

A STUDY ON THE POTENTIALS OF BEACH TOURISM IN KANNUR DISTRICT

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Abstract: Beach tourism represents a significant segment of global tourism today, drawing visitors with its natural beauty and recreational opportunities. Beaches are formed through coastal deposition processes and are prime locations for activities such as swimming, surfing, and sailing. Infrastructure development around beaches includes accommodations, recreational facilities, parking areas, entertainment venues, and transportation networks. Many of Kerala's beaches suffer from inadequate infrastructure, lack of basic facilities, and sometimes unwelcoming attitudes toward tourists, limiting their potential as tourist hubs. Recognizing these challenges, there is a growing need to address the issues faced by tourists at beach destinations and to develop these areas for sustainable tourism. This study focuses on exploring the untapped potential of beach tourism in Kannur District, which boasts the highest number of beaches in Kerala. It examines various beaches in the district, existing facilities, and identifies factors that motivate or deter tourists from visiting. Through this exploration, the study aims to contribute to the development of beach tourism in Kannur

Key word: Beach Tourism, Tourist's Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Tourism stands as one of the world's largest and rapidly expanding industries today. It involves the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their usual places of residence and work. This economic sector not only generates valuable foreign exchange but also creates jobs, boosts infrastructure development, and fosters regional growth. The importance of tourism is evident globally, with both developing and developed nations establishing dedicated government departments and supporting initiatives to promote tourism development. Small businesses and multinational corporations alike contribute to and benefit from this thriving industry.

India, with its diverse climates, landscapes, and rich cultural heritage, exemplifies the attract of tourism. From the rugged mountain peaks of Ladakh to the natural backwaters of Kerala, the country offers endless possibilities for travelers. The Indian countryside offers tranquility, traditional music, dance, and a cuisine that is both authentic and varied, attracting increasing numbers of tourists each year.

Beach tourism represents a significant segment of global tourism today, drawing visitors with its natural beauty and recreational opportunities. Beaches are formed through coastal deposition processes and are prime locations for activities such as swimming, surfing, and sailing. Infrastructure development around beaches includes accommodations, recreational facilities, parking areas, entertainment venues, and transportation networks.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

India boasts spectacular beaches that cater to tourists seeking relaxation and natural beauty. Kerala is unique as a leading beach destination because of its vast coastline. The state's well-maintained beaches, like those in Kovalam and Varkala, offer ideal settings for sunbathing and sea bathing, attracting visitors seeking tropical climates and stunning seaside landscapes. Kerala's beaches are well-known for their calm waves and crystal-clear blue seas, offering visitors from all over the world a peaceful haven.

However, despite the popularity of beach tourism in southern Kerala, particularly in places like Kovalam and Varkala, other beach destinations in the state receive comparatively fewer tourists. Many of Kerala's beaches suffer from inadequate infrastructure, lack of basic facilities, and sometimes unwelcoming attitudes toward tourists, limiting their potential as tourist hubs.

Recognizing these challenges, there is a growing need to address the issues faced by tourists at beach destinations and to develop these areas for sustainable tourism. This study focuses on exploring the untapped potential of beach tourism in Kannur District, which boasts the highest number of beaches in Kerala. It examines various beaches in the district, existing facilities, and identifies factors that motivate or deter tourists from visiting. Through this exploration, the study aims to contribute to the development of beach tourism in Kannur and beyond.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the awareness level regarding the beaches in Kannur among the tourists visiting Kannur.
2. To identify the factors that motivates the tourists to visit the beaches in Kannur.
3. To determine the satisfaction level of tourists regarding the facilities available in the beaches.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the political boundaries of Kannur district, specifically its coastal plains. The primary aim is to assess the developmental prospects for beach tourism in Kannur. The research includes a survey of both domestic and international tourists visiting the district's beaches. Insights and recommendations gathered from these tourists will guide future strategies aimed at enhancing Kannur's beaches as attractive tourist destinations.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Tourism plays a pivotal role in international trade, significantly contributing to the foreign exchange earnings of both developed and developing nations. It fosters positive perceptions of tourist destinations, encouraging participation in events such as conferences and exhibitions. Furthermore, tourism facilitates cultural exchange and educational opportunities by bringing together people from diverse backgrounds. As a catalyst for social change, tourism also projects a country's true image to the global community.

