



PLANNING FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN MAHABALESHWAR OF MAHARASHTRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Mahabaleshwar is one of the most popular tourists center in Satara district of Maharashtra. This paper attempts to study growth and development needs of tourism industry in Mahabaleshwar. The entire analysis is based upon the intensive fieldwork carried out in the study area. The questionnaire and interview techniques have been employed to collect the information about tourists spending, duration of stay, motives of tourists, transportation satisfaction etc. Analysis reveals that tourists' expenditure is low in Mahabaleshwar; most of them prefer to return in one day. Tourists also like to visits Mahabaleshwar in rainy season. Almost all tourists expect many things other than the beauty of nature.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism means a journey or a circular trip. It is temporary movement of people at outside their place of work and residence. Most important motive of the tourism is search of pleasure. This motive is also supplemented by other motives like business, education, medical, friends and relatives etc. Tourism is classified on the basis of these various motives.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industry in world. This industry depends upon other industries like hotels, transport etc. It is an associated group of industries. Development of tourism industry has number of advantages e.g. It creates large number of employment in hotel industry, transportation, restaurants etc. It helps to earn foreign exchange without export; it helps to improve infrastructural facilities at tourists Center. It also helps to develop region by adding national income. Besides these advantages of tourism development there are many disadvantages of tourism development like adverse effect on socio-cultural setup, degradation of environment, shortage of day to day required things, rise in price of land, accommodation, food, cloths etc. in order to minimize these disadvantages proper planning of tourism industry is required.

OBJECTIVES

Some specific objectives of the study are as follows

- i. To judge and justify the views of tourists visiting Mahabaleshwar about the various infrastructural facilities.
- ii. To explore some major problems of tourists and their expectations
- iii. To suggest some solutions over tourists problems
- iv. To see the possibility of future progress and prospects of tourism development in Mahabaleshwar
- v. To evaluate spatial interplay of tourists demand and satisfaction

DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY

Present analysis is based upon the data collection, observation and information given by the tourists at the time of interview. Both absolute numbers and percentages were used for analysis. Questionnaire is the main tool used in present study for data collection. All data collected through questionnaire are executed with the help of average, percentage, tourists' level of satisfaction etc.

STUDY AREA

Mahabaleshwar is one of the high altitude plateau in Sahyadri Ranges. Study area extends between 73°36' E to 73°43' E longitude and 17°54' N to 17°59' N latitude. This plateau lies on the crest of Sahyadri range. Wilson point (1436 m) is the highest point in the study area.

EARNING FROM TOURISTS

Tourism generates income and employment opportunities through spending of tourists. There is no published data about this aspect of tourism in Mahabaleshwar. Earning from the tourists is calculated on the basis of survey by using elements like Per capita per day expenditure of tourists, Duration of their stay. These elements have been worked out from the collected primary data.

DURATION OF TRAVEL AND TOUR

The total tourists' day is an important factor for any tourists center, The reason behind this is total tourists day have a direct relation with the total amount spend by the tourists, requirement of accommodation facilities, transportation facilities, catering facilities etc. Tourists always try to visit maximum places in minimum time and money. So for the tourists' centers it is very essential to create more and more physical facilities and tourists' attraction points to generate more tourists rupee by extending length of their stay.

Table – 1

Intended length of stay of tourists in Mahabaleshwar

Intended length of stay (in days)	No. of respondents	Percentage to total
One day return	147	58.8
1	64	25.6
2	23	9.2
3	08	3.2
Over 3 days	08	3.2
Total	250	100

Source : Primary Data

On the basis of sample survey the length of tourists stay is calculated. In the table – 1 the intended length of stay of tourists in Mahabaleshwar is given. From the above table it is observed that 58.8% of tourists have planned a programme of one day return tour, 25.6 % of tourists planned a programme of one halt at Mahabaleshwar. 9.2 % of tourists planned a programme of two day halt. 3.2% of tourists planned a programme of three days and same number of tourists planned for more than three days.

Usually tourists visit one or more tourists' stations in a particular trip. Of the 250 tourists contacted 147 visited only Mahabaleshwar. The rest visited other station like Wai, Panchgani, Pratapgad, Mahad, Ganpatipule etc. along with Mahabaleshwar.

