

AN ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINABLE, PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN VALPARAI

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ABSTRACT

Tourism destinations are strategically positioned when their image is promoted in the domestic and overseas niche or mass market. Destination positioning is a continuous exercise to showcase the credibility of tourism attractions superior to the competing destinations. There has been remarkable attraction towards the nature. Nature tourism is a responsible travel to natural areas, which helps in conserving the environment. It happens in natural settings with an emphasis on understanding the nature. Valparai, a hill station in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, is a home of pleasant weather and admirable scenic view. This beautiful place is located near to the border of Kerala. It stands majestically with green spread mountains and forests all around, famous for its flora and fauna, bio-sphere reserves, national Park, natural photography sites, etc. This paper is an attempt to find out the nature of tourism (Natural tourism) and its implications for the ecology and environment of Valparai area. Understanding the different aspects of positioning Valparai as Natural tourist destination or eco-tourism spot. This paper will also try to find out the important factors responsible for the present tourism scenario and suggest ways through which the multiple goals of conservation and promotion resulting in the development of Valparai area.

Keywords: Destination Positioning, Destination Management, Eco-Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Promotion and Development, Valparai

INTRODUCTION

India is one of the rapidly developing country in the world in all sectors, particularly in service sector like Tourism and Travel. As per 2019 statistics, India holds 34th out of 140 countries and shares the rapid increase global Tourist Arrivals by every year. Eco-tourism is completely a fresh approach in tourism sector. It conserves the cultural and natural history of the environment, taking care not to disturb the probity of the ecosystem. And while generating economic opportunities that make preservation, conservation and protection of natural resources advantages to the local people.

It is ecologically sustainable tourism with a main attention on experiencing natural areas that substitute environmental and cultural understanding.

Tourism is a dynamic and competitive industry that requires the ability to adopt constantly to customers' changing needs and desires, as the customer's satisfaction, safety and enjoyment are particularly the focus of tourism business. In the year 2015, 33.35 crores of domestic tourists visited Tamil Nadu and in the same year, 46.8 lakh of foreign tourist visited different destinations in Tamil Nadu. The main purpose of visit is leisure and recreation. Among the different type of tourism, visitors' shows interest in Pilgrimage tourism, Beach tourism, Hill tourism and Heritage tourism. In the hill tourism, the main destinations are Udagamund, Kodaikanal, Yercaud, Valparai, Yelagiri etc. Among the hill stations, Valparai is attracting considerable number of tourists and has lot of tourist attractions comprising of Waterfalls, Dams, Temples, Valleys etc. The main objective of this research paper is to analyse the different tourism attractions in Valparai region, to find out the profile of the tourists visiting Valparai, to analyse the infrastructure facilities available , quality of service to tourists and finally to provide valuable feedback for the development of tourism in Valparai.

CASE STUDY OF VALPARAI

1. About Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu (The Land of Tamils), state which is located in extreme south of Indian subcontinent. It is surrounded by the Indian Ocean to the east and south and by the states of Kerala to the west, Karnataka (formerly Mysore) to the northwest, and Andhra Pradesh to the north. Bounded by Tamil Nadu along the north-central coast are the communes of Puducherry and Karaikal, both of which are part of Puducherry union territory. The capital is Chennai (Madras), on the coast in the north-eastern portion of the state. It is divided naturally between the even country along the eastern coast and the hilly regions in the north and west.

In Tamil Nadu, hill stations, waterfalls, forests, bird sanctuaries and beaches are scattered with natural beauty in plenty for those who show love with nature. The vision of the state is to make a world renowned destination specializing is sustainable tourism through focused efforts on making synergy among all stake holders, inspiring capacity building and public-private partnership with revenue generating strategies.

2. About Coimbatore

Coimbatore is simply called as Kovai, second largest city of Tamil Nadu. Known as Manchester of Southern India, it is also a part of the Kongu Nadu region of Tamil Nadu. Located on the banks of the Noyyal River and is known for its textile Mills, factories, engineering firms, health care facilities, automobile parts manufacturers, educational institutions, hospitality, pleasant weather and for its Kongu Tamil. Coimbatore has a pleasing, salubrious climate, not reaching the high temperatures compared to other southern cities. It has showed its beauty in leaving its visitors awestruck at the charm, elegance and ever so humble nature of the emerging metropolitan and its residents.

