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This is to certify that B. RAJESWARI has
Participated / Presented / Published a paper titled Eco TOURISM IN
KARNATAKA in One Day National Conference
"THE EMERGENCE OF START-UP ECO-SYSTEM IN INDIA - New ways to engage millennials and wealth creations"
organised on 30th April 2019 with Kaav Publications, National Journal of Arts, Commerce and
Scientific Research Review (NJACSRR) Impact Factor: 6.0877, ISSN : 2394-4870




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NJACSRR V6 (2019) 349-352



National Journal of Arts, Commerce & Scientific Research Review

(A Refereed Blind Peer Review Journal)

ECO TOURISM IN KARNATAKA

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Conference Series - Received 16th Apr 2019, Revised 24th Apr 2019, Accepted 27th Apr 2019

Article Info

ISSN: 2394 - 4870
Volume -6, Year-(2019)
Issue-01 (Special Issue)
Article Id.:
NJACSRR/2019/V-6/ISS-1/A79

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Keywords:

Eco Tourism, Flora, Fauna, Jungle Resorts, Karnataka State Tourism, Ecology Wildlife Etc.

Abstract

Eco tourism also referred as environmental or ecological tourism is a form of tourism, where the tourists travel to natural or ecological areas to appreciate the cultural and natural history of the environment, while not disturbing the integrity of the ecosystem and creating economic opportunities that make conservation and protection of natural resources advantageous to local people. It involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna and cultural heritage are primary attractions. Ecotourism also minimizes wastage and the environmental impact through sensitized tourists. It can be one of the medium to preserve local culture, flora and fauna and other natural resources of the state. The Karnataka state tourism has chosen Jungles and Resorts to conserve ecology and wildlife because of its responsibility and commitment to preserve wildlife and protect our environment from deforestation, air and water pollution and more. To make it easier for you to take a break from urban living, Jungle Lodges and Resorts provide an authentic comforts at all its eco-tourism destinations in Karnataka.

Resorts to conserve ecology and wildlife because of its responsibility and commitment to preserve wildlife and to protect our environment from deforestation, air and water pollution and more. This paper mainly concentrates on eco tourism in Karnataka.

Components of Ecotourism

All definitions of ecotourism have stated with experienced and recognized by scholars or visitor. It shows that the concept and definition of ecotourism is derived from seven components. These are :-

- Contributes to the conservation of biodiversity.
- Sustains the well being of local people
- Includes an interpretation/learning experience.
- Involves responsible action on the part of tourists and the tourism industry

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Is delivered primarily to small groups by small-scale businesses.

Requires lowest possible consumption of non-renewable resources.

Stresses local participation, ownership and business opportunities, particularly for rural people

Principles of eco tourism

The People who implement and participate in ecotourism activities should adopt the following ecotourism principles:

- Minimize physical, social, behavioral, and psychological impacts.
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and local people.
- Provide direct financial benefits for environmental conservation.
- Generate financial benefits for both local people and private industry.
- Deliver memorable interpretative experiences to visitors that help raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climates.
- Design, construct and operate low-impact facilities.

Ecotourism initiative in Karnataka: Karnataka is a little India because it has everything as India like, world heritage sites, breathtaking hill station, spectacular waterfalls, exotic wildlife, gripping adventure options, sensational Jesu churches, renowned pilgrim centers, colorful festivals, thrabbing nightlife etc. Karnataka is all set to draw the customer on a mind boggling spread of experiences (G.K. 2016, 2007). The state provides varied nature of tourist attractions, wildlife sanctuaries at Bandipur and Nagarhole, the turbulent leap of Sharavathi at Jogfalls, the myriad coloured fountains of the picturesque Brindavan Garden at Mysore, the beaches of Karwar, the sun setting scene at Agumbe, the fabtolls architectural beauty at Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal, the tall monolithic Gometeshwar statue at Shravanabelagola and Karkal, the mystical Hampi, the world renowned Hoysala temples at Belur and Halebidu, dome of Gulgumbaz at Bijapur, and the bird sanctuary at Ranganatittu, etc. Among the visitors to the sanctuaries during the year 2016-17, 99.45% are domestic visitors while 0.56% are foreigners and during the year 2017-18 (upto Nov. 2017), 99.33% are domestic visitors while 0.67% are foreigners. Maximum number of foreign tourist visited Nagarhole National Park followed by Bandipur and Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary.

