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Eco and sustainable tourism potentials of Ramappa and Laknavaram lakes in Mulugu district, Telangana state: A study

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Its rapid growth and development contributed in the socio-economic development of the Nation. Since last decade, it has become a major thrust area in India to address the aforesaid issues, to utilize its wide variety of destination resources and also to optimize the level of financial involvement for developing tourist infrastructure in a constraint economic domain. Ecotourism is a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature which is ethically managed to be low impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented (control, benefits, and scale). Ecotourism may be regarded as a vital means for generating employment, income, and revenue of the State, preserving cultural heritage, improving overall environment and facilitating growth of a sound and fair social order.

Telangana, being a land of enchanting natural beauties has abundant potentials of eco-tourism. This paper attempts to highlight the ecotourism potentials of Ramappa and Laknavaram lakes in Mulugu district and its surrounding areas for the promotion of ecotourism in the state to achieve Socio-economic benefits as well as the preservation of nature, environment and cultural heritage.

Keywords: Eco-tourism, environment, cultural heritage, Ramappa and Laknavaram lakes

Introduction

Tourism, as a part of a country's economic growth strategy, has the potential to contribute significantly to the Socio-economic aspirations of people living in tourist destinations. India is one of the few countries of the world with an array of tourism resources from bio-cultural diversity to a wealth of histories and antiquities. India is blessed with a rich culture and beautiful country side. Thus, balancing the social, ecological and economic aspects of tourism is a prerequisite for sustainability. Ecotourism basically deals with nature-based tourism, and is aimed "to conserve the environment and improves the well-being of local people". On the other hand, sustainable tourism includes all segments of tourism, and has same function to perform as of ecotourism – to conserve the resources and increase the local cultural and traditional value. Any tourism program which is: nature – based, ecologically sustainable, where education and interpretation is a major concept and where local people are benefited can be called ecotourism. Ecotourism is a growing niche market within the larger travel industry, with the potential of being an important sustainable development tool. Considering the values of Eco and Sustainable tourism, the United Nations declared the year 2002 as the "Year of Mountain and Ecotourism" and previous year 2017 was declared as the "International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development".

The Telangana state is the ideal destination for the nature lovers which is blessed with enormous variety of flora and fauna. The state has thick forests, where, the newly formed Mulugu district is blessed with an enormous variety of flora and fauna. The natural assets like forests, lakes and waterfalls remain unexplored and untapped from the tourism point of view. Eco tourism in Mulugu district is a new segment of tourism, where the tremendous scope for the district as tourist destination due to the Ramappa and Laknavaram Lakes. These two lakes are few among the eco tourist attractions in the district, attracting the good number of tourists around the year.

Literature review

The research paper is aimed at the assessment of Ramappa & Laknavaram lakes as eco tourist potential destinations. Website evaluation is an emergent research area which in the previous years has been explored by both qualitative and quantitative contributions. Aga Iqar Haroon (1999) emphasized the role of communities in ecotourism. To him ecotourism has no meaning without the role of local communities. Ecotourism is a blend of controlled activities of people having a goal of sustainable development in their respective area. In the book of Bagri, S.C., Ravindhran, G. Bhatt, A.K. (1988) ^[2], *Eco tourism in India Concepts, Definitions, and Destination Management*, IITTM Journal, Vol. II, No.1, I find the analyzing information on eco tourism concepts and strategies in India for micro level research. Daniel Gnana Sagar (1998) holds the view that ecotourism is the only way to maximize the economic, environmental and social benefits of tourism. Everyone is a stakeholder in the process and we clearly need to avoid our past shortcomings and negative momentum with more and more travel and travel related organizations are addressing the needs of the eco-tourists and impact that they have had. According to Ratandeep Singh, (2003) ^[17], *Handbook of Environmental Guidelines for Indian Tourism; the relationship between environment and tourism in Indian context has been evolved.* Usha Verma and Rajnish Kumar (1991) highlighted the growth of tourism industry in India and the necessity to promote ecotourism for the purpose of preserving the uniqueness tourist destinations. The books of Dr. D. Satyanarayana, *Telangana Lo Kotha Paryataka Sthalalu, & Telangana Lo Kotha Vihara Sthalalu*, helped me a lot as source of information. The leading news papers, tourism magazines and journals provided the valuable information and contemporary developments.

