

HILL STATION TOURISM-NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MATHERAN: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Tourism at hill stations plays very important role in the tourism industry. Shimala, Kulu, Manali, Udmangalam and even also Mahabaleshwar are the famous hill stations having a lot of development. The researcher has selected Matheran hill station for this study. Matheran is a very scenic and beautiful hill station which is very near to Mumbai and Pune. This is one of the hill stations declared eco-sensitive hill station by government. When tourists visit any tourist place they need various services like hotels, food, tourism infrastructures, and many other services. So, ultimately it contributes to the economic development of local people. But Matheran is not as much developed as compared to other hill stations. Many problems are creating restrictions on its development. This paper has emphasised on the problems of development of Matheran. This paper is concluded with some suggestions for sustainable development of Matheran.

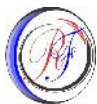
Keywords – Tourism, sustainable, potential,

INTRODUCTION

The World Tourism Organisation states that tourism is defined by “the set of activities of a person travelling to a place outside his or her usual environment for at least one night, but less than the a year, and whose main purpose of travel is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited.” Tourism is recognised as a major growth engine. Several countries are taking the advantage of their tourism potential and make it competent to survive with the global economy. It has a great capacity to create large-scale employment for the most specialized to the unskilled. The Indian economy is undergoing a major transformation. India has become the second most favoured destination for direct foreign investment. As an economic activity in the service sector, tourism also has enormous potential for contributing to economic growth.

The number of foreign tourist arrivals in India is 6.97 million with annual growth rate of 5.9%. The number of domestic tourist visits to all states is 1145 million with annual growth rate of 9.6%. Foreign exchange earnings from tourism are US \$ 18.44 billion. The share of India in International tourist arrivals is 0.64%. Hence, tourism has the potential to change the economic face of a region.

As this industry is growing very fast, still there is tourism potential resources like natural beauty, abundant natural resources, rich and cultural heritage and many other tourism attractions. It is also an important role of local people, tourists, government to take the initiative to protect the natural surroundings, preserve the heritage property for the sustainable development of tourism. In this paper, the researcher has selected a case study of Matheran, which is a very scenic and beautiful hill station in Raigad district of Maharashtra. It is one of the eco-sensitive hill stations. Many tourists visit Matheran because it is nearest hill station to Mumbai and Pune. But some restrictions are creating problems for sustainable development of Matheran.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To study the different problems faced in the study area.
- 2) To find out the scope of some tourism potential activities.
- 3) To make some suggestions for sustainable development of Matheran.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher had paid a visit to Matheran. This study is based on secondary data. Tourists are being observed by the researcher through observation method. The discussions are held with hoteliers. The local people are also observed by the researcher. The secondary data is also used for this study.

About Matheran

The late Mr. Mallet whose name, Matheran will ever remember because he is the father of Matheran. Matheran is one of the family hills comprising Western Ghats. It is situated at 18.58 North Latitude and 73.18 East Longitude. The area is about 7.35 sq.km. The highest spot of the hill is 803.47 m (2636ft) above the sea level. It is 120 km away from Mumbai. It is coning in Raigad district. Matheran is generously endowed with all varieties of natural beauty at their best. Nature has gifted this mountain range with endless beauty. In the last week of September or early October or in the months of November and December, the hill of beauty is at its best, green and cool. The season of October is the pleasantest and most beautiful one wishing to enjoy the charm of the hill, choose this time of the year to visit Matheran.

The Ghat road between Neral and Matheran was completed in about 1855. Prior to the construction of Neral to Matheran railway in 1907 the journeys to Matheran were made either on foot or by rickshaws, ponies or manchils. There is 8 k.m jeep passable roads to Matheran from Neral. The taxi service has been started from Neral to Matheran. The toy train that takes the visitors from Neral to Matheran, has a distance of 21 k.m in about two hours. The total number of tourist who visited to Matheran was 4,18,153 (domestic 4,10,161 and foreign 7,992) during the period April 2013 and March 2014.

