



A Study on Infrastructure Development of Kodagu Tourism

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ABSTRACT

India has already made a place on world's tourism map because of its great potential to attract tourists to the diversity of its sites spread all over the country. It is also known that we lay behind our other neighbouring countries like China, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

The infrastructure for tourism thus includes basic infrastructure components like airports, railways, roads, waterways, electricity, water supply, drainage, sewerage, solid waste disposal systems and services. Moreover, facilities like accommodation, restaurants, recreational facilities and shopping facilities also comes under the ambit of Tourism Infrastructure. Planning for sustainable development of Tourism Infrastructure, therefore, involves the integrated development of basic infrastructure and amenities along with all the tourism facilities in a balanced manner.

KEYWORDS :

Kodagu –gods -own-paradise: With its postcard-perfect settings, pleasant climate and green environment, Kodagu is a dream destination for holiday goers. No wonder then that the 'Scotland of India' is seeing an influx of visitors. While the average number of tourists hovers around 25 lakh a year, this year may spring a surprise. The department itself is taken aback at this unprecedented footfall and interest in the hilly district. For, the infrastructural facilities in Kodagu provided by the government are no match for the flood of tourists. But the growing number of home stays set up by locals has somewhat offset the government's apathy. While 249 home stays are registered, a recent drive by the administration to persuade more home stay owners to legalize their business has upped the number to 477. In addition, there are more than unregistered 1,500 home stays doing brisk business.

Why Kodagu beckons?

What makes Kodagu attractive for tourists is that it has something for everyone, be it adventure tourism, temples, historical places or wildlife parks. Some of the popular spots include Talacauvery, Bhagamandala, Abbey Falls, Madikeri fort, Raja's Seat, Omkareshwara temple, Nalaknad fort and Chelavara Falls near Napoklu, Dubare elephant camp and river rafting centre, Nisargadhama, golden temple at the nearby Tibetan settlement, Irpu Falls and Nagarhole National Park in South Kodagu, Mallalli Falls and Pushpagiri hills in Somwarpet taluk.

Tourist inflow to kodagu bound to multiply in the coming years for various reasons. As it shares the border with Kerala and is landlocked by coastal Dakshina Kannada district and Hassan and Mysore cities, it's a hop-over destination for many. That other historic and tourist-driven cities like Mysore and Hassan are within reach makes it even attractive.

The commissioning of international airport in Kerala's Kannur, 95 km from Madikeri, is also expected to boost tourism here. "Once this airport gets commissioned in mid 2016, tourist numbers will rise drastically". Tourists who fly in now have to come via Bengaluru and Mangaluru, which are far from Kodagu.

Kodagu as a tourist hot spot:

Until recently, Munnar in Idukki district of Kerala trumped Kodagu as a tourist hotspot, but the hilly district of Karnataka with its coffee plantations and pleasant weather has emerged as the new favourite in 2012-13. From January to November this year, Kodagu received as many as 10,73,961 tourists and Munnar only 3,53,545, although it has more to offer tourists in terms of infrastructure, going by the data of the tourism departments of the two states.

A recent survey by the Indian Tourism Development Corporation, New Delhi, too placed Kodagu in number one position among hill stations of the country. With its many homestays and natural beauty drawing more people to the 'Orange County' of late, the department of tourism is now waking up to its potential and building more facilities

here for visitors. While Kodagu saw a large number of tourists even in the monsoon, Munnar received 40 percent less tourists owing to bad weather. Tourism in the hill station has been badly hit due to the heavy monsoon. The average tourist inflow per day has dropped from 6,000 to 3,000 this year.

Transport and tourism:

A transport system acts as a bridge between places of tourist origin and destination. It opens out a region by providing an access to its tourist places. In its absence, the resource potential for tourism i.e. attractions and amenities, cannot be of any benefit. The system consists of a network of routes or means of transport and the modes of transport.

Tourism is most attractive if a country has all possible types of alternative transport facilities both in its major and minor networks. Trunk routes are inter-state routes forming the national network. They provide linkages between main transport hubs of India. The connections between the trunk routes and the nodal towns within a tourist region are mostly managed by regional transport authority. It is a minor network at the regional level. Private travel organizations have a greater role at the lowest level to look after the transport needs of tourists within the smallest local network. A tourist requires not an access to a tourist region but also an easy access in terms of cost, time and level of comforts. For example, whenever an easy connection is lost for area of high altitude or of bad weather, alternative mode of transport must be at hand for a tourist. The provisions are favourable if there are easy connections also between different modes of transport from one route to another; and between the major and minor places of tourist interest.

Now-a-days, it is the capacity of a transport system which determines the size of tourist traffic, the increase or decrease in the pace of tourist flows. Beside an increase in the capacity of transport system, the provision of comfortable seats, reasonably high speeds and discounts in the rail, road are becoming incentives. They further go to increase the tourist traffic, in turn ploughing in greater revenue.

Motor transport comes forward to carry passengers to less costly inns along the highways away from the crowded city hotels. This ready-at-hand facility reduces the unmanageable crowds of visitors inside the great cities during busy season. It also provides a big relief to low budget tourists and the vacationing students. Road tourism is being better looked for hill region where motorways are obviously predominant means of transport.