Objectives of the paper

The research study is taken up with the following aims & objectives:

1. To study the Conceptual framework of Ecotourism.
2. To study the Sustainable Development of Eco-Tourism.
3. To analyze the general and tourism profiles of Mulugu district.
4. To explore the different potentials of ecotourism in the Ramappa & Laknavaram Lakes.

Hypothesis

The study endeavors to test the following hypothesis evolved in the light of the said objectives.

H01: There is no eco tourist attractiveness behind the Ramappa and Laknavaram lakes.

H02: There is no significant difference in the different tourist satisfaction indicators based on the Gender of the tourists.

Research methodology

The present study based on primary and secondary sources. The relevant data for study has been collected from both the Primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected by using the structured closed questionnaire with the sample size 100 & Secondary data was collected from various websites, Journals & Books. The data collected through questionnaire were classified tabulated analyzed through simple percentage method. Further the data was analysis with chi-square test.

Conceptual framework of eco-tourism

Ecotourism is a new concept in tourism which was originally sparked off by the idea of making harmonious co-existence with nature a reality once again. As defined by the Ecotourism Society, it is the responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and sustains the wellbeing of local people. Today, ecotourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry. Its potential for growth is virtually unlimited. Any tourism program which is: nature – based, ecologically sustainable, where education and interpretation is a major concept and where local people are benefited can be called ecotourism. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as: “*responsible travel that conserves the environment and sustains the well - being of local people*”. The term 'Ecotourism' was first coined by “*Hector Ceballos Lascurain*” in 1983, and was initially used to describe nature-based travel to relatively undisturbed area with an emphasis on education. This new approach of tourism is becoming increasingly popular expression to conservation and sustainable development of the biodiversity. It involves education and interpretation of natural environment and to manage it in an ecologically sustainable way. Ecotourism is a growing niche market within the larger travel industry with the potential of being an important sustainable development tool.

The main activities involved in Eco Tourism are non-consumptive like *Bird Watching, Trekking, Nature Trails, River Rafting, Rock Climbing* and more importantly mere watching of the scenic beauty of Hills, Valleys, Meadows, Water bodies and the natural processes and practicing to Live in Nature. These activities do not have any negative impact on the environment but at the same time the different segments of society like professionals, Businessmen, Politicians, Common men, School Children, etc., who are involved in these activities are exposed to the nature and its intricate linkages in the maintenance of Ecological Balance and it is expected that many of them will inculcate Environmental Consciousness.

The sustainable development of eco-tourism

United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as “*tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic need can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological process, biological diversity, and life support system which meets the needs of the present tourists and host communities while protecting and enhancing needs in the future*”. This definition clearly explains that sustainable tourism practice helps to reduce the negative impacts of tourism. Eco tourism is one of most effective form of sustainable development in tourism to maximize the output and minimize the negative impacts of tourism development by preventing the deterioration of environmental and cultural values.

Sustainable development is concerned with acknowledging economic, social and environmental development aspects, catering for the current needs of society without damaging the well-being of future generations. Ecotourism is a niche market that emerged because of increased market demands for sustainable tourism practices. It serves to provide tourism products and services while accommodating for the economic, social and environmental aspects of society. Ecotourism has three prerequisites; namely *local*

participation, economic opportunities for the local population and respect for ecotourism integrity, implying that ecotourism development should be small-scaled and enabled through the use of local resources. Furthermore, sustainable tourism is aimed at balancing economic growth, environmental conservation and social justice while contributing to sustainable development.

Brief profile of Mulugu district

The Telangana state of South India has tremendous potential to become one of the foremost states in the tourist map of the country. The state of Telangana is divided into 33 districts with Hyderabad as its Capital. Covering an area of 112,077 Sq. Km, Telangana is the 12th largest state of India. The state falls in the Deccan region and comes under Subtropical Climate. The forest area recorded in Telanagana stands at 26,969 Sq. Kms, which was occupied over 24.5% of the total state geographical area.

The State has approximately 29,162 sq. kms of rich forests and diverse flora & fauna provides ample scope for promoting Eco-Tourism. Mulugu is situated in the northern east part of Telangana state. The total area of the district is

3881Sq. Kms. The district is administratively divided into 09 mandals with 335 revenue villages. The total male population in the district is 1.46 lakh and female population is 1.48 lakh according to 2011 census report.