The analysis of Kerala's economy underscores the critical roles of the tourism and IT sectors, particularly given the state's abundant human resources and the environmentally friendly nature of these industries. Kerala's acclaim as 'God's own country' underscores its status as India's premier tourist destination, offering a diverse array of attractions such as beaches, backwaters, pilgrimage sites, Ayurveda resorts, wildlife sanctuaries, eco-tourism, medical tourism, and cultural festivals. Unlike conventional industries, tourism draws upon natural resources, highlighting the need for sustainable development practices to harness its full potential.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Vijayakumar, B (1995) emphasized the significance of native tourism and eco-tourism in Kerala, a tropical region renowned for its natural beauty. His study, focusing on foreign tourists, empirically established that Kerala's natural allure, rather than artificial attractions, draws visitors to 'God's Own Country'.

Sarnagadharan, M and Retnakumari (2005), in their study involving three hundred international tourists, revealed that Kerala exceeds international tourists' expectations in terms of attractions and hospitality.

Noyal Thomas (2007) emphasized the role of regulated tourism in managing protected areas, generating revenue, and raising conservation awareness.

Motiram (2007) discussed globalization's impact on India's tourism industry, stressing the need for infrastructure improvements to attract more tourists and increase foreign exchange earnings.

Venugopal (2008) pointed out that despite their natural beauty, many tourist sites fail to attract visitors due to inadequate marketing. The advent of advanced internet protocols has significantly changed this scenario.

Sunanda and Suresh Kumar (2008) highlighted Kerala's appeal as a tourist paradise, emphasizing its cost-effective healthcare, skilled workforce, and diverse natural beauty.

Ravi (2009) advocated for sustainable tourism and highlighted ecotourism as a pathway to achieving it, addressing environmental imbalances caused by conventional tourism.

Manish Srivastava (2009) identified heritage tourism as a promising sector in India, though noting infrastructure deficiencies as a challenge to overall tourist satisfaction.

Shrivastav (2010) underscored ecotourism's potential to enhance community welfare through improved tourist-host relations, particularly benefiting rural areas.

Amutha Joseph (2012) consistently supported sustainable tourism promotion, advocating for inclusive growth through tourism policies and local awareness programs.

Anupama Sharma (2012) discussed the rapid growth of India's tourism industry and identified barriers to further development that require government, media, and community collaboration for resolution.

Uttam Kumar Sikder (2014) highlighted the tourism potential of states based on wildlife, natural beauty, and cultural richness, while urging greater focus on socio-economic development by state governments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs an analytical approach utilizing both primary and secondary data. The research focuses on 30 domestic tourists and 30 foreign tourists selected from various beaches in Kannur district. Convenience sampling is utilized for data collection. Primary data is gathered through questionnaires administered directly to tourists visiting Kannur beaches. Secondary data is sourced from a variety of sources including websites, books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and the District Tourism Promotion Council of Kannur. Data analysis includes percentage analysis, measures of central tendency and other statistical methods.

BEACHES IN KANNUR

Payyambalam Beach: Payyambalam Beach, located approximately 2 km from Kannur, is a popular tourist destination known for its pristine white sandy shores. The beach spans 4 km along the coast and offers a serene environment ideal for picnics and water sports. Notable attractions include sculptures and a beach garden, while accommodation options range from guesthouses to mid-range hotels nearby.

Baby Beach: Baby Beach, near Payyambalam, offers a scenic view of the sea with rocky formations and is located within an army cantonment area, ensuring visitor safety. It's a popular spot for leisurely gatherings and sunset views.

Muzhappilangad Beach: Muzhappilangad Beach is Asia's longest drive-in beach, famous for its 7 km stretch of sand and black rock formations that create calm swimming pools. Adventure sports like paragliding and parasailing are also available, and the beach hosts an annual festival.

Thottada Beach: Located west of National Highway-66, Thottada Beach is renowned for its peace and quiet. It is becoming more and more well-liked among travellers and provides options for swimming and sunbathing.

