



PROSPECTS OF BEACH TOURISM IN KERALA – A CASE STUDY OF SNEHATHEERAM BEACH IN THRISSUR DISTRICT

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Abstract

Tourism is increasingly an essential element of economic, social and cultural development and it has become one of the largest global economic activities in the world today. Tourism with its super brand “Gods own country” has made Kerala a household name among global tourists. Throughout the world, Kerala beaches are renowned for their breathtaking beauty. Thousands of tourists visit Kerala because it has the most diverse varieties of beaches anywhere in the world. . Snehatheeram Beach or love shore is a beach in Thalikulam of Thrissur District in Kerala. The present study is an attempt to identify the beach tourism potentials of Kerala and to examine the various facilities provided at Snehatheeram beach and also to examine the various programmes conducted at Snehatheeram beach.

Keywords- Tourism, Beaches, SnehatheeramThalikulam.

Introduction

Tourism plays a pivotal role in promoting goodwill among the people and thereby fostering socio-economic development of the country. Development of tourism has been given a high priority in the economic development programs of the country since 1980s. The state of Kerala, which is now stylized as ‘God’s own Country’ in the global tourist map, has also accorded it a major position in order to reorient its economic development utilizing its natural green development.

Beach Tourism

Beach Tourism means the utilization of the coastal environment in such a way as to attract tourists. The natural environment including the beach sand, the waves and the cottages are all important factors in beach sand, the waves and the depth along these areas, security, and the sights visible and ability to set up eco-friendly cottages are all important factors in beach tourism.

Need and Significance of the Study

Kerala is blessed with beautiful beaches which are the most important tourist attractions. The state has about 580km long coastlines, studded with world’s best string of beaches. Throughout the world, the beaches of Kerala are renowned for their breath taking beauty. The blues of the sky and the blue waters of the beaches of Kerala come together give enchanting experience tourists. Amongst the popular beaches of Kerala are Kovalam Beach and Varkala beach. The other much visited beaches of Kerala are Thangasseri beach, Cherai beach, Tannur beach, Bepore beach and Muzhappilangad beach, Bekal beach and Kappad beach.. Though the beaches are the centers of attractions, there is a concentration of tourists, only in the southern side beaches of Kerala, especially Kovalam and Varkala. The other beach centers attract comparatively a smaller number of tourists. Though a number of studies have been conducted on tourism, the beach tourism has not been able to draw the attention of researchers. Tourism is still an emerging discipline and hence any academic or research work ought to enrich the existing stock of knowledge on the subject. The state has very little information on the precise impacts of tourism, particularly beach tourism on the economy and the environment of Kerala. The present study focuses on the tourism potentials of Kerala with special reference to beach tourism. Hence the present study is titled as Prospects of Beach Tourism in Kerala- A Case study of Snehatheeram Beach in Thalikulam.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the beach tourism potentials of Kerala.
2. To examine the various facilities provided at Snehatheeram Beach and various programs conducted at Snehatheeram Beach.

Methodology:The present study is analytical in nature. Special focus is given to the beach tourism potentials of Kerala. The present study uses both primary and secondary data. Due to the special nature of the study the qualitative data has also been used in the present study.

Study Design:The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature. The study describes the tourism potentials of Kerala with special reference to beach tourism and analyses the problems and possibilities of Snehatheeram Beach...

Data Collection:In the present study primary and secondary data were collected for analysis the problems and interpretation.



Source of Secondary data:The secondary data necessary for the study have been collected from the following sources

1. Economic Review, State Planning Board, Govt. of Kerala(various issues)
2. Kerala Tourism Statistics, Govt. of Kerala(various issues)
3. India Tourism Statistics, Govt. of India (various issues)

Primary data :The primary data necessary for the study has been collected from the tourists (both foreign and domestic) and natives at Snehatheeram Beach in Thalikulam.

Beach Tourism Potentials of Kerala Kerala Beaches

The Kerala coast is 580 km long in the direction of north-north west to south-east, with many special features like sea cliffs formed by the action of waves on the coast. Distributed on the coast, there are long patches of sandy beaches. The coastline Table shows details of district wise coast line.