3. About Valparai

Valparai a beautiful hill station, present close to Pollachi town, with wide areas of tea and coffee plantations, thick reserve forest fostering a unique flora and fauna. Valparai is barren of man-made tourist attractions. It has many subterranean forests and wildlife sanctuaries. Eco-tourism is given utmost superiority here. The charming grass hills are part of the Indira Gandhi wildlife sanctuary. Wildlife and natural beauty makes Valparai famous among serious photographers. The climate here is reliable with the cool reliefs associated with hill stations.

Positioned at 1500m above sea level in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu, Valparai is an vague yet serene hill station in the Anamalai Hills. Its fascinating combination of grassy hillocks, clean air, and scenic sights lure tourists from all over the country and yonder. It is the heaven of those who desire to visit similar hill stations like Ooty, Coorg & Kodaikanal, but are disappointed by the outbreak of vacation-footfall in those places. Corporate workers or students looking for break from the noise of their urban lives to nature-loving passions and trekking-enthusiasts can gain something worthwhile from travelling and staying at Valparai. It truly is the 'seventh heaven'. Pushed by an economy that embraces largely of coffee and tea estates, this tranquil hill station also flourishes because of its flourishing tourism industry and that too an eco-tourism spot.

OBJECTIVES

The study was aimed to address the following objectives

1. To analyse tourists attractions like Viewpoints, Waterfalls and Dams in Valparai area.
2. To identify the tourists opinion about the facilities and services available.
3. To find out the tourists responsiveness towards cost of the services.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The present study is confined to tourists visiting Valparai. It focuses its attention on tourists coming for leisure, entertainment and joy. The study covers tourism infrastructure, cost of facilities, cleanliness and hygiene and tourist satisfaction. It tries to give valuable means and methods to promote tourism in Valparai.

METHODOLOGY

Sources of Data: The study is a descriptive one based on the data collected from various primary and secondary sources. Primary data is collected directly from tourists by researcher by conducting sample survey. Secondary data is collected from various sources including official websites, magazine, research publication and books. Sample Design: The study involves a survey of selected sample of 100 tourists visited Valparai. Unrestricted, non-probability convenience sampling technique has been applied in the research study. For the purpose of the study, tourists from different districts have been selected. Collection of Data: The type of questionnaires has been specifically designed for the collection of data from the tourists. Secondary data has been mainly collected from related websites, published articles, Newspapers and magazines.

TOURISM ATTRACTIONS IN VALPARAI

Valparai is the natural paradise located above the 3900 feet from the sea level on the Anamalai mountain range. Valparai is located at 10.37 degree North, 76.97 degree East. It is the municipal town under the Coimbatore district having population around 75000. It is popularly known as Cherrapunji of South India and its area is mostly surrounded by the Tea estates owned by private companies. Valparai can be accessed either from Pollachi or from Chalakudy, Kerala. The climate is suitable for cultivation of Tea, Coffee, Cincona. Valparai is one of the highest mid elevation hill resort in the country. The Tea plantations are surrounded by evergreen forest.

TABLE - 1
IMPORTANT TOURISM ATTRACTIONS IN VALPARAI

Sl.no	Attraction detail	Distance from Valparai in km
1	Balaji Temple	10
2	Vella malai tunnel	09
3	Grass Hill Akkamalai	13
4	Koolangal River	03
5	Monampalli forest	20
6	Nirar Dam	15
7	Chinna Kallar Dam	16
8	Sholaiyar Dam	06

1. Balaji temple

It is located 10 km from Valparai town and is managed by Peria Karamalai Tea industries and rituals are being performed like Tirupathi Balaji temple. The temple is located in a isolated hill and vehicular accesses is restricted to the temple premises. A small park near the temple is with flowers and green covers looks very attractive and visitors can relax in the park.

2. The Vellamalai tunnel

It is located under the mountain and the length of the tunnel is 3999 meters in Karamalai estates.

3. Grass hill Akkamalai

It is a part of Anamalai Tiger reserve and it is surrounded by a green grass environment. It's a beautiful site of high green grasses with ever green unique "Shola" Forest on a mountain slope, which is a protected area. It is situated at a distance of 15 kms. from Valparai. One can reach with permission of Forest Department by jeep from Valparai and by trekking from Chinnar and Thirumurthy Dam of Tiruppur District. Grass hills are a picturesque spot located in the Valparai and Anamalai range, at a height of 2400m above mean sea level with cool climate getting cooler at night. Right now all efforts are being undertaken by the Government to preserve the flora and fauna of this location. Nilgiri Thar is native of this place apart from Elephants, Bison, Indian Gaur, Bear, Nilgiri Langurs etc. and wide variety of birds including Hornbills. It is an ideal place for

trekking from Chinnar via Eravikulam national park of Munnar (Kerala) to Konalar kudil of Grass Hills. Grass hill is a UNESCO's world heritage site.

