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Understanding the relationship between tourists' motivations and their experience and satisfaction

Nichola Anastasia Ramchurjee *

Department of Environmental Science, Yuvaraja's College Autonomous, Constituent University of Mysore, Mysore, 570 005, Karnataka, India

Abstract

This paper examines tourists' motivation, activities and satisfaction while taking part in an ecotour in the Bagalkot district of Karnataka. Therefore, understanding the experience and behaviour of tourists as they undertake different activities is foundational to identifying the impacts occurring at the ecotourism destinations. The results show the tourist experience gained and key attributes they are seeking at the ecotourism destinations. It further presents the importance of these attributes in their experience and the enthusiasm with which first time visitors will try activities offered by the ecotourism destinations. There is a relationship that exists between tourists' motivation, the activities they engage in on an ecotour and their overall level of satisfaction.

Keywords: Tourist satisfaction, Behaviour, Experience, Motivation, Ecotourism destination

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1. Introduction

Tourism is considered vital to the world's economy. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2012) the direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was US\$6 trillion (9% of global GDP) and accounted for 255 million jobs in 2011. Over the next ten years, this industry is expected to grow by an average of 4% annually, taking it to 10% of global GDP, or some US\$10 trillion. By 2022, it is anticipated that it will account for 328 million jobs, or 1 in every 10 jobs on the planet. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2011), international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) grew by 4% in 2012 surpassing a record of 1 billion tourists globally for the first time in history, up from 996 million in 2011. Despite ongoing economic challenges, the growth of international arrivals worldwide is expected to continue in 2013 at a similar to slightly slower pace (+3% to +4%).

When people are motivated to travel, numerous choices must be made. Motivation relates to the choices of destinations and activities to be pursued. This in turn, relates to trip satisfaction and subsequent purchase or recommending the trip. It is expected that people with similar motivations will, to a certain degree, choose the same destinations and pursue similar types of activities while staying at the ecotourism sites. A satisfied tourist is expected to be more likely to choose to visit the same destination on other occasions and to become a promoter via positive word-of-mouth than an unsatisfied tourist (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Chen and Gursoy, 2001; Chen, 2003).

Nowadays, the choice of destination is influenced by activities offered at the destination. The numerous destinations and activities offered at the ecotourism destinations, are more or less similar in the customers' minds, and have major influences on their choices. The popularity of a destination has the potential to contribute to its economic success through an increase in modern infrastructure and employment (Darnell and Johnson, 2001). According to Morgan et al. (2003) destination features represent the facilities, attractions and experiences that a destination can offer a tourist. However, a lack of certain activities at the destination can have negative impacts on the tourists' motivation choice- satisfaction relationship. In order to meet the needs of the tourists in a satisfactory way, it is better to acknowledge and recognise why tourists visit certain destinations and what types of activities they pursue while staying there.

Motivations and behaviours are affected by tourists' self perceptions in general. Leary and Tangney (2003) illustrated the importance of acknowledging individual self-perception in that an individual's self-concept or identity has tremendous effects on the way they feel, think and behave, and for their future choices and ambitions as well. Trip experience, self perceptions and opinions are seen as important antecedents of tourist motivation. Past experiences and self insight will affect tourist motivation and thus the choices of destinations/activities. Experience and behaviour issues are also linked to economic and environmental considerations through product delivery and the economic benefits realised by visitors.

2. Literature review

Tourists' perceptions and awareness about a destination can help to determine the destination's success or failure (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Formica, 2002). The perceived attractiveness (Um et al., 2006) and perceived quality (Atilgan et al., 2003) of a destination can influence repeat visitations. Understanding what drives satisfaction for a tourist is one of the most relevant areas of research for the tourism industry (Petrick, 2003; Prebensen, 2006), as satisfied tourists tend to transmit their positive experience to others and to repeat their visit (Pizam, 1994; Hallowell, 1996; Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Operman, 59 2000; Alén et al., 2007).

