



# TOURIST PREFERENCE TOWARDS ECOTOURISM ACTIVITIES IN KODAIKANAL

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## Abstract

The tourism industry is one of the largest industries in the world and is associated with many sectors for the development and advancement of the global economy. India is a country that attracts millions of tourists every year and is considered one of the most popular travel destinations in the world. Sustainable tourism is the most responsible tourism as it provides people with employment and income to people without harming the environment. Ecotourism activities usually involve visiting and enjoying a natural place without disturbing the landscape or its inhabitants. In this regard, the present research aims to measure the tourist preference towards ecotourism activities and also the barriers to take part in the ecotourism activities at Kodaikanal. The study uses primary data collected from 130 conveniently chosen tourists through a structured questionnaire survey. Simple percentage analysis, one-way ANOVA and T-test are applied to find out the level of preference towards ecotourism activities. Kendall's coefficient of concordance test (W) is applied to rank the problems faced by the respondents to take part in the ecotourism activities. The result shows a significant difference in the mean score of respondents belonging to different occupational status and the barrier to take part in ecotourism activity at Kodaikanal is degradation of the ecosystem. It is suggested that government could enforce environmental laws to regulate the proper use of ecotourism sites and also to tourism authorities to encourage tourists to participate in the ecotourism activities.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, Tourist, Preference, Ecotourism Activities and Kodaikanal

## Introduction

Tourism has become the world's fastest growing service industry in the country with great potentials for its further expansion and diversification and it has direct and indirect chain link with several sector of an economy<sup>5</sup>. Tourism in India has been viewed as a major tool for bringing about socioeconomic development for the country's people. The tourism industry in India has grown steadily in recent years, providing employment opportunities to people from all over the world. There are numerous hotels, resorts, restaurants, and other amenities available for tourists visiting India. The constant threat of global warming and degradation

of nature has brought the concept of ecotourism in the limelight. Ecotourism is becoming more popular because it is believed that it will increase the income generation of native people whereas minimizing environmental impact. Ecotourism helps to conserve natural resources and enhance the natural and cultural resources of the spot. The nation is home to zoological parks, tea plantations, wildlife sanctuaries, majestic mountains, and abundant rainforests. India is the world's best destination to stay and is known for its exclusivity and tribal community.

### **Statement of the Problem**

India is a vast country with a lot to offer and the millions of people visit each year. The country has a wide variety of sights and sounds to enjoy, from metropolis to the serene countryside. India has the potential to be one of the world's best ecotourism destinations. Ecotourism in India is a thriving industry as the country has managed to preserve its radiant natural beauty and it involves the sustainable preservation of a natural area or region. This is becoming increasingly important for the ecological development of all tourist-friendly regions. India is slowly and gradually developing infrastructure without destroying the natural environment. It protects wildlife and saves the lives of flora and fauna. Many people believe that ecotourism prevents them from fully enjoying their vacation. But, this is not the case because ecotourism offers a wide range of activities. In this scenario, the present study aims to measure the tourist preference towards eco-tourism activities and the barriers faced by the tourist towards eco-tourism activities.

### **Review of Literature**

Chandran and Bhattacharya<sup>1</sup> investigated the perception of tourists visiting Munnar. It was suggested that there were major variations in the attitude of tourists in terms of age, education, and income. The result indicated that there was a positive connection between the satisfaction of tourists and factors related to the destination that influence the perception of tourists. Stanciu et al<sup>4</sup> analyzed the knowledge of young Romanian students about ecotourism and the main ecotourism destinations in Romania. It was concluded that young people were well acquainted with the main ecotourism destinations in Romania and they choose them for the beauty of the landscape, the variety of outdoor activities and the hospitality of the hosts. Upadhaya<sup>5</sup> et al aimed to understand the local people's perception of the impacts and importance of ecotourism with 167 respondents from Chitwan National Park (CNP), Nepal's prime center for ecotourism. The results revealed that local people's socioeconomic and demographic characteristics had significantly influenced their perceived impacts of ecotourism. It was concluded that detailed understanding and consideration of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics can contribute to effective outreach and planning process, potentially resulting in the higher promotion of ecotourism. Alsamawi<sup>3</sup> investigated the preferences of tourists toward selected tourism sites in Bahrain. The result showed that low level of awareness and interest in ecotourism among local communities in Bahrain. It was also clearly showed that variations in preferences and attitudes rates resulted from the differences in socioeconomic characteristics of tourists. Tran<sup>2</sup> analysed the tourists' preferences for ecotourism services and biodiversity conservation in a protected area in Vietnam. The results showed that tourists had an interest in the hypothetical ecotourism and prefer to enjoy all above ecotourism services. The study also revealed that tourists were willing to donate for biodiversity conservation activities in the protected area.