4. Koolangal River: It is located 3 km from Valparai on the way to Nirar dam. The water flow in the streams looks very attractive. The pebbles in the bottom of the stream is transparent adds the beauty to the river. Tourists can take bath and it is ideal spot to an outdoor social gathering. The river is located at the mid of the green mountain.

The Nirar dam is situated 15km from Vaparai and it was built in 1960s. It is constructed across the Nirar river at lower level, around eight kilometres below the upper Nirar weir. The purpose of the dam is to carry out the diverted waters running in the Anamalai basin to Sholaiyar valley.

Water from Chinna Kallar falls gets directly collected in Nirar dam. The water is conveyed through the lower tunnel, which is unlined from the dam site. The Nirar dam and its reservoir located in lush green forests and hill. This dam is mainly used for hydro electricity production and irrigation purpose. It also supplies water to various areas of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. On the way to the dam one can observe the natural beauty of mountain with tea plantations. Nirar dam is calm reservoir. It is one of the highest dams of Valparai. Best time to visit this dam is January to May and October to November.

5. Solaiyar Dam:

Solaiyar Dam is situated at 25km from Valparai and 55km from Chalakudy, Kerala. This reservoir dam is the second deepest dam in Asia and it is the important reservoir under Parambilkulam Aliyar project. The water storage capacity is about 160 feet. The overflowing waters are let into the Parambikulam reservoir all the way through the saddle dam. As the place is surrounded by forests and tea plantations, tourists enjoy the beautiful views and natural surroundings. On the way to the dam, we can see the wildlife such Bison, Great hornbill, Barking Deer and Elephants. This is the suitable spot for social gatherings and family get together. Good playing area is available for the children in the park, which is located near the dam. Tourists can enjoy the overnight stay in the forest guest house. A tree top house offers an enjoyable moment for the nature and adventure specialists.

6. Manompally Forest: Manompally is one of the forest ranges in Anamalai Tiger reserve, located about 20km from Valparai is known for its thick shoal forests, fast flowing rivers and scenic beauty. Manompally forest is being geographically bordered to Top slip and Parambikulam. This place is actually between Valparai and Solaiyar but 8 km inside the forest. This place has some human presence and they work Solaiyar power house and accommodated in the government quarters. Elephants and Bisons are frequently seen in the forest. Since the Crocodiles are living in the river water, it is not advisable to get into the river water. There is bus service between Valparai and this place, available in the morning and evening. There is a guest house maintained by forest department and rooms are available for the tourists. To stay in the guest house, prior permission is required from DFO office at Pollachi.

WATERFALLS ATTRACTIONS

Waterfall is a sudden unsupported drop in a stream. It is formed when the stream course is interrupted as when a stream passes over a layer of harder rock—often igneous—to an area of softer and therefore more easily eroded rock; the edge of a cliff or plateau; or the edge of a hanging valley formed under glacial conditions. Normally, as a stream grows older, the waterfall, by undercutting and erosion of the waterfall edge and stream bed above the fall, moves upstream and loses height until it eventually becomes a series of rapids and finally disappears.

A waterfall is a river or other body of water's steep fall over a rocky ledge into a plunge pool below. Waterfalls are also called cascades. The process of erosion, the wearing away of earth, plays an important part in the formation of waterfalls. Waterfalls themselves also contribute to erosion. Often, waterfalls form as streams flow from soft rock to hard rock. This happens both laterally (as a stream flows across the earth) and vertically (as the stream drops in a waterfall). In both cases, the soft rock erodes, leaving a hard ledge over which the stream falls.

A fall line is the imaginary line along which parallel rivers plunge as they flow from uplands to lowlands. Many waterfalls in an area help geologists and hydrologists determine a region's fall line and underlying rock structure.