The variety and type of activities available throughout the stay at the destination are of utmost importance for two specific reasons: (i) they facilitate social interaction (Ross, 1995; Thomas and Butts, 1998; Gallarza and Gil, 2006), and (ii) to constitute one of the most influential factors when choosing a holiday destination (Nykiel, 1997). Both elements are crucial for the determination of tourist satisfaction levels. However, Danaher and Arweiler (1996) established that, although the experience associated with items relating to transport and accommodation affect the degree of tourist satisfaction, positive tourist feedback focused mainly on outdoor activities. In this sense, it is essential for the industry to understand that the activities performed during the stay at the holiday destination and the experiences during these activities are clear sources of satisfaction for the tourist.

Tourists have the opportunity to receive information about the destination through multiple information sources, such as word-of-mouth communication, brochures, television, and other media. Both commercial and social environment have been shown to affect destination choice (Mill and Morrison, 1992). The former refers to information provided by the companies, destinations, and tourist businesses, whereas the latter is formed by the interaction with friends, relatives, and reference groups who do not expect to gain anything. Tourists' own experiences with the destination should be regarded as a third source of information.

Thus, the aim of the present study is to determine tourists' attitudes and behaviours by investigating their motivation and experience in order to show what will affect their degree of satisfaction. This study proposes the following (1) the decision of the tourist to take part in an ecotour (2) first time visits and tourists' willingness to participate in future ecotours (3) the experiences they obtain at the ecotourism sites and the contributing factors and related elements leading to their satisfaction.

3. Materials and method

3.1. Study method

A questionnaire survey was conducted for domestic and foreign tourists who visited ecotourism areas in Bagalkot district.

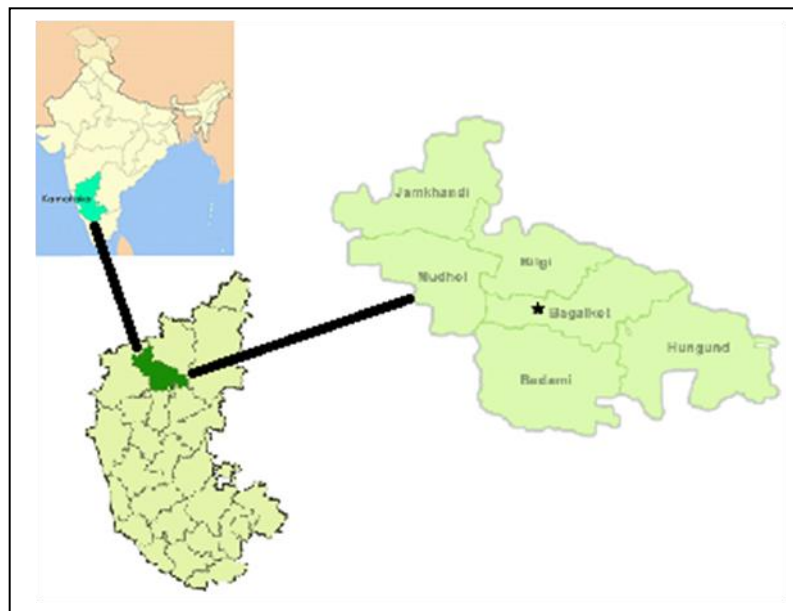


Figure 1. Map showing Bagalkot District

The survey was designed to measure the motivations and experiences of tourists regarding the ecotourism activities they participated in. The questionnaire involved aspects of the tourists' trip characteristics, sources of information and their experience gained on their ecotour. A total of N=375 respondents took the survey giving information of their experience, participation and satisfaction in ecotourism activities. The survey instrument was a six-page questionnaire, divided into three sections. The first section involved questions on social characteristics and demographics. The second section consisted of questions on trip characteristics attributes using a 2-point scale of yes/no. The third section entailed questions on travel motivation and activities using a 5-point scale evaluating tourists' attributes such as experience and satisfaction. Data from both the close-ended questions and open-ended questions were coded. They were then computed and analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including simple frequencies, mean ratings on the respondents' demographic and trip characteristics and factor analysis of motivation and activities were computed.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Demographic and social characteristics of the respondents

