high. Thus, the call for a sustainable element becomes a major point of view and with the intention of the strong influence of adoptability of sustainability supported tourism mechanism, the current research paper gives an eye sight to focus on the importance of tourism in Western Ghats of Karnataka, its relative challenges to the safety of nature and other environmental concerns and thus provocation of policies to be reached to the policy makers in order to achieve the sustainability in tourism of Western Ghats in Karnataka.

Key Words: Sustainability, Policy makers, Tourism, International attention.

Introduction

The growing shift towards sustainable development has led to a renewed interest in the impacts of tourism on the environment, society, and culture. However, there has been difficulty in conceptualizing the ways that it produces various environmental, social, and cultural benefits as opposed to merely costs. Symptomatic of this has been the difficulty of incorporating models of cost benefit analysis in sustainable development, with such approaches biased towards the measurement of the economic aspects. Multicriteria analysis has emerged as one solution to overcome these deficiencies, but so far such models have lacked a framework for conceptualizing the interrelationship of elements characteristic of tourism systems (Balasubramanian, M. 2020).

Many researches have thought out of Western Ghats and significant works have been done for the sustainability achievement in its tourism not just because Western Ghats offers scenic attractions and it is known for many destinations; the true picture of the scene is that Western Ghats is one of the UNESCO listed heritage point. The eco system of Western Ghats provisions the services to an effective stay of humans, animals and many species under its thick coverage of green forests, offers wild foods, raw materials to many processing industries; it regulates or simply controls the Climate change, weather conditions of neighbouring regions in particular, many regions in general; along the way there is a huge heritage of culture followed in these regions

which the entire world do obeisance and spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation, and aesthetic experience of a human being and adhere to recreational services as well; the habitat services are not exceptional.

There is a need for the supplication of the phenomena to act in priority of the ecosystem of Western Ghats and the services of such eco system for the basic leaving, high ranging activities like tourism and commercial use of resources by the industry as general and by the entire globe as a whole. The economic valuation of the terms connected to tourism matters to look whether the eco-tourism aspects of Western Ghats have been implemented by the tour operators, tourist agencies, local community involved in the tourist activities, the visitors visiting the places and staying for the specified duration on these hotspots. Therefore, there is a need for a larger number of economic valuation studies for a better understanding of the importance of ecosystem services, as well as sustainable use of ecological resources.

The Eco-system of the Western Ghats spread through the regions like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Goa and Tamil Nadu offers a wide range of opportunities for the local communities living over there and found their lives on the top of the hills, on mountain ranges, on river beds, on coastal corners, on hill tops and inside the forest areas etc. to gain a lot from the resources available naturally to lead their life and gradually utilise those resources for commercial purpose (like timbers are extensively grown in Koorg specific regions and sold for huge prices; sand extracted from rivers are sold in the open market and makes lot of money out it.); hence the poverty levels will be exterminated gradually. Thus the paper, being conceptual in nature narrates the ways in which the forest resources and other natural resources of Western Ghats are being explored, extracted and extremely utilised and mis-utilised for the commercial gain, how the tourism developmental activities are linked with sustainability policies and policy makers point with this regard is viewed with support of literature, evidences gathered from secondary sources and accordingly the future projections are made to conserve and safeguard the environment of the western Ghats with reference to the state of Karnataka and supplicate the policies to be put in a frame work and work towards the benefit of nature and the gradual gain of a man without disturbing the mother nature, territory and abode.

It should also be in concern that the trading activities near the tourism destinations will be either handled by locals or by other migrants. The current trend is that the investment for tourism in these regions will be accumulated even by international hosts and there will be a chances of locals looking after these trade activities as care takers. On the whole it is summarised that the tourism in Western Ghats because of its innumerable attractions gets an attraction of investments from domestic and international investors as well. This should give an alarming alert to the government, local bodies and to the general public that wherever the scenic beauty is exploring to the core; there creates the greed of a human for an additional gain and the concept of exploring will get a U-turn and becomes an exploitation. Man who lives in the nature, gaining from nature will definitely destroy the nature if the policies are not created in favour of the nature, implemented permanently and strictly followed. Thus, the call for a sustainable elements becomes a major point of view and with the intention of the strong influence of adoptability of sustainability supported tourism mechanism the paper gives a point for change and a stop for deep attention, walk with a closer look and watch up to the minute.