It could be seen from the table that most of the tourists planned one day return tour mainly because it is possible to visit most of the tourists' attraction points in one day. Also except rainy season rate of accommodation is very high in Mahabaleshwar. This amount is not affordable for most of the middle class domestic tourists. So they prefer to return or move to the next station like Wai, Mahad, Shrivardhan, Ganpatipule etc. were the charge of accommodation is comparatively less than Mahabaleshwar. Most of the middle class tourists travelling with their families so as to reduce expenditure on accommodation they prefer to move to the next station.

Only those tourists stay in Mahabaleshwar who were not able to reach Mahabaleshwar early in the morning. Those who plan to stay more than two days are mainly from high income group or the couples. In Mahabaleshwar there is no any other attraction center for the tourists except natural scenery. So there are very few tourists who prefer to leave more than two days in Mahabaleshwar.

PER CAPITA PER DAY SPENDING BY THE TOURISTS

Per capita per day spending by the tourists is one of the important element which has large economic significance. Tourists spending is influenced by many factors like prices of product or services, income of tourists, necessity etc.

Table – 2

Per capita per day expenditure of Tourists in Mahabaleshwar

Expenditure in Rupees	No. of respondents	Percentage
10-1000	106	42.4
1000-2000	95	38.0
2000-3000	37	14.8
Over 3000	2	4.8

Source – Primary Data

In the table – 2 per capita per day spending of the respondent tourists is given. It can be seen that tourists spending varies from Rs. 10 to more than Rs.3000 per head.

From table -2 it can be seen that 42.4 percent tourists spend between Rs. 10-1000, 38 percent spend between Rs. 1000-2000, 14.8 spend between Rs. 2000-3000 and only 4.8 percent of tourists spent over 3000 Rs. The average per capita daily expenditure works out to about Rs.1590.

Tourists spend little in Mahabaleshwar because about 59% of tourists visits for only one day hence there is very short time for marketing. Market of Mahabaleshwar is very small and there is lack of variety. Most of the things available in Mahabaleshwar market are available all over India. Besides that most of the tourists cannot afford to spend more. But what is to be admiring about them is their rising tendency to move out of the station in the urge of pleasure.

TOURISTS ATTRACTIONS IN MAHABALESHWAR

A place can be developed as a tourists center only if it has some attraction behind. Generally tourists have more than one motive to visit any tourists' center. Pleasure is prime motive but different peoples get pleasure from different things. In Mahabaleshwar natural Scenery and Panchganga temple are the most important factors that have influenced large number of tourists.

Table-3
Tourism attraction of Mahabaleshwar

Tourists Attraction	Respondents	
	Number	Percentage
Natural Scenery	242	96.8
Temple	230	92.0
Hill resort	54	21.6

Source – Primary Data

In the table-3 the tourism attraction in which the tourist visiting Mahabaleshwar are interested is shown. Natural scenery is the best attraction for 97 percent respondents. Most of the peoples in India are religious hence it is not wonder that among 250 tourists interviewed about 230 tourists visit the Panchganga temple in the Kshetra Mahabaleshwar. So the temple stands second tourists attraction point. About 22 percent of tourists show their interest in hill resort. Most of them are from the high class society or couples.

Tourists visit a particular place in search of pleasure. Almost all the tourists interviewed in Mahabaleshwar demand for many other attractions like Ropeway, Theater, Botanical Garden, Museum etc.

TRANSPORT FACILITIES

Table-4
Tourists' preferences for different mode of transport

Mode of Transport	No. of Tourists	Percentage to total
Personal Vehicle	118	47.2
Vehicle on rent	40	16.0
Taxi	42	16.8
Bus	50	20.0

Source – Primary Data

Efficient transport system plays an important role in tourism development in any region. Comfortable and congenial travelling is very essential for the tourism development.