Table 1a reflects that 30% of the respondents (N=112) were females. Table 1b shows that Bagalkot attracts 78.1% corresponding to (N=303) participants from the younger age group of 18-41. The participants indicated that 74.7% (N=340) of them were employed as seen in Table 1c. From Table 1d, about 29.6% (N=111) of the respondents indicated that they have university degrees, while 47.5% (N=178) have post-

graduate degrees. Table 1e explains that 30.7% (N=115) of the respondents were domestic visitors and that there is a greater number of foreign visitors within the survey. The foreign visitors indicated their country of origin, and there were a total of nine different groups. The largest of the respondents were from Mexico (16.0%) and Sweden (10.1%), followed by (7.7%) from England and (6.9%) of the respondents were from Germany and Switzerland respectively. Another (6.7%) of the respondents were Americans and (6.4%) from Spain. The least of the respondents came from France (5.1%) and Canada (3.5%) respectively.

Table 1a-e. Demographic and social characteristics of respondents of Bagalkot District

Table 1a: Gender (n=375)	
Male	70.0%
Female	30.0%

Table 1b: Age (n=375)	
18-25	27.7%
26-33	44.8%
34-41	6.1%
42-49	6.9%
50-57	4.3%
58-65	2.9%
66-73	7.7%
74+	0

Table 1c: Occupation (n=375)	
Student	17.6%
Professional	64.8%
Self-employed	8.3%
Homemaker	1.6%
Unemployed	0
Other	7.7%

Table 1d: Highest Education Attained (n=375)	
Primary	0.0
High School	2.1%
Pre-University	14.9%
University	29.6%
Post-Graduate Degree	47.5%
Vocational/trade qualification	5.9%
Other	0

Table 1e: Country of Origin Foreign visitors (n=260)	
USA	6.7%
England	7.7%
Sweden	10.1%
Switzerland	6.9
Canada	3.5%
Mexico	16.0%
France	5.1%
Germany	6.9%
Spain	6.7%

State of Origin Domestic visitors (n=115)	
Andhra Pradesh	4.8%
Assam	2.9%
Delhi	6.4%
Kerala	2.9%
Maharashtra	6.7%
Tamil Nadu	4.0%
West Bengal	2.9%

4.2. Trip characteristics of participants

Table 2 shows about 84.0% of the participants visited with their family/friends, while 27.5% travelled by themselves. Amongst the survey sample, it can be seen from Table 3, that 70.4% of the respondents were visiting the district for the first time. Of the 83.4% of respondents that took part in an eco-tours before, 76.8% of them organized their involvement by themselves, while 14.4% planned independently with organized tours, 2.4% and 7.5% made arrangements with tour operators and travel agents respectively, as covered in Table 4. Table 5 shows that 59.7% of the respondents took part in an eco-tour before and 23.7% of the respondents is taking part in ecotours in the district. Table 6 reveals that 92.8% of the respondents confirmed that they are willing to participate in future ecotours in the district. Table 7 shows that 49.1% of the respondents were visiting Bagalkot with their spouse/partner or family, 32.8% were with friends, while 8.0% were alone and 11.2% were part of organized groups.

Responses of Trip Characteristics of participants in Bagalkot district

Table 2. How do tourists plan their eco-holidays?