Dharmadam Beach and Dharmadam Island: At low tide, visitors may reach Dharmadam Island, a remote island close to Thalasseri with verdant coconut palms. It draws tourists wishing to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city because of its serene surroundings and natural beauty.

Meenkunnu Beach: With golden sands and coconut palms, Meenkunnu Beach is a more sedate option to Payyambalam Beach. It is located north of Kannur town. It's the perfect place to unwind and take pictures among breathtaking scenery.

Chaal Beach: Located nearest to Meenkunnu Beach; Chaal Beach is renowned for its lovely shoreline and tidy surroundings. With features including a peaceful ambiance for strolls in the evening and family get-togethers and children's park.

Chootad Beach: With views of the Perumba backwaters and the Ezhimala hills, Chootad Beach is still relatively unexplored and offers pristine natural beauty. It's a tranquil getaway with little amenities for tourists.

Kizhunna-Ezhara Beach: This sheltered cove offers safe spots for surfing and sunbathing. It has twin beaches with red cliffs and black rocks. It provides a peaceful environment apart from busy tourist spots.

Ezhimala Beach: Located nearest Ezhimala hills, this beach is well-known for its picturesque setting, crystal-clear blue waters, and chances for leisurely strolls and sea bathing. It's a peaceful location perfect for picnics and dolphin watching.

Ettikulam Beach: Located near Ezhimala Naval Academy, Ettikulam Beach provides a serene setting with lovely sunset views. It's a peaceful area to unwind away from the bustle of the city.

Neerkkadavu Beach: This beach, which is close to Azhikkal, has extensive lengths of smooth sand and calm waves. Fishermen and anyone looking for quiet love this unspoiled beach location.

Thalasseri Beach: This beach is well-known for its rippling waves and old buildings including a lighthouse and Thalasseri Fort. It's perfect for beachside picnics and historical exploration of the area.

These beaches in Kannur district provide diverse experiences, ranging from bustling tourist spots to secluded getaways, showcasing Kerala's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**Awareness with regard to Beech Tourism in Kannur****Table 1. Awareness with regard to beech tourism in Kannur**

	Domestic Tourist Mean Value	Foreign Tourist Mean Value
Beaches in Kannur	3.83	2.67
Transport Services	3.33	2.80
Accommodation	3.13	2.10
Tourist Information Centers	3.13	1.83

The table indicates that domestic tourists in Kannur are highly aware of local beaches, transport services, accommodation facilities, and tourist information centers, scoring means of 3.83, 3.33, 3.13, and 3.13, respectively. Conversely, foreign tourists show lower awareness levels regarding tourist information centers, accommodation options, Kannur beaches, and transport services, with mean scores of 1.83, 2.10, 2.67, and 2.80 respectively.

Motivating Factors to Visit the Beaches**Table 2. Motivating Factors to Visit the Beaches**

	Domestic Tourist Mean Value	Foreign Tourist Mean Value
Natural attraction	3.37	3.47
Entertainment	3.00	2.9
Driving	2.87	2.63
Travel costs	3.43	3.2
Recreation and sports	3.13	2.67
Special events	2.5	2.83
Festivals	2.4	3.43
Attractive accommodation	1.9	2.73
Shopping facilities	2.37	2.7
Night life	3.47	3.1

The table shows the factors that motivate tourists to visit the beaches in Kannur reveals that domestic tourists strongly agree that nightlife and natural attractions are the most important factors motivate them with a mean score of 3.47 and 3.37 respectively. Each is followed by travel costs (3.43). The tourists agree that recreation and sports (3.13), entertainment (3), driving (2.87) and special events (2.5) also motivate them. They disagree with the fact that festivals, shopping facilities, and attractive accommodation motivate them with scores of 2.4, 2.37, and 1.9 respectively.

In the case of foreign tourists, they strongly agree that natural attraction (3.47) motivates them. They agree with the fact that festivals (3.43), travel costs (3.2), nightlife (3.1), and entertainment (2.9) etc. also motivates them. They disagree that driving motivates them with a mean score of 2.63.

Hence it can be inferred that natural attractions, nightlife, and travel costs motivate tourists most shopping facilities available presently do not motivate them at all in the case of beaches in Kannur.