TABLE - 2

WATER FALLS IN VALPARAI AREA:

Sl.no.	Waterfalls name	Distance
1	Monkey falls	5 km from Aliyar
2	Chinna Kallar falls (Lawson falls)	15km from Valparai
3	Iraichal Parai falls	8km from Valparai
4	Birla falls (Solaiyar estate)	2km from Valparai
5	Congreve falls(Poonachi falls)	Near 28 th hairpin bend
6	Rhythm Falls	5km ahead of Athirampalli falls
7	Athirampalli falls	80km from Valparai

1. Monkey Falls

The Monkey falls is an excellent stop situated 65 kilometers (40 mi) from Coimbatore and 27 kilometers (18 mi) from Pollachi on the Coimbatore – Pollachi – Valparai main road next to Arutperunjothi Nagar and Azhiyar Valparai Forest Department Check Post of IFS. Famous as a popular tourism spot, Monkey Falls is located on road connecting Pollachi and Valparai. This waterfall originates from the Valparai hill ranges with astounding natural flora and fauna all around the Monkey Falls attracts many visitors who throng this place during weekends and public holidays. It lies on the foothill of Valparai. It is about 5 km from Aliyar.

2. Athirampalli Falls

Athirappilly waterfalls are situated in Athirappilly panchayat, Chalakudy taluk, Thrissur district. It is located on the west flowing, 145km long chalakudy river, which is originating from Anamudi mountains of western ghats and flows through the vazhachal forest toward the Arabian sea. The river runs smoothly and becomes turbulent when it reaches Athirappilly. The type of Athirappilly water is segmented and its height is 25 m and width is 100m. The average flow rate is 52 cumec. Athirappilly is largest waterfall in Kerala and it is named as “Niagara of India”. From the falls the water surges around big rocks and cascades from down in three separate plumes. After crossing the falls, the water becomes turbulent for about one kilometer until it reaches Kannakuzhi and becomes calm until it reaches the dam at Thumburmuzhi. The forest area has wildlife like the Asiatic elephant, tiger, leopard, bison, sambar and lion –tailed macaque. This 180 meter riparian forest in the Athirappilly –Vazhachal area has all four South Indian species of hornbills like the great hornbill, Malabar pied hornbill, Malabar grey hornbill and the Indian grey hornbill are found living together.

3. Chinnakallar Falls

Chinnakallar is the second highest rain fall area in India. With a wet and misty environment accompanied by lush green and dense forests compounded with tall majestic trees along side of the roads Chinnakallar a pleasurable to tourists attraction. There is a falls in Chinnakallar which sounds like a roaring lion situated at a distance of 15kms from Valparai. Chinnakallar is considered as one of the wettest places in India with close similarity to Mawsymram, Cherrapunji and Agumbe.

4. Rhythm Falls

It is about 30 km from Solaiyar and 5 km ahead of Athirampally falls. Water droplets from the falls scattering on adjoining road gives an excitement show. Rhythm falls is about 30 Km from Solaiyar and it is 5 Km ahead of Athirampally falls. The water droplets from the falls scattering on the adjacent road are really quite exciting to watch. This falls has featured in the film “RHYTHM”.

5. Iraichal parai falls

This falls is located 8 kms from Valparai near the Balaji temple. The water originates from the springs in the Grass Hills and it forms the perennial Nadumalai River which flows through Valparai. Bathing in the falls is strictly prohibited as it provides drinking water to the surrounding region. There is also a check dam on the river.

6. Congreve falls/ Poonachi Falls

It is situated on the way to Pollachi to Valparai, the 28th hair pin bend. This falls is situated within Nadumalai Estate of M/s. Peria Karamalai Tea & Produce Co. Ltd. which is very near to Valparai Town. This falls named after Mr. C.R.T. Congreve, one of the early explorers of this hill. Congreve Falls is about 6 Kms from Valparai.

7. Birla Falls

Birla falls is 2km from Valparai. It is situated in Solaiyar estate surrounded by tea fields. The waterfall trails from amid the green tea fields and offers a spectacular view.

ANALYSIS OF INTERPRETATION

1. Sex:

Sex of the 100 tourists surveyed 85 per cent are male and remaining is female.

TABLE - 3
SEX WISE RESPONDENTS

Sex	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Male	85	85
Female	15	15
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

The study reveals that the majority of the tourists are male. It is inferred that male tourists are much interested in hill tourism than female.

2. Age of the Tourists

Age is an important factor which helps to plan the suitable type of tourism product to be developed. Age is a very useful variable because tourists of different ages often have different needs. Of the 100 tourists surveyed, 54 per cent are in the age group of 30-40 years, 25 per cent in the age group of 41 to 50 years. 16 per cent in the age group of 51 to 60 years and the remaining 5 per cent are in the age group of above 60 years

TABLE - 4
AGE WISE RESPONDENTS

Age	Number of Tourists	Percentage
30-40	54	54
41-50	25	25
51-60	16	16
Above 60	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

From the table it is observed that majority of the tourists are having age between 30-40 years.