In the tourism point of view, this new district is a multi-dimensional tourist hub for Pilgrimage Tourism (Mallur Sri Hemachala Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple), Tribal Tourism (*Sammaka and Saralamma Fair at Medaram, which is Asia's Second largest fair*), Heritage Tourism (*Ramappa temple*) and Wildlife Tourism (Eturunagaram Wildlife Sanctuary). To explore these tourist centers, good numbers of tourists, visitors and excursionists have been visiting around the year. The accessible facilities are good to reach any of the tourist destinations with quality road connectivity. The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) buses are widely available from Hyderabad, Warangal, and Khammam to all the tourist sites. To cater the needs and wants of the tourist's quality hotels, restaurants and Government Guest Houses are available. The well-trained professional tourist guides are also available on behalf of Department of Tourism, Government of Telangana.



Source: District Website

Map 1: Mulugu District Map

The below statistical figures highlight that the with regard to the tourist arrivals data showcase the real tourist image and importance of the district.

Table 1: Tourist Arrivals (2016-2020)

Year	Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourist
2016	509261	1932
2017	720962	2368
2018	876437	3109
2019	908653	5231
2020	2042	853

Source: O/o the Director, Dept. of Tourism, Govt. of Telangana

Eco-tourism scenario

This district is well endowed with a rich gamut of picturesque and relatively undisturbed landscapes, forests and wildlife and cultural diversity. Nearly 30% of the land

in this district is covered with forest. The tropical dry deciduous forest has been stable for centuries and are the climatic climax type of forest and enjoys an annual rainfall of 1152.0 mm. It is home to several rare, endangered and threatened species. It is in this context that “Ecotourism” has gained its bearing in the district. Ecotourism also had the potential to play an important role in creating environmental as well as cultural awareness amongst all the stakeholders- local communities, tourists, government and private sectors. Some of the major Ecotourism destinations in the district are Ramappa Lake, Laknawaram Lake, Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhogotha Waterfalls and Tadvai Forest Zone.

Salient features of Ramappa Lake

The Kakatiya dynasty which had ruled Telangana region has left an indelible impression of their reign in Warangal district in the form of renowned temples and lakes.

Ramappa Lake in Warangal district is considered as a magnificent example of the irrigation works of Kakatiya Rulers. It is believed to have been constructed in 13th Century A.D. during the reign of Ganapathi Deva and the water is spread more than an area of 82 Sq km with verdant greenery all around. This lake is over looked by some really beautiful hill ranges in the background which offers a spectacular view especially during sunset time.

Ramappa Lake is a haven for nature lovers wherein one can simply come here to relax and refresh under sprawling trees or walk around this stunning lake, appreciating the beauty of Mother Nature. Tourists can also enjoy a fascinating boat ride across the blue waters. The mellowed horizon here which includes the pleasant breeze from the waters of the lake waters as well as captivating view provides visitors

with a of charming memory of the place, making them coming back again for more. Therefore, Ramappa Lake is considered one of the preferred tourist destinations on the eco-tourism basis in Mulugu district. Keeping in view the pleasant tourist experiences, the Department of Tourism, Government of Telangana has been offering Boating services also. Ramappa Temple is located nearly 1 Km away from this lake. Today this magnificent monument was identified as one and only UNESCO Heritage site, which become a Pride and Prime tourist destination in the district. This heritage monument is the one and only source for foreign tourist arrivals to these both Ramappa & Lakhnavaram Lakes. This destination is well-connected by road with frequent bus services from Warangal City, located nearly 70 Kms away.



Source: Self Taken

Fig 1: Images of Ramappa Lake

The below statistical figures highlight the tourist arrivals data, showcase the real tourist image and importance of the lake.

Table 2: Tourist & Visitor Arrivals (2016-2020)

Year	Domestic Tourists Arrivals	Foreign Tourist Arrivals
2016	2736	2957
2017	4038	3295
2018	6437	5796
2019	7953	6161
2020	2354	382

Source: O/o the Director, Dept. of Tourism, Govt. of Telangana

Salient features of Lakhnavaram Lake

Lakhnavaram Lake, located in Govindaraopet Mandal about 70 kilometers away from Warangal, is a trending picnic spot. The lake is an exceptional thing of beauty. The lake was formed by closing down three narrow valleys. Each valley is replaced with a short bund, and hills act as their natural barrier. The lake has been constructed by the rulers of the Kakatiya dynasty in 13th Century A.D. An added advantage is that the lake takes shelter in isolated surroundings and this makes your holiday very private.