Ecology and Environment - Constitutions:

The State is constitutionally bound to ensure the protection of environment in all walks of life. With this objective, the Department of Ecology & Environment was established in the year 1981 in the State. The Department looks after the formulation of policies and ensures the implementation of the rules, regulations, guidelines and instructions for the protection of environment and ecology. Interdepartmental environmental issues leading to conservation and protection of environment are also being co-ordinate. The Department of Ecology and Environment is at the secretariat level and is assisted by the following institutions in discharging of its functions.

- 1) Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPB)
- 2) Karnataka Bio-diversity Board (KBB)
- 3) Karnataka Lake Conservation and Development Authority (KLCDA)
- 4) Environment Management & Policy Research Institute (EMPRI)
- 5) Karnataka State Coastal Zone Management Authority (KSCZMA)
- 6) State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA)

Major Initiatives by Karnataka Government in tourism

Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation set up in the year 1971 to provide basic needs of accommodation and transport facilities to the visiting tourists at tourist destinations.

Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd Set up in 1980 to promote Eco & Adventure Tourism owns 18 resorts across the state.

Karnataka Exhibition Authority, Mysore set up in 1991 to promote art, culture, literature, science and technology of Karnataka through exhibitions/fairs.

Karnataka Tourism Vision Group has been constituted for advising the Department of Tourism.

Providing concessions and subsidies to investors and operators in the tourism sector including mega tourism projects under the New Tourism Policy 2015-20.

Enabling investment in state tourism sector through Karnataka Tourism Trade Facilitation Bill.

Cauvery Tourism development authority has been formed for the comprehensive Development of Tourism facilities in Mysuru, Mandya, ChamaraJanagara and Kodagu districts.

Proposals to establish cable cars at Nandi Hills, Madhugiri, Chamundi Hills, and Kemmannagundi Hills.

Identification of 46 destinations under a project called Adoption of Tourist destinations.




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Allowing cruise tourism at various ports like Belekeri Port, Malpe Port, Karwar Port, Tadri Port, and new and old Mangalore Ports.

Implementation of Rating Agencies to assess the service providers in the Tourism industry.

Providing infrastructure & facilities at tourist destinations through Karnataka Tourism Infrastructure Limited.

Certain Mandatory Requirements For Eco-Tourism

Department of Tourism (DoT) has spelt out for entities operating Ecotourism destinations. Ecotourism activities to be identified and developed at any destination shall be site-specific i.e. dependent upon the potential of the particular site being developed. Following are the activities and facilities that may be undertaken for promoting an area as an ecotourism destination within the State.

- Nature Camps: Camping sites identified for ecotourism activities should be provided with basic facilities to enable the tourists to stay in natural surroundings either solely to experience the wilderness, or additionally for participating in other activities requiring overnight stay in forests.
- Eco-friendly Accommodation: Accommodation that would be developed in an ecotourism destination should be 'eco-friendly', i.e.,
 1. They should be built with locally available material.
 2. Should make use of renewable resources.
 3. Should adopt ecological sustainable solutions such as water harvesting etc. Above all, the entire concept should contribute to the revenue of the local community and raise the living standards by involving them in provision of various services related to this segment of tourism.
- Trekking and Nature Walks: Ecotourism destinations identified for Trekking routes of varying distances and guided nature trails should ensure that they cause minimum disturbance to the natural vegetation and soil. Staff and local persons, especially youth should be appropriately trained to act as Nature Guides and Naturalists so as to assist visitors during wildlife viewing and trekking.
- Wildlife Viewing and River Cruise: Wildlife viewing in eco-friendly vehicles or on elephant backs should be promoted at appropriate sites for observing wildlife.
- Adventure Sports: Facilities for adventure sports such as rock climbing, rappelling and parasailing along with water sports such as river rafting, boating and canoeing should be developed in consultation and cooperation with experts and the

concerned department or agency having jurisdiction over the water bodies.