## Objectives of the Study

- To measure the level of preference of respondents towards ecotourism activities on Kodaikanal.
- To identify the barriers to take part in the ecotourism activities during the visit to Kodaikanal.

## Research Methodology

The study is based on survey method. The study makes use of both primary and secondary data. The convenient sampling technique is adopted for collecting the data from the respondents. The primary data is collected from 130 respondents who visited Kodaikanal by using well-structured questionnaire in Erode Town. The secondary data is collected from various journals, magazines and articles. The collected data is analysed by using various statistical tools namely Percentage analysis, One-way ANOVA, t-test and Kendall ranking technique.

## Hypothesis

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference in the preference of respondents among the groups of socio-economic variables.

## Results and Discussion

The following are the findings of the study:

### Profile of the Respondents

The socio-economic profile of the respondents based on their demographic factors such as gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, monthly income and study related profile such as source of information, number of times visited, person accompanied, mode of transport, duration of stay and amount spent for ecotourism activities are examined by simple percentage analysis. It is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 Profile of the Respondents**

Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	34	26.2
Female	96	73.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Upto 20 years	39	30
21 to 35 years	55	42.3
36 to 50 years	35	26.9
Above 50 years	1	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
School	19	14.6
Graduate	68	52.3
Professional	25	19.3
Others	18	13.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>Occupational Status</b>		s
Professional	18	13.8
Private Employee	33	25.4
Government Employee	26	20.0
Self Employed	40	30.8
Others	13	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Monthly Income</b>		
Upto Rs.20,000	31	23.8
Rs.20,000 to Rs.30,000	25	19.3
Rs.30,001 to Rs.40,000	17	13.1
Above Rs.40,000	57	43.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Source of Information</b>		
Friends & Relatives	103	79.3
Travel Agent	12	9.2
Newspaper/ Magazine	10	7.7
Brouchers	5	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Number of Times Visited</b>		
Onetime	54	41.5
Two times	44	33.8
Three times	19	14.7
More than three times	13	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Person Accompanied</b>		
Alone	7	5.4
Family & Friends	82	63.1
Spouse	38	29.2
Others	3	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Mode of Transport</b>		
Two-wheeler	20	15.4
Car	76	58.5
Bus	23	17.7
Train	11	8.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Duration of Stay</b>		
One Day	30	23.1
Two to Three Days	83	63.8
More than Three Days	17	13.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Amount Spent on Ecotourism activities</b>		
Below Rs.10,000	60	46.2
Rs.10,001 – Rs.20,000	41	31.5
Rs.20,001 – Rs.30,000	15	11.5
Above Rs. 30,000	14	10.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Primary Data**

It is found from Table 1 that, majority of the respondents are female (73.8%), belong to the age group of 21 years to 35 years (42.3%), a majority of the respondents (52.3%) have completed their graduation, a high percentage (30.8%) are self-employed, 43.8 % of the respondents are having family monthly income above Rs.40,000, 79.3 % of the respondents have received the source of information about ecotourism through their friends & relatives and visited the eco-tourism spot only one time, 63.1 % of the respondents travelled

with their family & friends, 58.5% of the respondents prefer to travel by car, 63.8% of the respondents stayed for two to three days in the eco-tourism places and 46.2% of the respondents spent below Rs.10,000 for their eco-tourism activities.

### Level of Preference towards Ecotourism Activities

The significant difference between various independent variables and the level of preference towards ecotourism is analysed. The null hypothesis is framed to test the significance of the variables. The hypothesis is tested with One-way ANOVA and t-test score analysis at 5% level of significance. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Level of Preference towards Ecotourism Activities**

Factors		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P-Value	Result
Age	Upto 20 Years	39	15.33	4.361	1.665	0.178	NS
	21 Years – 35 Years	55	16.80	4.178			
	36 Years – 50 Years	35	16.14	3.524			
	Above 50 Years	1	22.00	.			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>16.22</b>	<b>4.102</b>			
Educational Qualification	School	19	16.95	4.660	0.520	0.670	NS
	Graduate	68	16.22	4.044			
	Professional	25	16.36	4.182			
	Others	18	15.28	3.739			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>16.22</b>	<b>4.102</b>			
Occupational Status	Professional	18	18.83	1.654	2.708	0.033	*
	Private Employee	33	16.39	4.710			
	Government Employee	26	15.58	3.646			
	Self Employed	40	15.25	4.528			
	Others	13	16.46	3.017			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>16.22</b>	<b>4.102</b>			
Monthly Income	Below Rs.20,000	31	17.23	3.827	2.323	0.078	NS
	Rs.20,001-Rs.30,000	25	17.20	3.403			
	Rs.30,001- Rs.40,000	17	16.35	3.904			
	Above Rs.40,001	57	15.21	4.423			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>16.22</b>	<b>4.102</b>			
Source of Information	Friends & Relatives	103	15.75	3.908	2.624	0.053	NS
	Travel Agent	12	17.33	4.376			
	News Paper/Magazines	10	19.00	5.077			
	Brouchers	5	17.80	3.271			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>16.22</b>	<b>4.102</b>			
No. of times visited	One time	54	15.61	4.449	1.870	0.138	NS
	Two times	44	16.23	4.371			
	Three times	19	18.16	1.772			
	Four time or more	13	15.92	3.546			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>16.22</b>	<b>4.102</b>			
Persons Accompany	Alone	7	15.71	5.851	0.369	0.776	NS
	Family & Friends	82	16.01	3.760			
	Spouse	38	16.66	4.628			
	Others	3	17.67	2.082			

