



A case study on Tourism Development in Backwaters Kerala Tourism destination from Stakeholders' perspective

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Abstract

India has massive geography and different geographical structure found in India like Rivers, Mountain, Islands, Beaches, coral Rees, Lakes and Back Water, Indian state has incredibly beautiful back waters and diversity. In order to development of tourism destination, back waters are able to be attracting tourist for which stakeholders of Kerala want to welcome investors and preference towards making strategies for destination development and destination competitiveness. In this backdrop, the potential of tourism resources to promote and attract tourism in studied area.

This research carried out through survey using structures interview among 150 respondents including many stakeholders in the study area.

A focused group discussion is also carried out to validate the findings of the survey.

The research concluded that back waters of Kerala have the potential resources to promote as a tourism destination. Many resources are not properly utilizing for tourism so local respondents and stakeholders preferred to develop the study area.

Small business such as houseboat, boat, gift shops, art and craft shops, water activities service providers, folk events etc. should be developed and also, they supported information centres for tourists to attract more tourists to their community.

Keywords:

Destination development, Destination competitiveness, potential resources, stakeholders, information centres.

Introduction

Now a days tourism is being considered as a means to generate an excellent economy in the world. Tourism has a huge contribution it the country's economy. If tourism is separated from the economy, then the overall economy of the country will not be able to grow much. When there is progress in tourism, new positive changes also come in the economy. Every country is making full use of the resources available under his boundaries for the promotion and development of tourism, in this sequence India is also not untouched. India is also promoting its available resources all over the world, so that tourists can be attracted from different regions of the world. We can get idea of how important tourism is from ancient Indian texts. Great Sage and scholars told tourism as the most important part of life. Tourism is the backbone of any country, which

contributes a lot in keeping the economy alive. Apart from this, it also provides means of employment to crores of people for their livelihood. India is full of new diversities, where there are countless beautiful and historical places to be seen. Different type of geographical structure available in the world like mountains, rivers, lakes, canals, corals, island and back waters etc. the back waters of Kerala are very famous among all of these. "Backwater is water turned back in its course by an obstruction on opposing current or the flow of tide in a river channel. The backwater regions of Kerala are one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world".