To reach Mahabaleshwar only one mode of transportation is present and that is roadways. It can be seen from the table that about 47 percent of tourists use their own vehicles to visit Mahabaleshwar. About 33 percent of tourists hire vehicles to visit Mahabaleshwar. The main reason behind this is every one want freedom to spend their time. This does not happen with bus because of fix schedule of bases. Also most of the tourists visit Mahabaleshwar in groups so it is more economic and convenient to travel by a private car then by private bus or S.T. Bus.

SATISFACTION INDEX

Tourism industry deals with the human being. Satisfied tourist is important and powerful medium of publicity, while dissatisfied tourists make adverse effect on tourism development. Hence it is important to give best service to the maximum number of tourists.

Table – 5
Factor wise level of satisfaction

Factors	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Total
Natural Scenery	188	62	-	-	250
Accommodation	23	54	26	147	250
Transport	-	74	130	46	250
Entertainment & Cultural Programme	-	-	-	250	250
Food & Drinking Water	18	45	160	27	250
Tourists Guide	-	-	98	152	250
Personal safety	90	145	15	-	250
Shopping Facilities	-	-	58	192	250
Climatic Conditions	21	124	80	25	250

Source – Primary Data

Out of 250 tourists contacted 100 percent have stated that they enjoy their trip of Mahabaleshwar and all of them would recommend to their friends and relatives to visit Mahabaleshwar.

Table – 6
Factor wise level of satisfaction wise average values assigned by tourists

Factors	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Natural Scenery	8.9	7.9	-	-
Accommodation	8.4	7.2	5.1	2.2
Transport	-	7.6	5.5	1.2
Entertainment & Cultural Programme	-	-	-	1.0
Food & Drinking Water	8.3	6.9	4.8	3.0
Tourists Guide	-	-	4.7	2.1
Personal safety	8.8	7.8	5.6	-
Shopping Facilities	-	-	5.1	3.3
Climatic Conditions	8.2	7.5	5.0	2.6

Source – Primary Data

Tourists' satisfaction depends upon many things like natural Scenery, accommodation, transport, entertainment & cultural programme, food & drinking water, tourists guide, personal safety, shopping facilities, climatic conditions etc. By considering the above factors tourists were requested to express their satisfaction in the points (out of 10) and the classification is done. On the basis of points 8-10 for excellent, 6-8 for good, 4-6 for satisfactory and 0-4 points for unsatisfactory. The average value for different level of satisfaction were calculated. By multiplying these values by respective frequencies gives total satisfaction. When total satisfaction is divided by total frequency of the respective factors give the satisfaction index for the factor.

It can be seen from the table that out of 250 tourists 188 have ranked natural scenery as excellent and 62 as good. 23 tourists have ranked accommodation as excellent, 54 as good, 26 as satisfactory and 147 as unsatisfactory. 74 tourists have rank transportation as good, 130 as satisfactory, and 46 as unsatisfactory and so on. The level of satisfaction of tourists in respect of factors like natural Scenery, personal safety, climatic conditions, transport, food & drinking water are comparatively higher than accommodation, entertainment & cultural programme, shopping facilities, tourists guide etc.

Table – 7

Factor wise satisfaction index (points out of 10) and their rank

Factors	satisfaction index	Positional Rank
Natural Scenery	8.7	1
Accommodation	4.2	6
Transport	5.3	4
Entertainment & Cultural Programme	1.0	9
Food & Drinking Water	5.3	4
Tourists Guide	3.1	8
Personal safety	8.0	2
Shopping Facilities	3.7	7
Climatic Conditions	6.3	3

Source – Primary Data

Note – Formula adopted for calculating satisfaction index

$$SI_i = \frac{\sum m_i n_i}{N}$$

Where,

SI_i= Satisfaction index for ith factorm_i= Numerical value for a particular level of satisfaction for ith factorn_i= Number of respondents deriving the particular value of satisfaction for ith factor

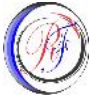
N= Total number of respondents for that factor for all level of satisfaction

It can be seen that the satisfaction index for the tourists for natural scenery work out to 8.7, for personal safety 8, for climatic conditions 6.3, for food & drinking water and transport 5.3, for accommodation 4.2, for shopping facilities 3.7, for tourists guide 3.1 and for entertainment & cultural programme 1. It is to be noted that natural scenery have ranked highest followed by personal safety, climatic conditions, food & drinking water, transport, accommodation, shopping facilities, tourists guide and entertainment & cultural programme.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper helps to understand the behavioral pattern of the tourists. It also helps to understand their length of stay, expenses, mode of transport, tourists' attractions, satisfaction and their expectations. This paper reveals some important conclusions which are as follows.