- Angling: Angling facilities for Mahaseer and other suitable fish species, strictly on a catch-and-release basis, should be developed only on suitable water bodies flowing through or along in these areas in consultation with the Fisheries Department. If necessary, water bodies not artificially stocked by rearing and releasing seed into the rivers that have been depleted of target species over time.
- Herbal Ecotourism: Herbal ecotourism should be made the thrust areas only at locations having rich herbal heritage. Traditional medicinal practices of such locations could be explored and based on these, authentic herbal inputs having appropriate certifications and recognition could be made available to the tourists.
- Urban Ecotourism through Eco-Parks: In order to promote urban ecotourism, ecoparks could be developed in various urban centers. Such Eco-parks should contain provisions for various ecotourism activities including interpretation centers, trekking, nature walks, biking, bird watching, camping, angling, herbal center, adventure sports etc on a small scale, depending upon the area being developed. For this purpose, existing public parks in urban localities could also be utilized.
- Visitor Interpretation Centers: Existing interpretation facilities should be strengthened to provide complete information to visitors and accommodate the requirements of various classes of visitors envisaged. Each destination must adopt ways to enhance and enrich the visitor experience.
- Interpretation: Educational conservation education should be provided in and around each destination for creating awareness amongst school and college students, local communities, government staff and visitors in order to maintain and enhance support for ecotourism and environmental conservation. Various means that could be adopted include media campaigns, formation of eco-clubs at schools and colleges, exposure visits to destinations, displays and hoardings, community centers etc. New and innovative methods shall also be encouraged.
- Other Facilities: Facilities for any other eco-friendly activities could also be developed based on specific requirements of a site, provided the activity is compatible with the overall objectives of this policy and in conformance with the various standards and guidelines laid down in this regard. Incentives and Concessions To create awareness of the concept of Eco-tourism, DoT has offered several

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incentives/concessions to encourage entities to develop this segment. These are set out in various sections/clauses:

Highlights of Tourism Policy

Karnataka Tourism Policy 2015 - 2020

Investment Promotion Subsidy

The actual quantum of investment subsidies eligible for a project would depend on the extent of the equipment being utilized for providing tourism related activities.

Stamp Duty & Concessional Rate

- 50% - 100% payment on Stamp Duty to be exempted
- A concessional rate of INR 1.00 per INR 1,000

Transfer of Land on Lease Basis

- For development of tourism infrastructure projects, government land could be leased to the private developer / entrepreneur for a period of 30 years, renewable by another 30 years on a case to case basis.

Exemption on Entry Tax

- The payment of Entertainment Tax by Entertainment Parks that are classified as Ultra Mega Projects and Super Mega Projects shall be reimbursed.

Reimbursement of Entertainment Tax

- 100% exemption on entry tax on plant & machinery and capital goods for development of Tourism Projects.

Exemption on Luxury Tax

- Exemption on actual room charges of INR 5,000 or below per day, no luxury tax would be applicable.

Exemption on Motor Vehicle Tax

- New vehicles purchased by tourism project proponents in Karnataka for carrying out tourism related activities shall be exempted from payment of Motor Vehicle Tax. Reimbursement of Entertainment Tax Exemption on Luxury Tax.

Interest-Free Loan

- 100% of Value Added Tax shall be sanctioned as interest free loan for Mega, Ultra Mega, Super Mega projects.