Backwaters profile

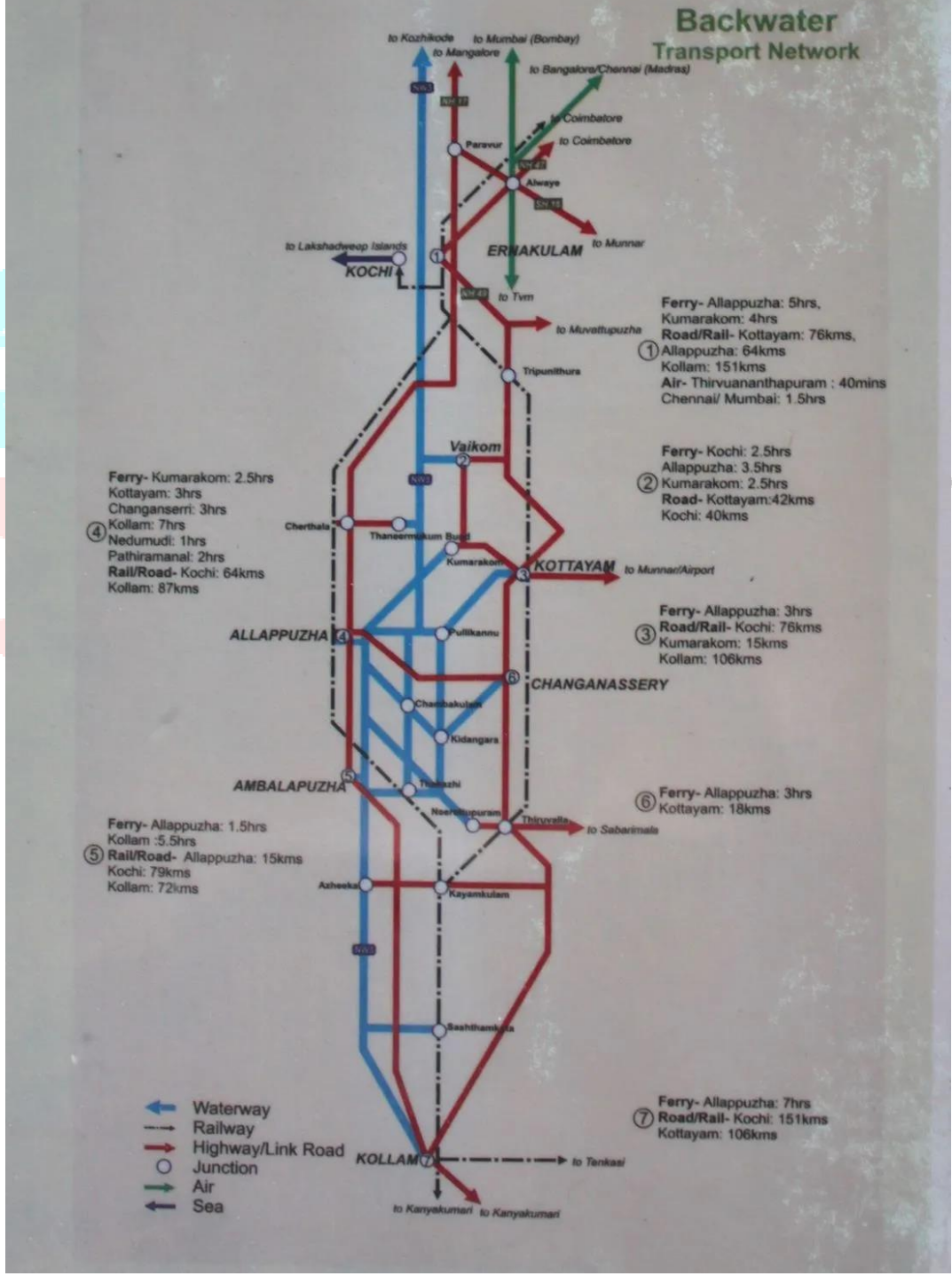
Kerala is a beautiful state of India which is famous all over the world for its backwaters. The Indian state of Kerala has attractive lakes, canals, lagoons and estuaries. On hearing the name of Kerala, the desire to roam in the backwaters of Kerala starts awakening in our heart. Apart from this, roaming in a house boat in the backwaters, eating food in banana leaves and drinking coconut water is interesting. Trekking in the Kerala backwaters seems like a dream come true. Houseboat cruises and frolic are the main attractions of tourists visiting Kerala. The most important source of fresh water for the state of Kerala is the backwaters which have become a vast habitat of marine flora and fauna.

Backwater is a part of the river which is not active. But being connected to land, it is full of beautiful activities. Houseboats and small boats run in it. In which tourists like to visit them along with seeing the interesting places and views associated with the banks of the river.

The Kerala backwaters or Kerala backwaters are a chain of brackish backwaters and lakes located parallel to the Arabian Sea in the state of Kerala in the south of India. There are five large lakes connected by natural and artificial canals in which 38 rivers bring water. It extends over almost half of the north-south length of Kerala. The Kerala backwaters have formed behind barrier islands formed by the effect of sea waves and tides in front of the estuaries of rivers descending from the Western Ghats.

The Kerala backwaters region consists of more than 900 kilometers of waterways spread over canals, lakes, rivers and sea areas. There are many villages and towns along the water from which tourists come to enjoy these backwaters. India The National Waterway 3 here covers 205 km from Kollam to Kottapuram and runs parallel along the coast in southern Kerala. It is important for freight traffic and tourism.