Review of Literature – Looking Back to Move Ahead.

In order to seek a savvy sense on the said topic the researcher undertakes review of available literatures of similar nature and varied percepts. This process has included the steps such as understanding the background study, the need for the understanding of the same, collect the relevant information from the literatures to best fit them as evidences, identify the gap and work on the same for further implications. For the purpose of the current study, the researcher has taken up the literatures related to India tourism on the whole, Karnataka tourism in particular, Western Ghats tourism in mention. The summary drawn from the reviews are presented below:

Bawa, K., (2002) demonstrate for the first time the potential use of satellite imagery to characterize areas of high and low species richness of trees in tropical forests. The studies, conducted in the Biligiri Rangaswamy hills in the Western Ghats, India, show a high positive correlation between species richness and the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), which is an index of green biomass. They discuss the application of NDVI values for biodiversity assessment and monitoring, as well as for conservation planning. The NDVI is a rough measure of green biomass.

Bhagwat, S. A., et. al (2005) examined the diversity of trees, birds, and macro fungi at 58 sites in three land-use types in a tree-covered landscape in Kodagu district in the Western Ghats of India. Ten forest reserve sites in the formal protected area, and 25 sacred groves and 23 coffee plantations in the neighbouring cultivated landscape were sampled. A total of 215 tree, 86 bird, and 163 macro fungus species were recorded. The forest reserve had a large number of trees that were restricted in their distribution, and the sacred groves had a large number of macro fungi. The author has also observed that deciduous trees and non-forest-dwelling birds increased, and evergreen trees and forest-dwelling birds decreased with increasing intensity of land management. The study have found that trees having non-timber uses and macro fungi useful to the local people, as well as those with medicinal properties, were abundant in sacred groves. It is also mentioned in the study report that there is no significant differences in the distribution of endemic and threatened birds across the three land-use types.

Northcote, J., & Macbeth, J. (2006) In order to meaningfully evaluate tourism systems in terms of sustainable parameters, the ITY framework is proposed. At its base are tourist, financial, economic, environmental, social, and cultural areas. At the second level are the current or expected returns for each area. The third is the required level that the system needs in order to remain sustainable. In this paper, a framework is proposed that will help planners articulate and address a broad range of positive and negative developments in the tourism system. The guiding principle behind it is that management requires consideration of the costs and benefits along a number of yield dimensions, namely current or expected levels, required levels in order for the system to be sustainable, potential levels possible within a sustainable system, and the overarching ideological approach to integrating sustainable practices.

Khalil et. al (2007) Examined the role of tourism in the short – run economic development in case of Pakistan through error correction models and the casual relationship between tourism receipts and economic expansion. The result points out that there is a strong relationship among tourism, receipts and economic expansion.

Triguero-Mas, M. et. al.(2009) long-term integrity of protected areas have been integrated for the purpose of the study keeping the urban and rural perceptions to protect the environment with reference to one of the popular site of Western Ghats of Karnataka – Dandeli. This paper gives a comparative view of urban and rural residents' perceptions on the impact of a protected areas and also analyses the association between the perception of economic, social and environmental impacts, and overall attitude towards the protected areas. The results section reveals the fact that Local residents' perception of the economic costs generated by the Protected Areas increased the likelihood of negative attitudes towards it, especially for residents living within or on its borders.

Mishra P.K (2011) on Causality between tourism and Economic Growth; Empirical Evidence from India. Analyse the growth of tourism in India and observed that it is one of the efficient tools for promoting economic growth of the host country. According to the study last few decades, tourism industry in India has been growing at a rapid pace for the last few decades and it has vast potential for generating employment and earning large amount of foreign exchange besides giving a fillip to the country's overall economic and socio-cultural development. The study used popular time series models for the period spanning from 1978 to 2009. The results provide the evidence of long-run unidirectional causality from tourism activities to economic growth of the country. Based on this the study recommended for active partnership among the all wings of the central and state governments, private bodies and voluntary organizations in the Endeavour to attain sustainable growth in tourism and overall economy as well.