- i) About 59 percent of tourists prefer to return in one day. Tourists from high income group and couples are exception for this. A high rate of accommodation is the main obstacle for the extension of tourists stay. Tourists prefer to leave in nearby stations like Wai, Mahad, Shrivardhan than Mahabaleshwar.

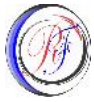


- ii) Tourists spend very little in study area because of small and costly market.
- iii) About 50 percent of tourists prefer to visit Mahabaleshwar by their own vehicles. Only 10 percent of tourists use bus services.
- iv) Natural scenery in the study area is the prime attraction for the tourists while Panchganga temple stands second. 100 percent of tourists satisfied with natural scenery.
- v) Natural Scenery, personal safety, climatic conditions, transport, food & drinking water stands high in position rank of satisfaction index while most of the tourists are not satisfied with accommodation facilities, market, tourists guide, entertainment & cultural programme,
- vi) Narrow roads, Traffic jam and crowded near tourists points make tourists frustrated.

SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of the foresaid conclusions which are drawn from the present study, following suggestions have been made.

- i) In Mahabaleshwar demand based resource plan is necessary to utilize natural resources to the maximum level.
- ii) To earn more tourists rupee extension of tourists stay is must. For this cheaper accommodation facilities must be developed by NGO's and government.
- iii) In order to attract more tourists it is recommended to develop some man made attractions like club, zoo, Gardens, Amusement park, Museum etc.
- iv) Reasonable, big, attractive market with local products persuades tourists to buy more and more. This type of market is one of the requirements of study area.
- v) It is recommended to start bus service of Mahabaleshwar municipal transport from tourists point to point. This will allow tourists to spend more time on different tourist point where they want and move to the next tourist point with available bus.
- vi) Tourists visit any center with some impression in the mind so it is very essential to create good image in tourists mind. This is possible with the help of advertisement on different T.V. channels, Newspapers etc. so it is proposed to develop separate advertisement department in corporation in order to attract more tourists by creating urge in tourists mind to visit Mahabaleshwar.
- vii) It is proposed to create Mahabaleshwar Municipal Corporations own website with complete information about natural scenery, climatic condition, history, geographical situation, distance from other cities, nearby tourists centers etc. supplemented by photographs, sketches, maps and public opinion.
- viii) Young tourists attracts towards something new and thrilling it is therefore recommended to start sports like paragliding, rock climbing, tracking etc.
- ix) Tourist's always want to visit more than one station in a particular trip. There are many stations near the study area which have potential to attract tourists in large number. It is therefore recommended that stations like Wai, Kamalgad, Dhom dam, Pandavgad, Mandherdev, Vasota, Tapola, Kas plateau, Ajinkyatara etc. must be developed to attract more tourists.



- x) Tourists always want a guide who is able to create a real picture of the hill station in their mind, but the guides in the study area are not well trained. So it is recommended that guides in the study area should be trained in a such a way that they should provide information about all cultural, historical, social, political, geographical, economic aspect in the region. Also they must have command on English, Hindi and Marathi language.
- xi) To highlight the study area in newspaper and on news channels some steps like organizing national and international conferences, seminars, discussion, visits of famous social and political personalities should be recommended.
- xii) Tourists always try to visit famous and popular points where crowds gather enormously. It causes congested situation there. So it is recommended that other tourists' points should be highlighted. Information about such points, there distance and direction must be displayed at the entry point.
- xiii) In the ghat section roads are narrow so it creates problems like traffic jam. Extension of roads is recommended for the comfortable journey. Number of landslides occurs in the ghat section so it is essential to make plan to avoid landslide.
- xiv) For the proper development and growth planning should be done by the experts in various fields like Medical, Engineering, Biology, Geography, Art and Culture. History, Geology etc. is recommended.

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