Backwaters of Kerala (Kollam - Ernakulam)



(Source: www.transitmap.net)

Review of literature

As a result in a dramatic increase in tourism activities over the past few decades, the amount of tourism-related research (Bushell et al., 2001) has increased. The main motive of such kind of research is to explore and develop the place as a tourism destination by which the destination can avail to attract the tourist to create jobs and infrastructure. Basically, tourism resources have been assessed to evaluate their contribution to destination attractiveness (Kozak & Rimmington, 1998; Leiper, 1990; Witt & Moutino, 1994). Often these studies have been done from the tourist demand perspective, it contributes that tourists' main attractions towards the available resources and elements at the destination, by which tourists can motivate and plan to visit that specific destination. Pizam, A (1978) in his study, "Tourism Impacts on the Social Cost to the place as Perceived by the Residents and Stakeholders", points out the social impact of tourism on the host community, such as vandalism, increased price of goods and services, drug abuse, increased alcoholism and increased cost of land and housing. Availability of natural resources, working of government machinery and the economic contributions of tourism in Kerala. The study reveals that the purpose of visit to Kerala is mainly for pleasure (Sudheer, S.V. (1991).) The importance of native tourism/eco-tourism and he assesses the demand for the same in a tropical region like Kerala which unfolds the manifold manifestations of nature. The study though confined to foreign tourists, has succeeded in establishing empirically the fact that the natural beauty of Kerala rather than artificial ones attracts the foreign tourists to 'Gods Own Country'. (Vijayakumar B., 1995)

Research question

Tourism in India has been booming up in the recent past year due to a favourable conducive environment in the country. There are a lot of tourism projects undertaken by the Kerala government and other organizations to promote Kerala at the global scenario. Backwaters of Kerala are very famous but proper assessment and identification have not been much expressed.

Therefore, there is a need to make involvement of stakeholders on tourism resources available in backwaters of Kerala to further promote Kerala to backwaters as a best tourism destination in the southern part of India and gain competitive advantage. Stakeholders are more aware about the needs and wants of the tourist and they can easily participate in the promotion and development of backwaters of Kerala.

Research objective.

1. To identify the tourism potentials in the study area to promote as one of the best tourism destinations of India.
2. To identify the preference of stakeholders on tourism in development and promotion of the destination.
3. To achieve destination competitiveness through the promotion of tourism resource in the study area.
4. To recommend strategy to attract more tourists to the study area.

Research Methodology and Research Design

Primary data were collected for this study through surveys using structured interviews. This interview included the several items on the following dimension:

- Development of tourism attraction.
- Challenges for tourism development.
- Tourism destination competitiveness

Research conducted interview among 150 respondents comprising tourism travel agent, water activities service provider, houseboat owners, local people and discussion with tourism stakeholder and various scholars.

Discussion of findings

Findings of the study manifest that tourism stakeholder's preference form the tourism resources development stakeholder present their views of sustainable tourism in research area, so they are likely to support future tourism development because services provider perceived more benefits than costs.

Rather than the physical and environmental benefits from tourism development discussed by (Davis ,Allen ,and cosenzq,1988 Getz 1994: lank ford and mowards,1994) changes and opportunities in back water of Kerala (Zacharias siby ,fames moraleJase ,m.c. and Afzal salam,2008) this study demonstrated that the tourism stakeholder perceived economic benefit from tourism development they more likely to promote responsible and sustainable tourism and they are likely to support future tourism resources for example creation of jobs, attract investors etc.

Among those attractions the respondents prefer the development of available tourism resource ,independent business such as gift shops,art and craft shops ,tour packages ,guide and escort services water sports boat house fishing industry and local culture and they support promotion and publicity and information for tourism to attract more tourism to their community

The tourism resources that tourism stakeholder in this study preferred to develop water canals sport activities in lakes cultural and talk event house boat business entertainment serial provider and most important information centre for tourist their preference for the development of tourism attractions like snake/Nehru boat race house boat cruise canoeing and kayaking ayurvedic massage fishing along with this they were support competitive strategies such as marketing policy and destination development policy

In that manner this result implied that this connection could represent the best combination between tourism attraction and destination competitiveness

This match can give more and good quality of tourism attraction resource effectively among the targetsmarket.