The entire region seems bountiful with green crops and pleasant water resources. The Lakhnavaram Lake which hides itself amidst the hills was discovered during the Kakatiya region and the rulers expanded it to grow as a source of irrigation. An added attraction to this mystic beauty is the suspension bridge. There are two hanging bridges takes the tourists to Mini Island in the lake. The authorities maintaining the lake also provide boat riding facility which will take the tourists close to the most serene part of the lake. Today, this lake has known as fresh water lake and source of eco tourist site and contributing significantly in the Socio-economic development of in and around of this place. The forest department Eco-Tourism council of this district has been making all fun filled arrangements in the lake for the benefits of tourists. The tourists have been taking part in cycling and trekking in the forest after the visit of the lake for the challenging and thrilling experiences. The Department of Tourism made arrangements for tourist overnight stay in this place. On 23rd April, 2016, the Department of Tourism was inaugurated tourist cottages for accommodation purpose with all the modern amenities and facilities, where the tourists are spending their timing in happiest way in peaceful surroundings.



Source: Self Taken

Fig 2: Images of Laknavaram Lake

The below statistical figures highlight the tourist arrivals data, showcase the real tourist image and importance of the lake.

Table 3: Tourist Arrivals (2016-2020)

Year	Domestic Tourists Arrivals	Foreign Tourist Arrivals
2016	51093	7494
2017	62197	8268
2018	87640	9853
2019	94685	10132
2020	2836	1973

Source: O/o the Director, Dept. of Tourism, Govt. of Telangana

Behind Reseasons of tourist visits to ramappa and Laknavaram lakes: To access the objectives or purpose of

tourist visits to the both Ramappa and Laknavaram lakes are as follows.

Table 4: Behind Reseasons of tourist visits to ramappa and Laknavaram lakes

SL. No.	Reasons	Ramappa Lake		Laknavaram Lake		Total
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
01	To Enjoy Forest Area	12	06	05	02	24
02	To Experience the Beauty and Boating in the Lake	10	06	16	04	36
03	To visualize Local People Socio-Cultural &Economic Conditions	06	02	03	01	12
04	To purchase Forest Products	07	04	04	02	18
05	To Experience the Hospitality Services	05	01	03	01	10
Total		40	19	31	10	100
Percentage		40%	19%	31%	10%	100%

Source: Field Survey

From the above table, we express the opinions of tourists of the actual reasons. The results show image of nature-based tourist surroundings are as, 40 percent tourists at Ramappa and 19 percent tourists at Laknavaram Lake have expressed their positive opinion behind the objectives of their visit to these two eco tourist prominent lakes. The remaining 19 percent tourists at Ramappa Lake and 10 percent at Laknavaram Lake have expressed their negative opinion

towards their visits and considerations on eco tourist setup of these lakes. On the whole the majority of tourists have been holding a positive opinion on these two eco tourist lakes by their considerations as Ramappa and Laknavaram lakes are rich environmental based holiday spot.

H01: There is no eco tourist attractiveness behind the Ramappa and Laknavaram lakes.

Table 5: Chi Square Test

Person Chi Square	Table Value	Calculated Value	df	P Value	Remark
	9.48	5.26	04	2.05	Highly Significant

It is noted that in the above table the 'P' value is less than 0.05 and hence the result is highly significant. Hence, the hypothesis 'there is no eco tourist attractiveness in Ramappa and Laknavaram lakes "does not hold well'. From the analysis it is concluded that there is highly significant and these two lakes are potential eco tourist lakes in Mulugu district.

H02: There is no significant difference in the different tourist satisfaction indicators based on the Gender of the tourists.

Table 6: Independent Sample T-Test between Tourist Satisfaction Indicators and Gender

Tourist Satisfaction Indicators	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Value	p-Value
Tourist Basic Needs	Male	55	2.49	0.66	2.55	0.00
	Female	45	2.98	0.98		
Provision of Amenities	Male	63	3.25	0.56	4.66	0.00
	Female	37	2.54	0.78		
Value Added Services	Male	46	3.20	1.23	2.54	0.00
	Female	54	3.11	0.45		
Sanitation & Hygiene	Male	68	2.44	0.56	1.56	0.01
	Female	32	2.55	0.87		
Safety & Security/ Medical Facilities	Male	47	2.35	0.98	2.34	0.01
	Female	53	2.31	0.64		
Local Hospitality	Male	66	2.54	0.23	2.27	2.01
	Female	44	2.39	0.56		
Service Quality	Male	55	2.54	0.54	0.89	0.02
	Female	45	2.58	0.46		

