

Prospects of heritage Tourism in Karnataka: An analysis

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Abstract

Karnataka state boasts many historical monuments and places which attract tourists not only from different parts of the country but also from different parts of the world. Karnataka, the sixth largest state in India, has been ranked as the third most popular state in the country for tourism. It is home to 507 of the 3600 centrally protected monuments in India, the largest number after Uttar Pradesh. The State Directorate of Archaeology and Museums protects an additional 752 monuments and another 25,000 monuments are yet to receive protection. The individuals make visits to these places with the purpose of site seeing as well as for acquiring information on different parameters. This trend is defined as “Heritage Tourism”, which plays a significant role in attracting tourists to these destinations. The positive cascading effects of heritage tourism is worth mentioning over here as it plays a vital role in propelling growth, contributing valuable foreign exchange (as millions of foreign tourists visits Karnataka every year), enhancing employability and ultimately resulting in community development. The most important dimension of heritage tourism is the cultural exchange among various tourists who visit the country and the cross cultural interface that shall pave path for universal peace and harmony. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people who “travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”. The present paper attempts to highlight the potentials and problems of heritage tourism in Karnataka. Heritage tourism is a form of tourism, which involves travelling of people to heritage destinations. It is concerned with study of country’s art and architecture. With rich cultural and historical heritage, Karnataka state has everything to offer to a tourist, ranging from architectural wonders (palaces, temples, mosques, forts, etc), caves and prehistoric wall paintings, widely varied topography ranging from the monotonous plains to the loftiest mountains, large climatic variations ranging from some of the wettest and the driest as well as from the hottest and the coldest parts, beautiful long beaches on the sea coast, vast stretches of sands, gregarious tropical forests and above all, the great variety of the life-style, the state offers an unending choice for the tourist. Broadly, tourism in Karnataka can be divided into four geographical regions: North Karnataka, the Hill Stations, Coastal Karnataka and South Karnataka. The historical monuments provide relevant information regarding the history of their establishment and the rulers, who constructed them. In spite of its high potential in heritage tourism product development and tourist infrastructure, Karnataka state has not attracted the maximum number tourists as expected. Therefore it calls for a detailed study with an aim to understand the potential of heritage tourism of Karnataka, the present challenges it is facing and measures for overcoming those.

Key words: Heritage tourism, Historical monuments, Potentials and Problems, Prospects.

Introduction:

Karnataka state is a like tailor made for promoting Eco-tourism. Karnataka boasts of the highest elephant Gaur bison and tiger population (greater than 6000, 8000 and 400 respectively) in India. Its forests hold some of the largest remaining populations of the endangered tiger and leopard. Eco-tourism is a very popular activity in the state. Karnataka leads other states in eco-tourism. Jungle Lodges & Resorts, a state-run organisation has camping and safari facilities in several wildlife sanctuaries. Private safari providers have sprung up in several places along the western ghats. Apart from Eco-tourism, Karnataka also has huge potential for Heritage Tourism also. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is responsible for protecting and maintaining of all historical and heritage places and objects in India. Its main activities are: conducting archaeological explorations and excavations, chemical preservation of monuments and antiquarian remains, architectural survey of monuments, development of epigraphically research; setting up and re-organization of site museums in India, training in archaeology, maintenance, conservation & preservation of centrally protected movements/sites and remains.

Karnataka has rich treasure of relic's ancient remains, vestiges, ancient monuments of archaeological and also historical importance. Karnataka has many megalithic and Neolithic heritage sites. The ancient heritage monuments of noted ruling dynasties have stood the test of time even after thousands of years. With rich cultural and historical heritage, the state has everything to offer to a tourist, ranging from architectural wonders (palaces, temples, mosques, forts, etc), caves and prehistoric wall paintings, widely varied topography ranging from the monotonous plains to the loftiest mountains, large climatic variations ranging from some of the wettest and the driest as well as from the hottest and the coldest parts, beautiful long beaches on the sea coast, vast stretches of sands, gregarious tropical forests and above all, the great variety of the life-style, the state offers an unending choice for the tourist. Their style, inbuilt sculpture and architecture have attracted number tourists from all over the world. Karnataka is blessed with rich heritage monuments which constitute the state's core cultural tourism products. It offers a number of natural and made tourist attractions that are sufficiently varied and interesting so as to attract different types of tourists. There are well defined circuits in the state for the tourism development. This being the case Karnataka state has rich scope for developing Heritage Tourism more effectively than any other state of India.