Renard, Q. et. Al. (2012) Forest fires are a recurrent management problem in the Western Ghats of India. Although most fires occur during the dry season, information on the spatial distribution of fires is needed to improve fire prevention. The study has used the MODIS Hotspots database and Maxent algorithm to provide a quantitative understanding of the environmental controls regulating the spatial distribution of forest fires over the period 2003–07 in the entire Western Ghats and in two nested sub regions with contrasting characteristics. The researchers have used hierarchical partitioning to assess the independent contributions of climate, topography and vegetation to the goodness-of-fit of models and to build the most parsimonious fire susceptibility model in each study area. Results show that although areas predicted as highly prone to forest fires were mainly localised on the eastern slopes of the Ghats, spatial predictions and model accuracies differed significantly between study areas.

Dr. N Maruti Rao (2013) the article calls for an action of preservation and conservation of bio-diversity along with eco-tourism having the support from communities and locals in every decision making and others. This study aimed at evaluating the participation of community residents in ecotourism and conservation activities at Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary; review the benefits received by residents from the wildlife sanctuary. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used for the selection of respondents. With adoption of structured questionnaires and analysis the results depicted that there is very low participation of community residents in the tourism support activities and Karnataka tourism on the other end will not seek any forms of support or suggestions and their decisions is what is the finding of the study. The tourism agents, tourist guides or travel planners also failed to interact with community residents while implementing any of their plans regarding eco-tourism at Dandeli, and at the same time, the local public was not informed or simply ignored while a lot of forest reserves are being utilized. The study also reveals that community residents were not involved in the planning and management process of the conservation of wildlife and biodiversity of Dandeli located in the Western Ghats section of Karnataka.

Joseph, P. D., & Pakkeerappa, P. (2015) in his study the eco-tourism being the focal point, the research constraint itself to the coastal locations of Karnataka. The empirical research the basis of gathered from tour operators and tourists gives an array of information related to the sustainability of coastal tourism, nature-friendly initiatives that tour operators as individuals, and the government as a whole have to take in order to protect the tourist destinations, likely generating sources without compromising the best deals of nature and series of being nature friendly. The study tails up the features of the development of coastal tourism and its intervention by different pollutants and also notes on its least importance to sustainability. The study suggests for the involvement of the local community at various levels of concerned policies is a requisite and at the same time the authorities should ensure the development of the local community, their social interest should also be serviced in a well-directed way.

Rajeshwari, B., & Bai, J. M. S. (2019) this article is concerned with the point of infrastructure for the development and growth of tourism, its opportunities, and at the same time the likely effect of the adoption of too many urbanization policies and utilization heavy loads of resources for the sake of tourism and for the creation of luxury and comforts. In the quest to provide facilities for tourists the environment has been affected in other ways, large hotels and other facilities for tourists and likes consume large amounts of power in their quest to provide a long list of patrons with all the hip electronic comforts. With the adoption of empirical research as a method, post hypothesis testing concludes that Transport, Accommodation, Shopping, Facilities, Local transport, Safety & Security (Police Service), and Sanitation are below average level with concern to infrastructure requirements and actual availability.

Summary of Review of Literature

From the review of above literatures in detail and available evidences from secondary sources on a check it is summed up that the Western Ghats since it is nature's best spot for many bio-diversified activities is posed to natural challenges like forest fire, landscape, flood, tsunami and its ill effects to the destinations at one edge and an exploitation of natural resources for commercial purpose, poor quality of management of nature is at another sharpened edge. The available literatures have either conceptualised on man-made affairs to Western Ghats or on natural disorders of environment. To fill this gap, the current paper sheds light on both the issues and policy makers with this regard.