Table 1,Length of coastline of Kerala (district-wise)

District	Length of coastline (km)	Coastline percentage to total
Thiruvananthapuram	78	13.2
Kollam	37	6.3
Allapuzha	82	13.9
Ernakulam	46	7.8
Thrissur	54	9.2
Malappuram	70	11.8
Kozhikode	71	12.0
Kannur	82	14.0
Kasarkode	70	11.8
TOTAL	590	100

Source: GOK (2005)

It is apparent from table that maximum length (14%) of coastline is present in Alappuzha and Kannur districts. There are nearly 200 village panchayats, 11 municipalities and four corporations located along the coast facing the sea or backwaters and about 30 percent of the population of Kerala lives in the coastal zone, which has a high population density (GOI, 2006).. In Kerala, it is observed that tourists are visiting only few beaches in spite of the fact that there are a number of beautiful beaches in Kerala. It may be due to the absence of information to the tourists and the lack of planned efforts on the part the authorities to make aware the tourists on the beach tourism destinations of Kerala.

According to the Department of Tourism, there are five major beaches in Kerala, namely, Kovalam, Varkala, Fort Kochi, Kappad and Bekal(GOK, 2003, p.2).Among the beaches, only Kovalam and Varkala are developed into full-fledged tourist sports of the state.

Apart from these, there are many minor/potential beaches throughout the state.Table 2 gives a proper idea of potential beach recourses of Kerala.

Table 2,Potential beach resources in Kerala

District	Beaches	Features
Thiruvananthapuram	Poovar South	Wide beach, backwater
	Pulinkudi	Rocky cliff, extensive stable beach
	Pozhikkara	Beach, were backwater meets the sea
	Sankumukham	Beach, archaeological sites, palace, park
	Veli	Tourist Village, backwater, beach tourism, park
	Papanasam	Cliff, beach, mineral spring, temple
Kollam	Edava	Barrier beach and backwater at close proximity, coconut groves
	Kappil	Barrier beach, extensive backwater, coastal road
	ParavurPozkikkara	Pozhi, temple, coconut groves
	Mundakkal	Park, extensive stable beach
	Thirumullavaram	Bay, beaches, coconut groves, temple. pond
	Palliyamthuruth	Uninhabited island(inlet) with beautiful backwater surroundings
Alapuzha	Alapuzha	Extensive stable beach, pier, suitable for recreational fishing



	Marrarikulam	Wide beach
Ernakulam	Cherai	Extensive beach, backwater, frontage park
Thrissur	Thalikulam	Wide beach and snehatheeram park
	Chavakad	Wide beach
Malappuram	Vallikkunnu	Wide beach
Kozhikode	Kozhikode	Wide beach
Kannur	Muzhippilangad	Wide beach, cliffs
	Meenkunnu-ayyambalam	Extensive beach
	Ezhimala	Promontory and pocket beaches
Kasragod	Valiyaparambala	Wide beach with sea and backwater
	Pallikkara	Fort on cliff , wide beaches around, backwater at vicinity
	Kottikkulam	Promontory and pocket beaches around

Source: Compiled from different district brochures

Snehatheeram

A visit to the beautiful coastal town of Thrissur is simply incomplete without a trip to one of its super-scenic beaches. Sun, sand and the enigmatic Arabian Sea, all come together in a beautiful harmony that descends upon the Snehatheeram Beach, right in the middle of the Kerala coastline. Upon setting foot on this popular beach, one realizes at once why it is christened “Snehatheeram” or ‘Love Shore’ – the reason is simple. It is impossible to come here and not fall in love with the ambient music of the sea waves hitting softly against the shore, and watching the Sun take a gradual dip in its waters, before disappearing completely.

The beach, located at a distance of 3 kilometres from the Thalikulam Taluk of Thrissur, and about 30 kilometres from the town itself, is an idyllic setting for everyone who visits it. Children can be spotted playing catch and making sand castles, lovers come here to enjoy a romantic walk in the breezy atmosphere against the backdrop of the sea, and families come for a fun-day out. Because of this universal appeal, the beach attracts national and international tourists at all times of the year. The beach was selected as the best beach tourism destination by the Department of Tourism (Kerala) during the year 2010. The beach is maintained by Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) and is definitely one of the most beautiful beaches in Kerala. Thalikulam Snehatheeram destination is under the control of an executive council headed by MLA as the chairman, Thalikulam Gramapanchayat President as Vice Chairman and DTPC secretary as CEO. The day to day affairs are managed by 10 staff appointed by Destination management council. The idea behind the setting of Snehatheeram goes to T.P. Prathapan M L A who is the master brain behind the starting of the project.