The heritage tourism in Karnataka provides an opportunity for the tourists to experience the culture in depth by visiting various heritage monuments, historical or culture relevant destinations or by participating in fairs and festivals. Heritage tourism in Karnataka is based on the traditions, fair and festivals, art forms, architecture styles etc. There is an array of ancient sculptured temples, modern cities, scenic hill ranges, unexplored forests and endless beaches. Karnataka has been ranked as the fourth most popular destination for tourism among the states of India. Karnataka has the second highest number of nationally protected monuments in India, second only to Uttar Pradesh. Most significantly, Hampi monuments and Pattadakal monuments are recognised as world heritage centres by UNESCO. These world heritages centers attract large number both domestic and foreign tourists all over the world. Hampi, Pattadakal, Aihole and Badami heritage monuments will be given preference for heritage tourism. Besides its cultural heritage, Karnataka is well-known for its natural surroundings, the

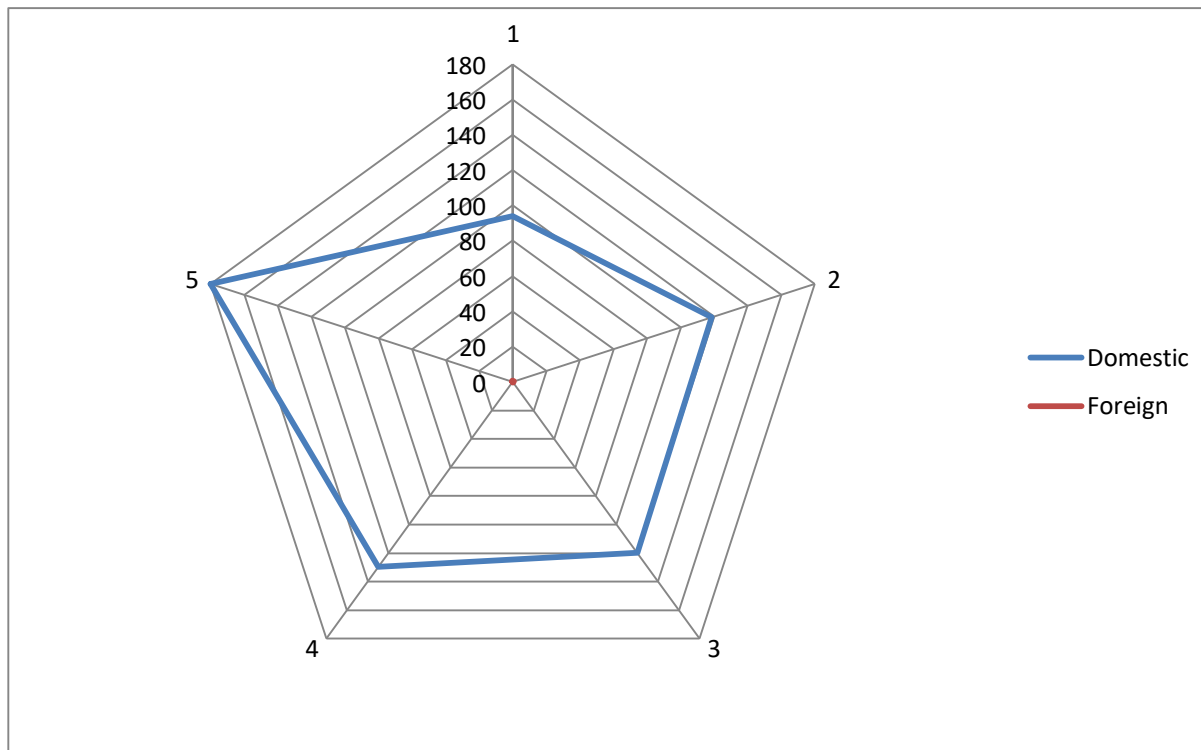
architectural masterpieces, paintings, arts and crafts, heritage sites, creativity, ethnicity, music, dance, customs, mountains, valleys, beaches and rivers. All these aspects render a significant contribution in making the state a tourist paradise. Though Karnataka had acquired prominence and status as a tourist centre during the days of the early rulers of various dynasties. There have been implementation of planned efforts with the main emphasis put towards the organization of the process of growth and development of the tourism industry. Karnataka is having highest number of heritage monuments, at present there are 752 state protected, 608 centrally protected monuments are recognised by the ASI in Karnataka.