There are some tourism attraction resource preferred by the stake holder to market the destination and to gain destination competitiveness in back waters of Kerala.

- The ice blue colour of backwaters and the rivers and canals should be promoted to attract tourist.
- Houseboat of Kerala backwaters are very famous which should be promoted becausefor this the government is also providing free GPS navigation facility.
- Sport activities like snorkelling, kayaking,sailing, parasailing and wind surfing can be promoted very well in the backwaters of Kerala to attract tourism.
- Chithari is a still virgin destination the island is accessible only by boat ithas good flora and found ,it may give new experience for the tourism.
- Kumbalangi tourism village Kochi is a model fishing village and it is major attraction to get Chinese fishing net and fishing activities.
- Mannanam is a historical place ion Kottayam and it is a religious place this place is a good choice for cruise tour
- Alumkadavu in Kerala, it is the place where first houseboat of India were built it is famous for crafting of kettuvalloms (traditional rice Barges), it is a coir manufacturingcentre and making kalam famous forits coir products
- When A house boat operates other than the direct staff/permanent staff (Srank/ captain, a chef and driver) there are job opportunities for fishing, oyster farming, ducks chicken vegetables etc

Challenges for Tourism Development in Backwaters of Kerala, As tourism Destination

Respondent and tourism stakeholder highlighted some items, that may create impediments in the development of Kerala backwater as tourism destination, these are the following.

- Inadequate infrastructure of transport and tourism.
- Pollution from sewage dumping, salinization of the water, sand dredging and other such disruption have affected the lives of the locals in the backwaters of Kerala.
- Backwaters are facing oil leakage problems and due to this issue, many times good quality of sea food like fishes and prawns doesn't meet the needs of tourists and locales.
- The contaminated water reportedly causes illness such as skin disease and there have been reports of tourist houseboat invading the privacy of the residents.
- Unregulated sand dredging for construction is spoiling the beauty of the beaches.
- Number of professional sport activities services providers are limited.
- Number of theft are increasing day by day specially in the evening, that is affecting law and order.
- Quality of houseboat, boat, kayaks, and adventure instruments are not that much satisfactory so tourists feel dread.

Strategy for the development of tourism to attract more tourists

Researchers recommend the following strategy for the promotion and development of tourism to attract higher number of tourists.

- Improve quality of services like riding, food serve for tourists, yoga, massage etc.
- Improve quality of instruments used for the water tourism by which tourist can easily enjoy the adventure activities based on water.
- Cleaning of canals and rivers is the primary requirement.
- Promote beach tourism and water tourism.
- Maintain clean and eco- friendly environment.
- Promote local culture and local cuisine.
- Promotion and organization of more social events like Nehru Boat Race at world scenario.
- Attract long term support of the government for the tourism industry in Kerala.
- Provide opportunities for tourist to experience the village life and culture (tradition food on banana leaf and Pongal festival and other culture of destination).

Conclusion

According to the result of this study, researcher found that the back waterof Kerala has the potential resources to promote as a tourism destination. Although the study area has many resources and rich in diversity but most of them are not promoted as tourism attraction, they should be put on proper use.

Under the available resources there are some resources in Kerala, which have not yet been fully utilized. So there are few strategies proposed by the researcher in order to obliterate more benefit for the tourism development in the study area.

The study also concluded that the development of environmental and physical aspects of tourism will give more economic benefit by which Kerala Stakeholders get more tourists and cultural tourism will also improve and they also preferred to develop small independent businesses like gift shops, chaupaties, folk and cultural events, art and craft shops, house boat and boat services and they also want to develop more tourist information centre to make sure about the satisfaction of tourist and safety and security of tourists too.

This study may conclude that successful tourism development and destination management competitiveness, a more intense understanding of tourism stakeholders' attitude and preference.

The main preference of tourism stakeholder is to develop tourism destination and support tourism destination competitiveness and strategies should be understood competitive destination environment and position to be achieved.

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