Rail Transport:

Organized tourist travel started on railways since the close of Second World War. Big rail network of our country could operate cheaply and quickly for travellers of those days. It provided only the low budget comforts, while rail routes connected major cities within 200 to 500 km distances, the very long distance sub-continental service extend-

ed over several hundred kilometres.

There are five little mountain trains connecting the most scenic hill resorts of Shimla, Ooty, matheran in Maharastra and Darealing to the North of Kolkata, for the pleasure loving tourists. Appropriately called "Toy Trains" they offer varying natural scenery with rise in altitude in the mountain. The tracks criss-cross a number of bridges, over hundred tunnels U turns and aqueducts on their way. Some steam engines are still being used to attract tourist to their historic memory.

Konkan coastal railway is a newly completed wonder of engineering connecting Mumbai to Mangalore (along Karnataka- Kerala border) via Goa. This 760 km long scenic track has 10% of its track under tunnels or bridges.

- ♣ Transport system and transport routes of various types provide an easy access to tourist destinations.
- ♣ Much remains to be done to make all types of travel more comfortable and hospitality services at traffic terminals attractive for foreign tourists.
- ♣ The Railway ministry is planning a Mysore-Madikeri-Mangalore railway link. Since the announcement, some stiff opposition to the plan has been mooted by locals and environmentalist's fearing the destruction of Coorg's Forests and natural heritage.
- ♣ The railway connectivity harm environment. On the one hand forest will be destroyed and on the other hand, private estates will be destroyed.

PLACE OF HOTELS IN TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

The need for accommodation in different classes of hotels suiting the varying requirements of tourists is no less an important part of tourism infrastructure. Accommodation facilities in the host country has become such an important part of tourist industry that it is now known as hotel industry by itself. Best possible room and restaurant services are in great demand for allure the tourists.

Tour guides:

In the long run, a tour guide induces the visitors to the attractions of a tourist place or a tourist area and conducts them around the actual tourist spots. At the lowest local level, tour guidance is the basic unit for promotion of the whole programme of tourism. An effective tour guide needs to be adequately aware of the geography of the area, background of the localities of tourist interest, past history including legends about temples, shrines, monuments ruins of old site and forts on the list of sightseeing.

A good tour guide is expected to talk about the relevant local traditions, culture, folk lore, performing arts, festivals and fairs for making the narration into an appealing story for the tourists. The facts about the tourist sight must be told clearly in the introduction. He or she will better be speaking to the tourists in their language they understand. An experienced guide is capable to know the attitude of tourists just on enquiring about the country from where they came. This knowledge makes his or her responses well taken and satisfies their queries. The skill of the guide lines in throwing interesting anecdotes about local events and in highlighting the memorable roles played by persons associated with tourist sites. The first time tour can be a starting point of next visits if the tour guide succeeds in creating a lasting interest among the tourists by his performance.

Funds released from the state government for the development of the infrastructure of Kodagu tourism:

Table no. 01

Sl.no	Name	Amount
1.	Honnammankere	1 crore
	Abby falls	20 lakh
2.	Mallali falls	10 lakh
3.	Makkalagudi hills	10 lakh
4.	Irupu	10 lakh
5.	Fort	7 lakh
6.	Nalknad palace	5 lakh
	Total	2.43 crore

The State Government recently sanctioned Rs. 1 crore to develop nine tourist spots in Kodagu district. Kodagu Deputy Commissioner K.R.

Niranjan had submitted a proposal to the Department of Tourism, involving a sum of Rs. 2.43 crore, to develop places of tourist interest in the district. The department had, in turn, apprised the State Government of the immense potential of places in Kodagu, citing the "home stay" concept that has been successful in the district.

Of the Rs. 2.43 crore, the Government has released Rs. 1 crore for developing nine spots of tourist interest in the district. A sum of Rs. 30 lakh will be spent on developing infrastructure at Honnammakere in Somwarpet taluk, and Rs. 20 lakh for improvement of infrastructure at Abby Falls.

A sum of Rs. 10 lakh each is proposed to be utilised for developing tourist facilities at Mallali Falls and Makkalagudi Hills, both in Somwarpet taluk, and Irpu Falls in Virajpet taluk. An amount of Rs. 7 lakh would be used for creating a garden in front of the fort here.

Drinking water facility would be made and toilets constructed at Nalknad Palace in Madikeri taluk involving a cost of Rs. 5 lakh. An identical sum will be used to construct toilets near the "Gaddige," mausoleums of the former rulers of Kodagu.

A sum of Rs. 3 lakh will be utilised for developing a garden, and for landscaping at Nalknad Palace. The amount of Rs. 1 crore was sanctioned in March. But work could not be taken up because of the monsoon.