Source: Primary Data

From above table, it is clear that there is a significant difference in the mean score between male and female tourists on different tourist satisfaction indicators like Tourist basic need ($t=2.55$, $p=0.00$) at a significance level of 0.05. Provision of Amenities ($t=4.66$, $p=0.00$) at a significance level of 0.01, Value Added Services ($t=2.54$, $p=0.00$) at a significance level of 0.01, Sanitation & Hygiene ($t=1.56$, $p=0.01$) at a significance level of 0.05. Safety & Security/Medical Facilities ($t=2.34$, $p=0.01$) at a significance level of 0.05. Service Quality ($t=0.89$, $p=0.02$) at a significance level of 0.05. However, no significant difference in Local hospitality ($t=2.27$, $p=2.01$) at a significance level of 0.05. Hence, the hypothesis that "There is no significant difference in the different tourist satisfaction indicators across the three Two Eco-tourism sites based on the gender of the tourists" was accepted for different tourist satisfaction indicators like Sanitation and Hygiene, Local Hospitality and Service Quality. However, the hypothesis was rejected for the tourist satisfaction indicators like Safety & Security/Medical Facilities, Local Hospitality.

Research findings

A survey on impact of Eco-Tourist lakes Ramappa and Laknavaram tourists with a sample size of 100 was conducted with the support of questionnaire. The majority of the respondents agreed that the eco-tourism leaves it impact on the tourists. The major research findings are as follows.

Eco-tourism-a source for nature experience

The overall result indicates that the eco tourist centers attract the good number of tourists around the year. Out of 100 respondents 71 percent expressed their positive views that these two lakes are the potential eco tourist centers based on its charismatic beauty. The Tourists have expressed their huge interest to explore the beauties of the lakes by boating.

Forests as Recreation Centers

Majority of the respondents expresses that the forests are the key sources of big recreation centers. These two eco tourist lakes are situated as part of forests, which have been attracting the large scale of tourists around the year.

Eco-Tourism enhances the Standards of Local People Living Styles:

Eco-Tourism helps for improving their standard of living through disposable income with better lifestyle and educational facility. The host community showed positive attitude towards tourism which in turn increase their involvement in the way they have treated tourist. They are enthusiastic and thrilled by the development of the tourism and increased tourist flow in the village.

Purchase of Forest Products: Majority of the respondents are given their opinion on purchase of Forest based products like Honey and other spices through Integrated Tribal Development Authority (ITDA).

Eco-Tourism Inspire Community Pride

The respondents expressed a sense of pride about socio-cultural enhancement in the society. The host community is so proud that the tourists from various parts of the world as well as country come to see the cultural aspects like folklore, customs, costumes, and food habits etc.

Tourism & Infrastructural Development

The respondents agreed that eco-tourism helps in the development of local infrastructure with better connectivity such as increased frequency of buses from Eturnagaram, Warangal, Bhupalpally and nearby areas.

Suggestions

The suggestions for better development of these two Ecotourism sites in Mulugu district to protect the natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people by the way of contributing sustainable practices as follows:

1. The Central and State Governments should allocate necessary funds from time to time to district administration for the purpose of improving Road ways, transportation, and provide safety and security conditions at these two eco tourist lakes.
2. The State Government has to pay more attention to highlight these two potential lakes at national and international level with effective promotional activities.
3. Need for responsible tourism practices at these two lakes for the environment protection and eco-friendly sustainable tourism. A sort of awareness should be created in the mindsets of the tourists on not to disturb the beauty of the lakes.
4. The forest and tourism departments must organize seminars in the nearby areas for providing training on the Do's and Don'ts at these eco tourist lakes.

Conclusion

Eco-tourism has been widely promoted as a viable alternate to ecologically and culturally degrading mass-tourism, as a form of sustainable development, which can yield immediate economic returns without risking major damages to local communities and natural environment. Eco and sustainable tourism play an important role in the tourism industry by reducing negative impacts of tourism. Ramappa and Laknavaram Lakes are the precious gifts of nature with its bountiful and charming facets, its socio-economic values, its cultural aesthetics and historical significance is indeed one of the most appropriate sites as ecotourism potentials in the Mulugu district. The scenic beauty of these two lakes has been attracting large scale of tourists and visitors around the year. Keeping in view the eco and sustainable tourism potentials of the lakes, the State Government also recently constructed good infrastructural facilities for the benefit of the tourists. But there is a requirement of some more infrastructural facilities in future to become as a rich model for eco and sustainable tourist destinations in the entire Telangana state.

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