3. Native District

The researcher makes an attempt to analyze the origin of the tourists. Out of the 100 tourists surveyed are coming from Chennai, 51 per cent from Coimbatore, 20 per cent from Tirupur, 12 per cent from Erode and remaining from other areas of Tami Nadu.

TABLE - 5
NATIVE DISTRICT

Native District	Number Of Tourists	Percentage
Chennai	15	15
Coimbatore	25	25
Tirupur	20	20
Erode	12	12
Others	28	28
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

From the table it is observed that the majority of the tourists are coming from Others.

4. Education

Education of the 100 tourists, 63 tourists are graduates, 22 are high schools, 12 are post graduates and remaining are other categories like diploma, certificate courses etc.

TABLE - 6
EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE TOURISTS

Particulars	Number of Tourists	Percentage
High School	22	22
Graduation	63	63
Post Graduates	12	12
Others	3	3
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data.

The study indicates that the majority (63 per cent) of the tourists are Graduates. It appears that educated persons take better interest in visiting places.

5. Occupation

Occupation decides the economic status of a person which in turn decides the quality and cost of the tourism service offered. The study analyses the occupation of the tourists, 25 per cent of the tourists' occupation are Business, 60 per cent Private employees, 5 percent Government officials, and the remaining 10 per cent of tourists are from other categories like retired persons, House wife, children, Agriculturist, etc.

TABLE - 7
OCCUPATION

Particulars	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Business	25	25
Private employees	60	60
Government officials	5	5
Others	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data.

From the table it is observed that majority of the tourists' occupation are Private company employees.

FINDINGS

- ❖ The majority of the domestic tourists are male.
- ❖ The majority (54 per cent) of the tourists are in the age group of 30 to 40 years.
- ❖ The study exposes that the majority of the tourists are coming from Others and surrounding places.
- ❖ The majority (63 per cent) of the tourists are Graduates. It appears that educated persons take better interest in visiting places.
- ❖ The majority (60 per cent) of the tourists are private employees.
- ❖ The study reveals that the majority of the tourist visited to Valparai has monthly income Rs.15,000 to 40000.
- ❖ The majority of the tourists are accompanied by their friends.
- ❖ The majority (90 per cent) of the tourists come for tourism purpose only.
- ❖ The majority (70 per cent) of the tourists are visiting Valparai for the first time.
- ❖ The study reveals that 55 per cent of the tourists used Private vehicles to reach the destination.

SUGGESTIONS

- ✓ There should be exclusive website on Valparai, which depicts information like accommodation facilities in different type of hotels, Food and beverage details, information about tourists' attractions and their photos, the price and testimonials.

- ✓ An exclusive information centre should be created at Bus stands in Coimbatore, Pollachi and Valparai and Railway stations in Coimbatore and Pollachi to facilitate the tourist to have successful tourism plan.
- ✓ To increase the length of the stay, attractive tourism packages should be designed including nearby destinations like Athirampally falls etc.
- ✓ The basic infrastructure components like roads, electricity, waterways, water supply, drainage, sewerage, solid waste disposal system and services and facilities like accommodation, restaurants, recreational facilities and shopping facilities in Valparai are to be developed to attract more international tourists.
- ✓ Cleanliness and hygiene should be maintained at Hotels, restaurants, waterfalls Bus stand and other tourism spots in Valparai.
- ✓ Food courts at waterfalls area are to be opened and accommodation facilities also can be developed near waterfalls area.

CONCLUSION

Hill tourism is familiarizing nowadays due to cool climate, better ecosystem and good tourist attractions. Valparai an attractive hill stations with plantations, valley views, dams and waterfalls becoming popular among travelers and the number of tourists visiting this place steadily increasing every year. By improving the basic infrastructure like road, electricity, water supply, drainage system and facilities like accommodation, restaurants, recreation, shopping, the tourists' inflow can be further increased. The state tourism department and other tourism operators should initiate steps to improve the tourism activities. By conducting research studies, certain important issues are found and suggestions are provided for the development of tourism in Valparai. By effectively implementing the suggestions with state government and local governance support, the number of tourists and length of stay can be get improved and revenue of Valparai will be improved.

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