Decision for Visits	
By travel organisation	5.9%
By community organisation	3.7%
Self-travel	27.5%
Family/Friends	84.0%
Others	0

Table 4. Participation in ecotour

Participation in ecotour	
Yes (in Karnataka)	23.7%
Yes (in other places)	59.7%
No	16.0%

Table 3. First time visit to Bagalkot

First Visit	
Yes	70.4%
No	29.6%

Table 6. Tourists willingness to participate in future ecotours

Willingness to participate in future Eco-tours	
Willing to	92.8%
Not willing to	7.2%

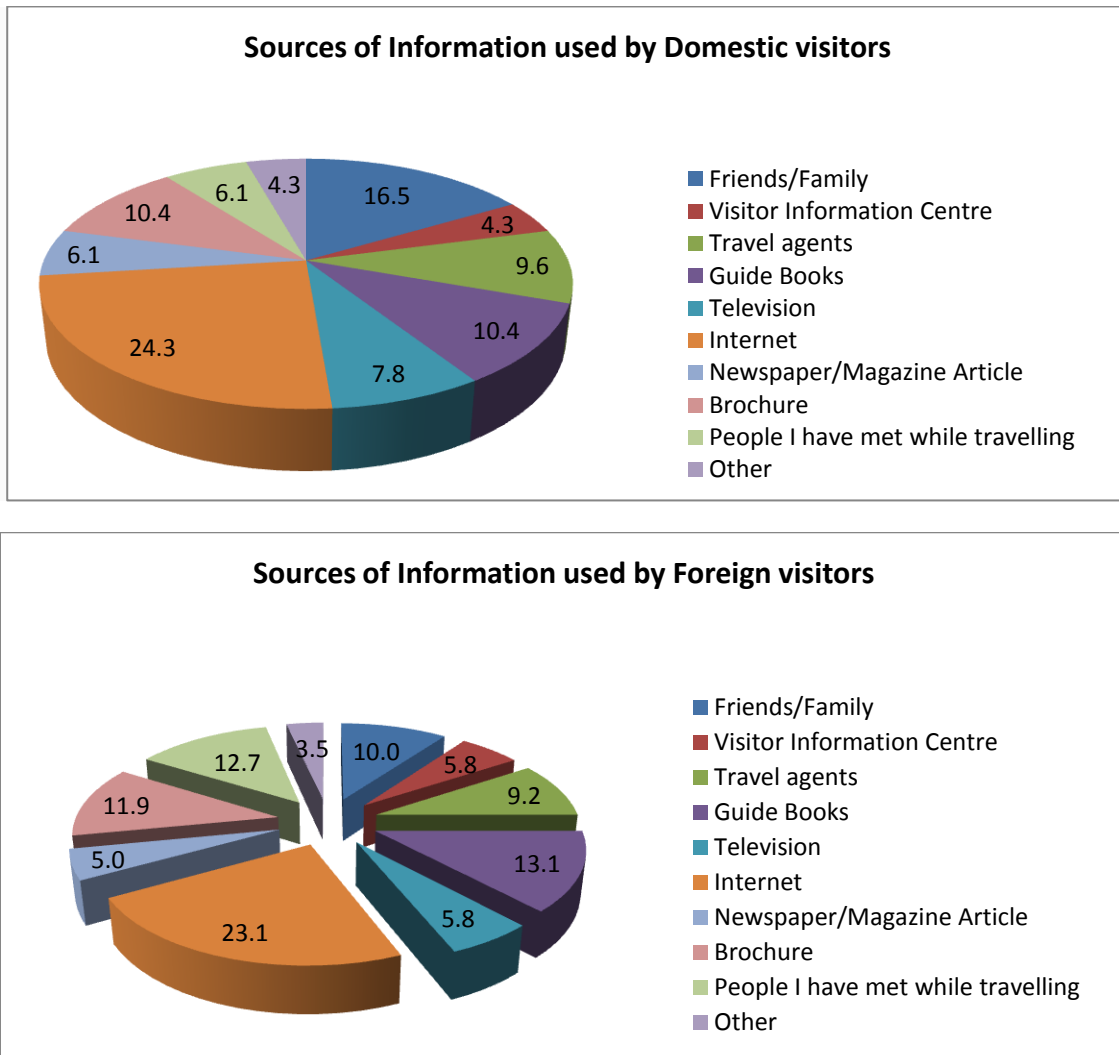
Table 5. Organisation of ecotour

Organization of eco-tour	
Independently, by yourself	76.8%
Independently with organised tours	14.4%
Non-profit group organised tours	0
Tour operators	2.4%
Travel agents	7.5%
Other	0