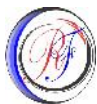
1 Places of Interest in Matheran

- Temples---ShriPisarnathMadir
- Sporting Places---Panday Playground
- Olympia---It is an extensive circular plateau making riding an exciting pleasure. The natural sports are held here in the month of May.
- Parks: Paymaster Park, Nowroji Lord Garden
- Panorama Point, Mount Barry, Mary Point, Madhavji Point, Khandala Point, Garbut Point, Alexander Point, Rambag Point, Chowk Point, One Tree Hill, Echo point, Landscape Point, Honeymoon Point, Lousia Point, Mondey Point, Charlotte Lake.

Till today, the tourists visit Matheran only for entertainment or just for relaxation. There is no attitude to look at Matheran from another angle. It is not only the hill station but also has several potentials. A very few tourists are attracted towards such types of tourism or they may not have an idea about the potential of Matheran.

2 Tourism Potentials in Matheran

- Adventure tourism
- Sports Tourisms



- Jungle Safari
- Eco-tourism
- Bio-diversity tourism
- Wellness tourism

3 Problems in Matheran

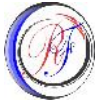
Though the numbers of tourists are increasing day by day, they are not satisfied with this place. They just come here for self-entertainment. So, they prefer to stay only for a night and two days due to lack of tourism development. The flow of tourists is only for five to six months in a year. This flow may get reduced after certain period of time. Because there many reasons that create restrictions to its development. After observing the tourists, discussing with local people and hoteliers, the researcher has noticed the following problems in the study area-

- Deforestation
- High transport cost
- Decline of wildlife and birds species
- Improper medical facility
- Irregular supply of water facility
- No development of site scenes
- Tourist information services
- Problems of toilet blocs
- No potable water facility
- Problems of safe and secure adventure tourism
- Shortage of skilled manpower in hotels
- Burden of municipal tax and parking tax without any comfortable and satisfactory services
- No Proper education regarding hospitality business
- Non--available cash in ATM
- Untrained Guidess

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The above problems have restricted the sustainable development of Matheran. There is a need to have a proper strategy for the survival of tourism activities in Matheran. Some suggestions have been given by the researcher to overcome the above problems in the study areas.

- ✓ Matheran is an eco-tourism hill station therefore, there should be strict control on deforestation. Local people should be convinced for any other occupational source rather than cutting of trees.
- ✓ Increasing train frequency from Neral to Matheran. Railway Wagons for carrying goods should also start. Construction of Substitute Road from Panvel via Dhodhani to Mathern should be complete.
- ✓ If the forest is protected then automatically habitats of the wildlife, birds will also be protected.
- ✓ Rainwater harvesting system should make it mandatory for hoteliers because there is heavy rainfall at Matheran.



- ✓ Rotary Club and Lion's Club should take initiative to establish toilet blocs and drinking water facility.
- ✓ Benches at site scenes, safeguard at site scenes also should be developed with the help of some charitable trust or NGOs.
- ✓ Guide training course should be provided to local youth by MTDC.
- ✓ Initiative should be taken by one of the hoteliers in Matheran or their association to organise training for Youth of Matheran for adventure tourism at Shimal-Kulu-Manali. (as a part of Corporate Social Responsibility.) So, after well trained, Youth of the Matheran can organise adventure camps at Matheran.
- ✓ Initiative must be taken by any well-known Institution to establish Hotel Management Institute at Matheran. So that the hoteliers get a choice to select the skilled and trained employees for their hotel business.
- ✓ Initiative by the Yoga Institute to organise health and yoga camp.
- ✓ Regular check and supply of cash in ATM machines.
- ✓ Government should make an appointment of sufficient number of doctors strictly in Government hospitals.
- ✓ Proper utilisation of tax or revenues collected from tourists.

If all the above suggestions are take into consideration then there will be sustainable development of Matheran. The tourists will not come only for a day or not only for entertainment but they will also get attracted by other motives of tourism. Nature has a potential itself but human beings should find out or realise its potentiality. Human being will not come unless he to know it unless he loves nature.

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