Foreign and Domestic Tourists Arrivals across Karnataka between 2013-2017

(Tourist arrivals in Millions)

Year	Domestic	Foreign
2013	94	0.63
2014	118.3	0.56
2015	119.9	0.64
2016	129.7	0.46
2017	180	0.5

Source: Statista – 2020



Prevailing Challenges of Karnataka heritage tourism

Karnataka has a large number of heritage monuments, spread all over the state. These heritage monuments are great treasure for humanity. Apart from 752 state protected, 608 centrally protected, it is estimated that there are nearly 25,000 to 30,000 other monuments in Karnataka which have to be documented sequel to their preservation and primary conservation. Many heritage monuments may vanish due to lack of conservation and maintenance of monuments. According to the Times report, 2013, 11 percent of Karnataka monuments encroached, which stands second highest number of encroached monuments in the country after Uttar Pradesh. The temples in Hampi, Gol Gumbaz in Bijapur are highly encroached by the local people, which houses 182 heritage monuments, has the highest encroachment by the people. The state government is keen interested in preserving the heritage monuments. Awareness among local people and tourists is very much necessary towards the rich heritage. Karnataka state government's "one state, many words" promotional campaign is attracting millions of tourists to heritage sites. But still the tourism industry in Karnataka is facing several problems like

- (a) Encroachment by the local people and lack of clear defined boundaries by the govt
- (b) Lack of Public –Private partnership
- (c) Lack of Master Plan by the concerned authorities
- (d) Lack of sound marketing strategy
- (e) Lack of information for tourists
- (f) Lack of basic hygienic facilities at tourist destination
- (g) Environmental Pollution
- (h) Arrangement of Light & Sound Shows depicting the historical significance
- (i) Poor maintenance of heritage centres
- (j) Lack of professional trained tourist guides
- (k) Poor administration and management
- (l) Absence of national policy and legislation for heritage protection and management
- (m) Existence of beggars around heritage monuments centres.

Prospects for development:

- The state tourism department is planning to promote Wine Tourism for which it has identified few potential wine producers in Karnataka to develop this segment.
- With the need to develop manpower in the industry, the state tourism department is also planning to train about 3,000 people through Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) to increase efficiency and offer quality services to tourists.
- State tourism department has introduced “Green Police” at 30 selected destinations in the state. Green police is an additional security force in which ex-service men have been employed. The security force works closely with the local police to ensure safety and guidance to tourists.
- The Rural tourism has great opportunities for tourism and showcasing the rural life, heritage, art, culture, sports etc., This helps the local rural people to improve both socially and economically.
- The “Athithi” Homestay is encouraged and developed across the state. Home stays are minimally regulated and is treated as a non-commercial venture.
- Karnataka tourism works with the BBMP and BDA to develop the Bangalore Tourism Master Plan to ensure that the city re-generates itself into one of the India’s best tourist destinations.
- Adequate number of world-scale, word-class exhibition and convention complexes through appropriate PPP model is promoted and established in Bangalore and other cities in Karnataka.
- Mangalore and Karwar will be developed into major Cruise tourism hubs through the development of international standards dedicated cruises on PPP initiative.
- Theme and Entertainment Parks are promoted and established in Bangalore and other places.
- Gender distinct toilets, cafeteria, mini-store, Pharmacy and an information/souvenir booth established at intervals of about 150 km along the highway leading to major tourist destinations.
- An eco-tourism zone stretching from Coorg to Karwar will be declared and a chain of nature camps will be established and branded as Jungle trials.
- Karnataka is been positioned and promoted as India’s Premier Health and wellness destination. Traditional systems of wellness and medicines like Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Yoga etc., will be leveraged and the state will be projected as a unique destination for spiritual healing.
- The Government in national and international Heli tourism operates for establishing and promoting tourism in Karnataka and special incentives is worked out to promote it.
- It works closely with the state police. The tourism police force is established for visible policing in key tourism areas. The tourism police will act closely with the local police in case of tackling cases of offenses against tourists and also to facilitates quick responses.

Conclusion

Karnataka with its rich history and amazing culture has all the potential and ingredients of heritage tourism development. Heritage tourism can make a significant contribution in the economy of Karnataka. The rich heritage of Karnataka state needs to be preserved for the future generations. Karnataka state is having many ASI protected heritage monuments, which has huge potential for the sustainable heritage tourism development. Other than the ASI protected heritage monuments, it has number of monuments, which are neglected and discarded due to lack of government policies, lack of economic feasibility of preservation. Heritage tourism must be managed well by ensuring Tourist's facilities such as food, shopping, transportation, professional qualified tourist guides; accommodation etc. should be developed to meet the basic needs and expectations of the tourists. The private and public sectors should come forward and join their hands with government to make heritage tourism successful in Karnataka. There is need of creating awareness among the local people about importance of heritage and tourist destination.

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