Concessions for Homestays

- Exemption from Luxury Tax on actual room charges of INR 5000 and below per day
- Payment of electricity and water charges at domestic tariffs
- Property tax rates as prescribed for residential purposes

Development Rights for Heritage Buildings (DRHB)

- Development of heritage buildings for tourism related activities shall be eligible for the award of development rights certificate from the local body concerned.

Conclusion

The tourism industry in Karnataka has vast potential for employment and earning large sums of foreign exchange for the state. This industry has also contributed towards overall economic development and social development. The growing tourist demand is already exerting pressure on our natural and other resources. Unless attention is paid now for developing tourism in ecologically sustainable manner and maintaining environmental integrity, it may well cause irreparable damage. Communities are part of ecotourism ecosystems, and these community residents should have the greatest voice in the conservation of their natural resources. The concept of sustainable tourism development spans a very broad spectrum of issues, all of which have a bearing on the decisions of developing countries' tourism policymakers must address in the very near future to both, the Central and the State.

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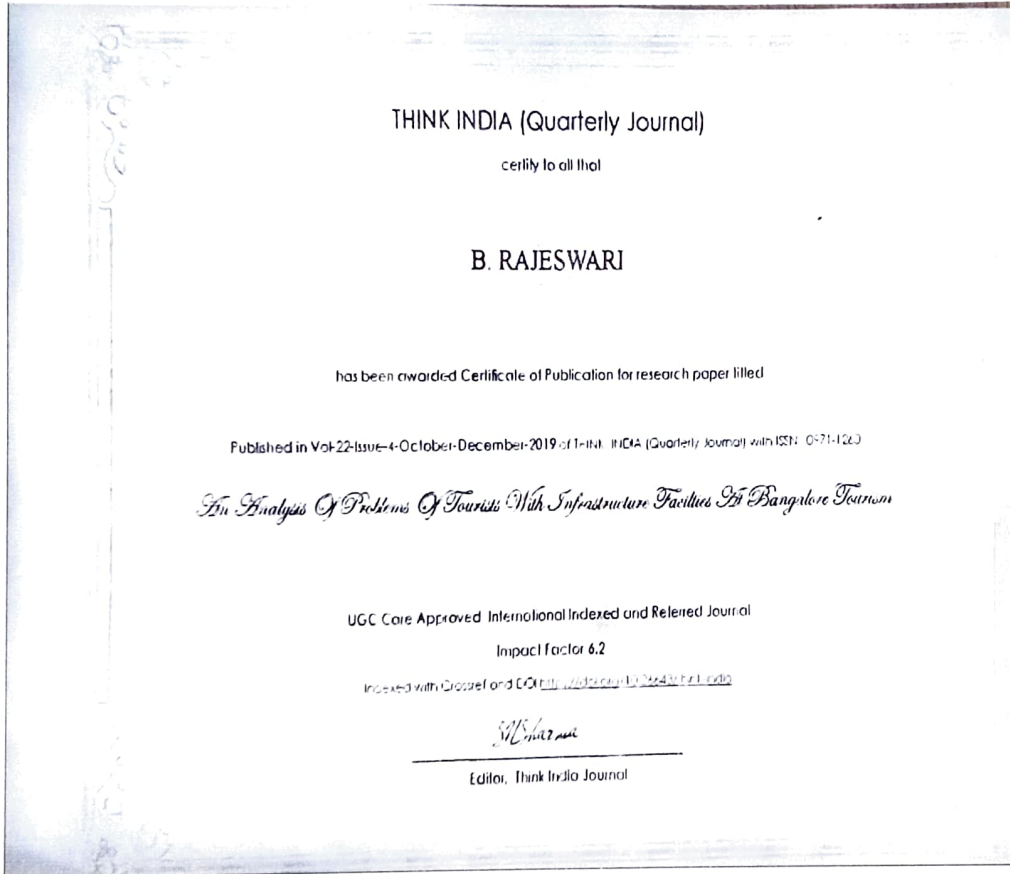


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