Satisfaction Level with the Facilities Available in the Beaches**Table 3. Satisfaction Level with the Facilities Available in the Beaches**

	Domestic Tourist Mean Value	Foreign Tourist Mean Value
Cleanliness and hygiene	2.90	3.03
Swimming places	3.13	3.56
Safety measures	3.23	2.83
Guidance facilities	3.56	2.67
Restaurant facilities	3.03	3.20
Shopping facilities	2.83	2.36
Entertainment	3.73	3.36
Parking area	2.83	2.86
Rest area	4.16	3.73
Assistance from authorities	3.60	3.00

The distribution showing the satisfaction level among the tourists concerning the facilities available on the beaches indicates that, in the case of domestic tourists, they are highly satisfied with the rest area (4.16) and entertainment facilities (3.73) and assistance from authorities (3.6). The tourists are satisfied with the guidance facility (3.56) and safety measures (3.23), restaurant services (3.03). They are less satisfied with cleanliness & hygiene (2.9), the parking (2.83) and shopping facilities (2.83) available.

In the case of foreign tourists, they are highly satisfied with the rest area(3.73) and swimming place (3.56). The tourists are satisfied with the entertainment facilities (3.36), restaurant facility (3.2) and cleanliness and hygiene (3.03), assistance from authorities (3.00). They are less satisfied with the parking area (2.86) and safety measures (2.83). the guidance facilities (2.67) and shopping facilities (2.36) available.

Hence it can be inferred that tourists are highly satisfied with the rest area, entertainment facilities, swimming places, and assistance from authorities. They are less satisfied with the parking area and shopping facilities.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Beach tourism is a prominent sector within global tourism, attracting visitors with its natural beauty and array of recreational activities. Beaches, formed by coastal deposition processes, offer prime locations for swimming, surfing, and sailing. Supporting this tourism are essential infrastructures such as accommodations, recreational facilities, parking areas, entertainment venues, and transportation networks. This study focuses on uncovering the untapped potential of beach tourism in Kannur District, which hosts the highest number of beaches in Kerala. It comprehensively examines various beaches in the district, evaluates existing facilities, and identifies factors influencing tourist visitation.

The study revealed that domestic tourists in Kannur demonstrate high awareness of beach tourism, while foreign tourists show comparatively lower levels of awareness. Analysis of factors motivating tourists to visit Kannur's beaches indicates a significant reliance on natural attractions by both domestic and foreign tourists, underscoring the importance of the beaches' natural allure. Domestic tourists place a strong emphasis on nightlife, whereas foreign tourists also value it but to a slightly lesser degree. Both groups prioritize travel costs as a crucial factor. Additionally, domestic tourists place higher importance on recreation, sports, and driving compared to their foreign counterparts, who emphasize festivals more than domestic tourists. Neither group finds festivals, shopping facilities, or attractive accommodations particularly motivating.

In terms of satisfaction levels, both domestic and foreign tourists express high satisfaction with the rest areas and entertainment facilities available on Kannur's beaches. Domestic tourists rate assistance from authorities more favorably compared to foreign tourists, who, conversely, are more satisfied with swimming places. However, both groups show dissatisfaction with parking facilities and shopping amenities. Foreign tourists notably express lower satisfaction with safety measures and guidance facilities compared to domestic tourists. Interestingly, domestic tourists are marginally less satisfied with cleanliness and hygiene compared to foreign tourists.

These findings underscore the strengths and areas for improvement in Kannur's beach tourism infrastructure, highlighting opportunities to enhance visitor experiences and attract a broader tourist base.

CONCLUSION

The research evaluate the potentials of beech tourism in Kannur district of Kerala state. Overall, tourists visiting the beaches in Kannur are highly satisfied with rest areas, entertainment facilities, swimming places (for foreign tourists), and assistance from authorities. However, there is room for improvement in parking facilities, shopping facilities, safety measures, and guidance facilities to enhance overall satisfaction levels among visitors. From the data, it can be conclude that natural attractions, night life, and travel cost are the most influential factors motivating tourists to visit beaches in Kannur. Conversely, shopping facilities are currently not seen as motivating factors for tourists visiting these beaches

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