Table 7. Travel companion

Travel Companion	
Individually	8.0%
Family	49.1%
Friends	32.8%
Part of an organised group	11.2%

The top three sources of information used by domestic visitors were the internet (24.3%), friends/family or word of mouth (16.5%) followed by guidebooks and brochures at (10.4%) respectively. Overall, foreign visitors sought more information from a variety of sources than domestic visitors. However, the internet was the first source (23.1%), followed by guidebooks (13.1%), and then people I have met while travelling (12.7%) for foreign visitors. However, foreign visitors also had a higher propensity to seek information from brochures (11.9%), their family and friends (10.0%) and from travel agents/tourist offices and information centers (9.2%).



*Respondents could choose multiple sources of information

Figure 2. Sources of information utilized by Domestic and Foreign visitors

The internet and word of mouth from other travelers played a more important role as sources of information at the destination for international respondents than they did for domestic tourists. Now one of the easiest and most affordable promotional methods to reach the global audience is through the Internet. This study shows the emergence of the Internet as a major element for information on ecotourism destinations.



Figure 3. Tourists experience and satisfaction

Figure 3, highlights the experience and satisfaction gained when the foreign visitors were involved in many different activities. They learned about the local culture, participated in environmental protection and were involved in recreational and relaxing activities. They gain satisfaction from nature appreciation, the environment and the local customs and traditions.

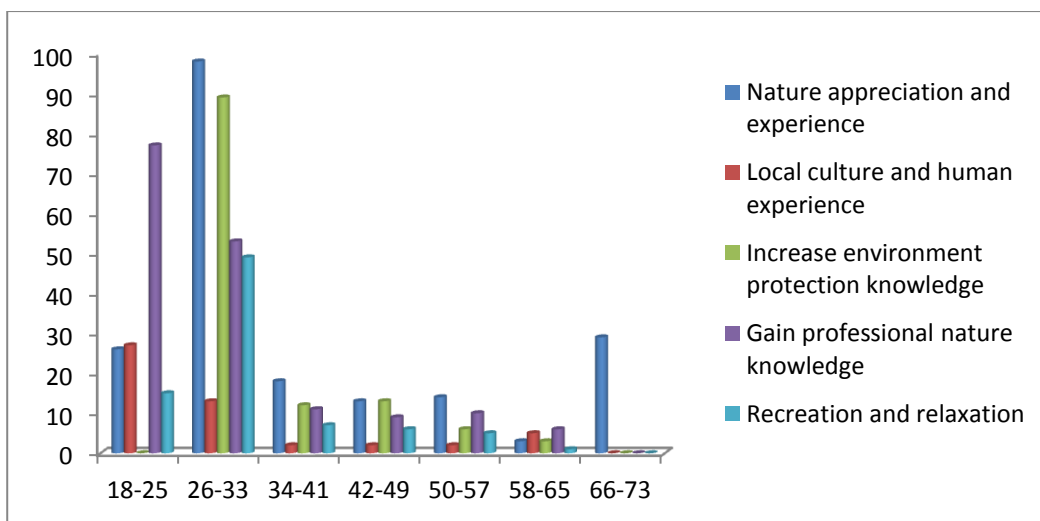


Figure 4. Comparisons of Age and Experience

Figure 4, shows a comparison between the different age groups and experiences the tourists gain on their ecotour. It can be seen that the 18-25 age group appreciate gaining professional nature knowledge, this can be attributed to that young people are interested in receiving knowledge about the various ecotourism sites they visit. In the age group 26-33, they sought to appreciate and experience nature, followed by acquiring an increase in knowledge to protect the environment and then they visited these ecotourism sites for recreation and relaxation. For the other age groups, there was no unique experience which was seen, however, in the 66-73 age group, there was a high degree of appreciation and experience of nature, this was due to the fact that as people become older, there is appreciation for the smaller things in life.