Statement of the Problem

The research purpose included the intention of examining the natural factors and man-made factors resulting in abuse of Western Ghats, decay of its' natural resources, impurity of the tourist instruments and indecency at destinations. It is important to adhere to the regulations on sustainability in tourism in order to achieve the quality in engagement and enriching the tourism value. With an exaggeration of tourism and related activities gearing with commercial sense over the generations and passing of the time, the Western Ghats are posing to severe and persistent conservation threat. Thus, the research addresses the issues related to sustainability of Western Ghats without disturbing the economic gain vested in these regions. The paper gives an alarming alert to the policy makers to educate and enrich the value of tourism in Western Ghats and clepe for a promise to be nature friendly. Hence, the current research stands as- 'Sustainability in the Tourism of Western Ghats of Karnataka – A Roadmap Approach to the Policy Makers'.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the Challenges posing by eco-tourism habits practiced in the Western Ghats parts belonging to the state of Karnataka.
2. To identify the economic sources vested in the Western Ghats and likely exploitation of nature for the same and suggest measures to protect the bio-diversity with an effective address of government policies.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of identification and examination of the positive and negative factors contributing to the sustainability of tourist destinations of Western Ghats the descriptive nature of the study have been accommodated. The study intends for analytical note based on available evidences and literature, thus the study is termed as conceptual in nature. The scope is limited to the parts of Karnataka where Western Ghats have got its spread. The source of the data beings secondary in nature the relevant information's have gathered from previously available literatures, environment focused magazine series, internet sources and newspapers.

A Conceptual note on Challenges to Sustainability – evidence from the literature

The communities residing in Western Ghats are less educated or falls short of monetary resources to think of marketing activities at their nearby tourist destinations. This in another way making a space created for outsiders come and occupy the tourist destinations in the name of marketing and take control of such locations with the passing of the time. Few studies and the literature proves that people who are outsiders to any locations or destinations will have less emotions or sentiments on such places and its resources and hence instead of conservation they may also fall into the action off exploiting it.

Climate change is one factor which needs a serious attention from environment concern departments and tourism service institutes. As Western Ghats is place which can seriously injured by climate change, drastic changes in the weather conditions, rain falls and cause lot of problems to mankind and as well to tour visitors. It requires a high alert from the part of authorities involved in these activities. Looking the same issue from an another perspective depicts that the relative lockdown and cut short of tourism related activities due to climate change and other natural causes results in loss to the tour agencies and investors and also it requires a huge investment on repairing and correcting the destinations to its normal structure.

Western Ghats being an attraction and affection – dependency of Western Ghats for human life and tourism development

Opportunities for recreation and tourism like Hiking, camping, nature walks, jogging, winter sports, wild watching, horse riding, hunting, etc. have opened up the investment channels and many forums at international level looking at India's Western Ghats as right platform to invest and earn further.

Enjoyment of rural, unique and colourful landscapes, individual habitats and species, and tranquillity supporting mental well-being has made the people from different part of the world to must visit the places vested in Western Ghats.

Inspiration for the art, science, and technology, Writing, painting, design, documentaries, movies, engineering materials, and architecture being the motives; many travellers visit Western Ghats not just for enjoyments but for rejoice, rejuvenate and learn from the nature.

Information for education and research - Education trips by schools and other groups; employee training; research related to ecosystem function, publications and patents.

Spiritual and religious experience Natural and built sacred places, philosophy and faith; support to mental well-being.

Cultural identify and heritage-Landscape and habitats formed by human activities, species of spiritual importance, traditional and indigenous knowledge.

Findings and suggestions

The involvement of community is seen on a very low pace on tourist destinations of Western Ghats and in order to avoid the likely causes of outsiders taking up the tourist activities for the sake of huge gains may make affect the protection and conservation of environment and its' resources. Thus the government policies should be framed in such a way that it should promote the local community leaving in Western Ghats to take over the tourist activities so that it can also minimize the migrations from these locations.

The NGO can a play vital role in improving standard of living of community residents through the provision of microfinance. They should also conduct customized vocational training programmes for community residents (Rao, N. M., & Pawar, R. 2013).

The periodical monitoring of eco-tourism policies by local panchayats, district level associations in charge of environment protection and ministry of affairs relating to tourism is need of the hour and this further enriches the balanced approach of tourism and eco-friendly activities.

Many destinations in the Western Ghats are either naturally built or constructed out of human efforts using the forest resources again. It has got a huge reservoir of forest, where the commercial tourism uses the forest in the name of safari, jungle resorts, fishing, visit to Zoo gardens etc. it means that the policies should be framed in such a way that the tourist visitors should not cause any harms to the nature, animals or any other species living in these regions, example: Night hunts (Shikari), involving illegally in forest fire etc. the respective authorities should always be backed with the precautionary measures against natural hazards that may occur during any time. They should also plan for the immediate shift of animals and birds living in these regions if they are afflicted out of any natural actions or it may be an intentional actions of humans also.