Funds utilised:

Table no. 02

Sl.no.	Name	Amount
1.	Blow-up pictures	2.23 lakh
2.	Kannada speaking guides	95,000
3.	English speaking guides	1.66
4.	Abby falls	3 lakh
5.	Film shows	97,300
	Total	

Almost the entire amount of Rs. 15 lakh that was released to the Tourism Committee headed by the Deputy Commissioner earlier has been spent. Of this, Rs. 2.23 lakh was spent on blow-up pictures of tourist spots. Such blow-ups could be seen at important government offices and institutions in Kodagu. A sum of Rs. 4.5 lakh was spent on constructing steps at Abby Falls.

A sum of Rs. 95,000 is accounted towards expenditure for appointing tourist guides who speak English. As much as Rs. 1.66 lakh will be utilised for appointing Kannada-speaking guides, Rs. 3 lakh for development work at Abby Falls, and Rs. 97,300 for promoting film shows. A sum of Rs. 1.18 lakh is remaining.

An amount of Rs. 25 lakh has been released to develop Hattihole Falls, near Madapur, and Rs. 33.54 lakh for construction of the Kodava Heritage Centre.

Administrative approval has been given for construction of a helipad near the Golf Course here, for which a sum of Rs. 10 lakh had been released, he said.

Monsoon Magic: Abbi Falls near Madikeri town in full flow on account of very good rainfall, attracting a large number of tourists.

Table No. 03

Sl. No.	Name	Amount
1.	Hattihole	25 lakh
2.	Kodava Heritage Falls	33.54 Lakh
3.	Helipad	10 lakh
	Total	68.54 lakh

The natural landscape of Kodagu district nestling in the Western Ghats has come in for praise from tourists, but not its infrastructure. Facilities such as good road connectivity, power supply, availability of water, will certainly make Kodagu —God's own Paradise — a place to visit and remember perennially.

The Tourism Department has woken up to the tourism promotion issue very late. Or, one can say that nothing much was done to develop tourism in the right earnest for many reasons, for many years. Not enough funds to take up tourism-related activities, and failure to sustain the developed infrastructure due to excess rainfall, have plagued the district. The Coorg Business Summit held in December last year had attracted over Rs. 2,500 crore investments, but they have failed to take off, thanks to the deficient infrastructure, including availability of land.

The Tourism Department aims to promote tourism in Kodagu district at a cost of Rs. 6.90 crore. But, monsoon has been playing the spoilsport. Rains battering the district have rendered all infrastructure development, mainly roads, futile. The magnitude is severe this season.

The Public Works Department has taken up as many as 17 tourism projects in the recent times of which nine have been completed. The remaining eight works were in different stages of progress. Of the proposed total cost of Rs. 6.90 crore covering the 17 projects, a sum of Rs. 4.29 crore was released and Rs. 2.15 crore spent.

The Tourism Department plans to plant saplings on the Fort premises in Madikeri at a cost of Rs. 4 lakh. The Fort, called as 'Madikeri Kote', currently serves as a citadel of the Kodagu district administration, including the office of the Deputy Commissioner. Another Rs. 3 lakh is to be spent for installing solar lights on the Fort premises.

Availability of good infrastructure is one of the essential requirements for attracting more tourists, both at domestic and as well as at International level. Non availability of quality infrastructure creates a problem for attracting large number of tourist at some destination. Adequate and proper infrastructure will create economic growth, employment generation and preservation of art, culture and heritage. But it is not possible if there is no proper planning and management of tourism infrastructure.

Tourism sector projects are capital intensive. Roads, signage, lighting, transport linkages, parking etc. require government findings. Projects like as hotels, tourist trains, golf courses, normally requires professional expertise. It can be managed privately. To attract large number of tourist these facilities are necessary. For that Government should manage the available resources optimally and maintain sustainable tourism.

Suggestions :

- ❖ A roadside stall selling fast food centres to travellers.
- ❖ Need to more hotels, restaurants, cafes, fast food centres and amenities that can attract the tourists.
- ❖ Tourist places information boards needed
- ❖ Trained guides
- ❖ Good roads
- ❖ Public transport system, better refreshment packages for the tourists.
- ❖ Amusement parks for kids.
- ❖ Toy trains link to the tourist places.
- ❖ Need to keep free tourists maps in bus stand.
- ❖ Shopping centres

Conclusion: Planning is very first step of Management. Well planned Infrastructure development is very important for maintaining sustainable tourism growth. Working group on Tourism has suggested very good strategy for development of tourism infrastructure. Kodagu has a lot of tourism potential if they follow and implement proper strategy for development of tourism infrastructure.

The development of infrastructural resources like an efficient transport network hotels hospitality service and various other amenities are keys for the management of modern tourism. The existence and growth of tourism, whether domestic or international, badly depends upon an increased accommodation of all categories to meet the rush of tourists to tourist places especially during busy peak times. Various alternative modes of transport are to be provided for use in an integrated manner so that the one may also supplement the other.

The management of tourism has become a profession in the course of its growth and the job of trained functionaries is now of a specialized nature. A sensitive service industry like tourism equally depends upon the efficient work of various tour functionaries like tour guides and tour operators adopting their jobs as trained professionals. Both these jobs are now getting distinctly well defined and are of a specialised nature. These functionaries require undergoing a careful programme of training imparted in a series of steps before alluring them to interact effectively with tourists of diverse types.

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