Facilities and Main Highlights

- A tiled pathway and 4 stone mandapams with benches along to sit and enjoy the beauty of the sea
- A kids park with an aquarium of different varieties of fishes. Kids can play and enjoy rides and swings with a panoramic view of the sea. Snehatheeram beach is the only one in Thrissur to have a dedicated beach park for children. Since it is government-maintained, the entry charges for the park are a nominal 5 Rupees for children and 10 rupees for adults
- An open stage to conduct various programmes.
- A high mask light and a dancing fountain decorated with lights.
- Bathroom and cloak room facilities for gents and ladies .
- Two hotels to provide delicious sea food to tourists run by private parties. One is Nalukettu build with wood and coconut palm leaves offering attractive visual treat.
- Parking facilities at three places providing ample parking space.
- Snehavanam composing of various varieties of trees.

Programmes conducted at Snehatheeram

- Mazhakazha – 2009 July 25 . Around 50 artists presented programmes, All India Pet Show – September 4 to September 6 . More than 10000 tickets were sold on each day.
- Snehotsavam- Food festival was conducted as a part of it. Different cultural programmes arranged attracted huge audience.
- ,Deepavali - October 14 .Cultural programmes and varnamazha (fire work display) attracted huge audience.,
- Mylanchimonchu – November 27, 28, 29. 238 participants with in 3 hours created same pattern of mylanchi designs in 5213 hands ,Sports – Interstate Kabadi championship was held on 14 th april 2008. Ddate beach volley ball match was conducted on May 16, 17, 18. Helped in boosting sportsmanship among youths in and around the area.



- Utsavam – It was conducted under the leadership of state tourism department. Programmes lasted for 3 months. Traditional artforms of Kerala – Balikala, Nadanpattu, Kathakali, Poorakkali, Kuthiyottam, Vilpattu, Velakali, Padayani, Thiruvathira, Charadupinnikkali, Monthayumthalavum, Kolattakali, Kakkarisinadakametc were organized.
- Naval Band – January 31 st 2010. Cultural programmes of naval band were arranged by defence minister sri A. K. Antony .This programme attracted students and teachers from far and near places.
- Ammakilikoodu – 9th May 2010 .Mathrusangamam programme in which 1000 mothers were honoured .Bharat PadmasreeMohanlal and mother, PadmasreeYusafali M .A, SathyanAnthikkad, KaithapramDomodaranNamboodiri were chief guests.
- Mathysotsavam- - It was conducted to create awareness about new fishing techniques to the fisherman community. Various stalls of fishes, dishes made of fishes, aquariumsetc attracted huge audience.
- Onaghosham – August 28 and 30 2012. Pookkalamatsaram, comedy show and musical night were the important programmes.
- Exhibition of Bamboo Products – 18 -20 September 2014. The three-day bamboo festival showcases bamboo products, food items made with bamboo rice and traditional tribal medicines. A house made of bamboo has been displayed at the venue. Bamboo music will be performed in the evenings. A flute recital was also arranged as a part of the festival

Source of Revenue

The main source of revenue is the entry fees charged at the kids' park. For video recordings 1500 to 5000 is charged. For conducting programmes on the stage rupees 2500 is charged. Quotation wise tender is provided for two parties to sell ice-cream inside the enclosed area. The manager reported that an average of 1 ½ lakh rupees was able to collect on a monthly basis from the area.

Suggestions for Change

As a part of the study information's and suggestions were collected from tourists and locals they are as follows.

- Kids Park is now under dilapidated condition without proper and timely maintenance.They must be properly maintained by including more swings and rides.
- Aquarium inside the park must be kept neat and clean.
- There is a small well-constructed building inside the park without any use it can be converted into a small restaurant.
- Fees can be charged at the entrance gate of Snehatheeram.
- Fisheries museum can be arranged along with the park.
- Snehavanam is not properly maintained .Steps must be taken to protect it.
- New proposals like kadallilekkorunadapatha should be implemented.
- Earlier there were proposals for starting of paragliding facility at snehatheeram.It should be implemented.

Conclusion

Considering the unique strengths and potential of the state the focus should be on the development of new tourism products especially beach tourism, which is a main source of attraction to domestic and foreign tourists alike. The partnership between the department of tourism and local bodies will be strengthened for developing local tourism products to ensure the passing of tourism benefits to rural areas and communities. Theguiding factors in any tourism scheme taken up by the government would be indigenoussness, environmental friendliness and community involvement. Theparticipation of the government with private sector groups also is required fordeveloping Kerala as a first class beach tourist destination. Kerala is home to some of the best beaches of the world and witnesses a constant rush of people for finding comforts in the tranquil waters of Kerala.

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