The Western Ghats also offers a huge array of river beds where millions of species have found their ways for life including human being. In case of climate change and fluctuations in weather conditions the river may over flow and any tourism related activities on these shores like boating, kayaking, fishing etc. may get completely off and suffer huge loss. Thus, the authorities should frame their policies in such a way that the tourism related activities during their peak season must involve all the factors of commerciality upon the condition of environment protection and conservation.

Waste management is also a vital point need to be corrected and considered at tourist spots. Western Ghats is known for the living of variety of species; at these places the misconduct, misbehave of travelers with animals and living beings should be severely punished and teach lessons for future travelers by posting such punishable pictures on social media and on other platforms. The used plastic bottles, the empty bottles of alcohol, the snack covers, used chocolate wrappers etc. mercilessly throw on the sides of the road while in travel, or thrown inside the water without thinking of its effect to the nature and animals living in such territories. Only with an avocation of strict and compulsory policies of waste management the tourist activities in Western Ghats can be flourished under the label of sustainability.

Climate change has affected the Biodiversity of the state too. A considerable area of the Western Ghats in Karnataka represents a rich ecosystem. It supports a number of tourism destinations too such as Coorg, Kabini, Bandipur, Kudremukh, Dandeli, Agumbe, Subramanya, Dharamastala, etc. These destinations are known for natural beauty and pilgrimage. Climate change is altering the seasonal rainfall patterns and thereby posing a threat to the life cycles of flora and fauna. Both evergreen and deciduous forests are under threat since the predicted future climate might be unsuitable for the existing inventory of flora and fauna. Several of the plant species may perish. Besides, it is also uncertain whether new species of plants can establish and thrive under the altered climatic conditions. When species that provide multiple forest products perish or are unable to adapt, consequences are grave for natural cycles within the ecosystem. Such impacts may threaten the very existence of animal wildlife as the impacts may break the natural food chain. A dying forest also reduces the attractiveness and affects the beauty of the natural landscape which draws nature-based tourists. Climate change impacts on forest ecosystems and biodiversity are irreversible and require short-term adaptation strategies (Bhaskar Sailesh, 2019)

Since the number of places to be visited or the tourist destinations are more in the state of Karnataka that to in Western Ghats, the usual stretch of the tourist will be more than two days. This obviously makes them to depend on lodges for stay. With this concern the Western Ghats offers a huge number of jungle resorts, beach resorts, hill top resorts and restaurants, guest house or resorts on islands and etc. This requires huge

maintenance cost and also the resources. Many studies and field data proves that these home stays or guest houses exploit the local, natural resources for the benefit of providing comfort stays to the travellers. Example being cutting of thick trees in order to make stylish wooden bridges in spite of the availability of cement roads to reach to these hotels. Exploiting natural resources like grown flowers, trees and other saplings for photoshoots, video makings and using animals for photoshoots etc. this requires an attention by the policy makers while drafting the tourism policies of Western Ghats and following up of the procedures of the same.

Conclusion

We live in the world where every day there should be an action of updating in order to match up the speed of world than just looking at the movements of clock. Those sights which were very much insignificant earlier and disregarded for their not reachable materials are in booming and well versed formats now replacing the superpowers. The balance of power has shifted especially in terms of tourism in Western Ghats belonging to the state of Karnataka. It calls for an extra attention of the government because being the highest sources of revenue for the government and for the country as a whole. The Western Ghats because of high alert and promotion mechanisms of social media has become one of the important and must visiting tourist destinations off the world. Hence an apparent India needs an attention from the stake holders in order to enrich the experience of tourism of Western Ghats without hampering the interest of nature and its protection policies. Only with the adoption and practice and strict follow-up mechanisms of these policies the Western Ghats can avail the tag line of sustainable or eco-tourism hub. Western Ghats needs no comparison of other tourist spots belonging to any part of the world because of its huge scenic beauty and variety of attractions and curiosities. As the region builds up more economic muscles and its people become more affluent, Karnataka tourism is set to dwarf all other markets including any giants market of the world. Thus the policies in support of sustainability and eco-tourism gives even more attention and attributable values.

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