	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>16.22</b>	<b>4.102</b>			
<b>Mode of Transport</b>	Two Wheeler	20	15.15	4.614	0.968	0.410	NS
	Car	76	16.24	4.176			
	Bus	23	17.26	2.667			
	Train	11	15.91	5.029			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>16.22</b>	<b>4.102</b>			
<b>Duration of Stay</b>	One day	30	15.27	3.787	2.285	0.106	NS
	Two to three days	83	16.80	4.199			
	More than three days	17	15.12	3.822			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>16.22</b>	<b>4.102</b>			
<b>Amount Spent</b>	Below Rs.10,000	60	15.88	3.710	0.561	0.642	NS
	Rs.10,001-Rs.20,000	41	16.34	5.077			
	Rs.20,001-Rs.30,000	15	17.40	3.481			
	Above Rs.30,000	14	16.07	3.149			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>16.22</b>	<b>4.102</b>			
<b>Factor</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>Result</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	34	16.47	3.578	0.408	0.684	NS
	Female	96	16.14	4.286			

\*-5% level of significance, NS-Not Significant

It is found from Table 2 that the p-value relating to age, gender, educational qualification, monthly income, source of information, number of times visited, person accompanied, mode of transport, duration of stay and amount spent on one eco-tour expect occupational status are greater than 5% level of significance. Hence, it is inferred that there is a significant difference found in the mean score of respondents belonging to different occupational status.

### Barriers to take part in the Eco-Tourism Activities

Barriers to take part in the eco-tourism activities is analysed by using Kendall's coefficient of concordance test (W) and details shown in Table 3

**Table 3: Barriers to take part in the Eco-Tourism Activities**

Barriers	Mean Score	Rank	Kendall's 'W'
Low income	4.02	6	0.047
Transport problem	3.88	8	
No Companion	4.70	3	
Poor Infrastructure	4.45	5	
Negative information	5.21	2	
Safety measures	3.98	7	
Degradation of the ecosystem	5.22	1	
Non availability of leisure time	4.55	4	

**Source: Computed**

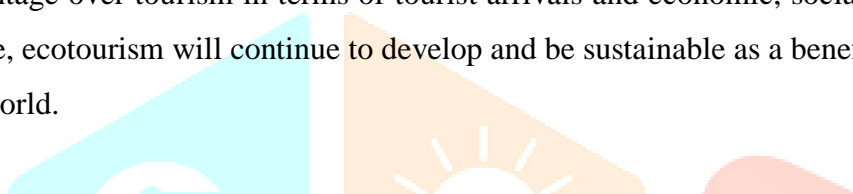
From the Table 3 the mean score for barriers to take part in ecotourism activity varies between 3.88 and 5.22. The "Degradation of the ecosystem" is ranked first with the mean score of 5.22, followed by "Negative Information" (5.21) and the least is "Transport Problem" (3.88). The calculated value of 'W' is 0.047 which is nearer to 0. So, it can be concluded that there is a low similarity among the respondents in assigning ranks.

## Suggestions

- The government could implement environmental laws to regulate the proper use of ecotourism sites.
- Local authorities could take measures for the pleasure of tourists without harming natural plants and living species.
- Tourism authorities and stakeholders must create awareness of ecotourism activities and encourage tourists to participate in the ecotourism activities.

## Conclusion

Eco-tourism areas should be considered as attractions for environmental protection and entertainment for environmentally conscious and eco-cultural tourists. It can be achieved through education about the natural environment, its importance and the conservation need for better management. The success of ecotourism sites depends on how protected area managers balance natural and cultural resources. Ecotourism has a clear advantage over tourism in terms of tourist arrivals and economic, social and environmental benefits. In the future, ecotourism will continue to develop and be sustainable as a beneficial way of life in different parts of the world.



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