4.3. Trip motivation and satisfaction

Table 8. Mean and Standard Deviation for motivation and activities

Motivation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Nature appreciation	4.54	1.49
Local culture	4.14	1.34
Environmental knowledge	3.33	1.47
Nature knowledge	3.44	1.49
Recreation and relaxation	4.40	1.49
Activities engaged in at the ecotourism destination	Mean	Standard Deviation
Nature walk	3.39	1.49
Visiting protected areas	3.49	1.50
Buying souvenirs/crafts	2.13	1.34
Cycling	1.13	0.332
Viewing wildlife	3.18	1.38
Visiting historical monuments	3.64	1.48
Taking photographs	4.74	1.44
Sight-seeing	4.37	1.48
Hiking	2.35	0.95
Cultural activities	4.11	1.32
Communicating with the local people	3.24	1.43
Taking boat trips	1.08	0.47
Assessment of experience	Mean	Standard Deviation
Satisfaction	4.93	1.26

Motivation is a measure of the basic function that enables different tourists' motivation to be integrated. To analyse the activities that tourists engaged in at the ecotourism destination, we evaluated the services offered, and thus 12 activities have been identified as primary options available to tourists visiting the district. In this study, we estimated tourist satisfaction with a single item, see Table 8.

Table 9. Factor analysis of motivation and activities

Motivation	M1	M2				
Nature appreciation	0.474					
Local culture	0.826					
Environmental knowledge		0.913				
Nature knowledge	0.711					
Recreation and relaxation		0.759				
KMO= 0.602; Bartlett test=274.716 (0.000); Explained variance=61.25%						
Activities engaged in at the ecotourism destination	A1	A2	A3	A4		
Nature walk	0.743					
Visiting protected areas	0.757					
Buying souvenirs/crafts	0.782					
Cycling	0.620					
Viewing wildlife	0.630					
Visiting historical monuments		0.706				
Taking photographs		0.893				
Sight seeing		0.696				
Hiking			0.867			
Cultural activities			0.757			
Communicating with the local people					0.823	
Taking boat trips					0.771	
KMO= 0.834; Bartlett test=3008 (0.000); Explained variance=75.94%						

Factor analysis identifies 2 factors relating to tourist motivation (61.25% explained variance) and 4 factors regarding activities tourists engaged in (75.94% explained variance). Table 9, shows for tourists' motivation, M1 refers to the appreciation and gaining knowledge about nature and experiencing and promoting local culture. M2 encompasses acquiring environmental knowledge and recreation and relaxation. On the other hand, activities converge into four groups, where activities related to nature, visiting protected areas, buying souvenirs/crafts, cycling and viewing wildlife falls in A1, A2 included visiting historical monuments, taking photographs and sight seeing. A3 covers activities such as hiking and cultural activities and A4 encompasses activities such as communicating with the local people and taking boat trips.

The result provides sufficient evidence to accept the relationship that arises between motivation, the activities they engage in on an ecotour and the overall level of satisfaction. These results can enlighten ecotourism managers on possible options and offers that can be provided to make ecotours memorable and encourage revisits. In this sense, a wide variety and suitable activities constitute one of the main assets to making an ecotourism destination attractive, successful and competitive.

5. Conclusion

Tourists travelled with their family and friends. It was proven that the tourists were satisfied with their experience and were willing to visit again, indicating that they have become positive promoters for the

destination. However, the challenge for the industry is to be aware of this need, and respond adequately. This study analysed elements involved in the complex relationship that exists between motivation, activities and satisfaction. Here, an individual's personal and intrinsic motivations are focused on finding a place to relax, interact and enjoy personal relationships. These aspects strengthen a tourist's satisfaction and their willingness to share memories about their ecotours and revisit that ecotourism destination.

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