

“Eco-Tourism Marketing in India: A Consumer-Based Evaluation of Green Positioning in Heritage Destinations”.

Dr. Pavan Nagorao Bahekar,

Ph. D from Rashtrasant Tukdoji Maharaj Nagpur University, Nagpur.

pawanbahekar@hotmail.com

Abstract:

More and more people are choosing eco tourism which preserves their culture and environment in India. Many Indian heritage sites are encouraging eco friendly travel at present. The purposes of this study are to explore green marketing usage by these locations, and visitors' attitude towards it. Surveys and other data are used to determine if tourists believe the green claims and if so, if it influences their level of satisfaction. The results show that tourists are more prone to be satisfied and come back if green messages are truthful. Besides, the study makes a set of recommendations towards implementing green marketing in Indian heritage travel.

Keywords: Eco-tourism, Green Marketing, Heritage Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Consumer Perception, Environmental Branding, India, Tourist Behaviour, Green Trust, Eco-friendly Destinations.

Introduction:

Over the last few years, eco tourism has proved to be of great interest especially considering the concerns with environmental damage and the ability of existing tourist methods to survive. However, eco tourism, the other form of sustainable tourism is about preserving the environment, becoming part of the community and all means of encouraging ethical travel. India sees eco-tourism as a promising means to bolster local economies and keep the country's biodiversity rich as well as cultural relic. How heritage tourism, one of the integral parts of India's ecotourism scene, is focussed on identifying, preserving and developing cultural landmarks and conventions.

Green marketing is one of the most important strategies which can promotes eco tour destinations. Green positioning and environmental branding increase the possibility to attract the customers who would value sustainability and eco-friendly operations of the businesses and their tourism operators. With increased knowledge of environmental issues amongst consumers, travelers are looking for destinations that reflect their ethical and environmental

ideals. As the behavior of consumers changes, India can use this opportunity to market safe and secure eco-friendly travel sites and historical landmarks as a sustainable mode of travel.

The function of green marketing in promoting ecotourism in the historic sites of India has been studied in this study. This environment study will help to understand how green positioning, consumer perception and environmental branding influences traveler behavior by contributing to the understanding of the successful marketing of ecotourism in the Indian context. Understanding the relationship between consumer belief in green promises and travel decisions can be tremendously helpful to policymakers and tourism operators in formulating a more sustainable tourism management strategy.

Literature Review:

Several research on the function of ecotourism and green marketing in India has been carried out. As per the study conducted by Bansal and Kumar (2011) of the Great Himalayan National Park, ecotourism when locals are active can help in community development. They proved through their research that training and employment of locals in tourism related sectors created a successful ecotourism.

Does ecotourism really help or does it make things worse? Das and Chatterjee (2015) sought to find the answer. While ecotourism can be good for local populations and the environment, they noted that it often doesn't work out because not enough planning is done, there are lax regulations and people don't really know what they are doing. They underscore the importance of better regulations and more robust management.

Indian travelers' perception on green tourism marketing was studied by Chand (2017). The report says while many tourists care about environmentally friendly practices, they don't always trust that businesses are green despite the company's claims. Thus, it suggested the companies tended to use straightforward and honest marketing to win the environmentally conscious customers.

Kumar and tiwari (2020) analyzed application of green marketing techniques in Indian ecotourism. He found that businesses are attempting to allure tourists through digital platform and eco messaging but that efforts often fail. The study feels there should be authentic environmental practices and the use of actually experienced things from nearby communities to make a bigger impact.

In India, Sharma and Thapliyal (2016) summarized ecotourism and the relationship with sustainable development. Nonetheless, ecotourism despite its numerous advantages has its limits, notably the pollution, failure by the government to enforce the laws and lack of local participation. According to their research, ecotourism should focus on supporting community as well as preserving the environment.

Babu and Mishra spent 2018 studying how marketing could facilitate eco friendly travel. Government and private sector collaboration, as well as education becomes imperative for the success of ecotourism. They find that marketing is a driver in the promotion of the responsible travel concept.

According to Verma and Singh (2021), they looked into visitors' behavior in the heritage ecotourism location. They found eco friendly locations and locations rich in culture are favored by many tourists. The report stressed that places should place emphasises on its cultural and natural signifiante and educates the visitors to strengthen its connection with the area.

Yadav and Gupta (2019) have looked at the marketing of Indian heritage monuments as ecofriendly travel destinations. They proposed to attract more eco conscious travelers through eco certification, digital storytelling and raising awareness about the community. Their study can offer useful tactics as they relate to the advancement of ecotourism in historical sites.

Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to discover how Indian sites of heritage and natural beauty use green marketing to market themselves with an emphasis on ecotourism. It will look at how those places impart to tourists the message that the environment needs protection. Moreover, the study attempts to understand if these signals are being perceived by tourists and, in case they are, if they are considered significant. Another purpose is to check whether these green messages modify the tourists' behaviour in cases of, for instance, to be more conscious about the environment. At the conclusion of the study, and simple, practical recommendations will be explored to further the growth of eco friendly travel in India.

Methodology:

Using the descriptive research approach involving both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study attempted to investigate eco-tourism marketing at Indian heritage sites. Primary data was collected by way of surveys of 300 tourists at historical locations as Hampi, Khajuraho and Ajanta-Ellora. The closed ended and open ended questions in survey would be used to assess how visitors understand eco-friendly practices, opinions, and willingness to support the eco certified services.

The visitors were selected by convenience sampling, choosing those willing to participate.

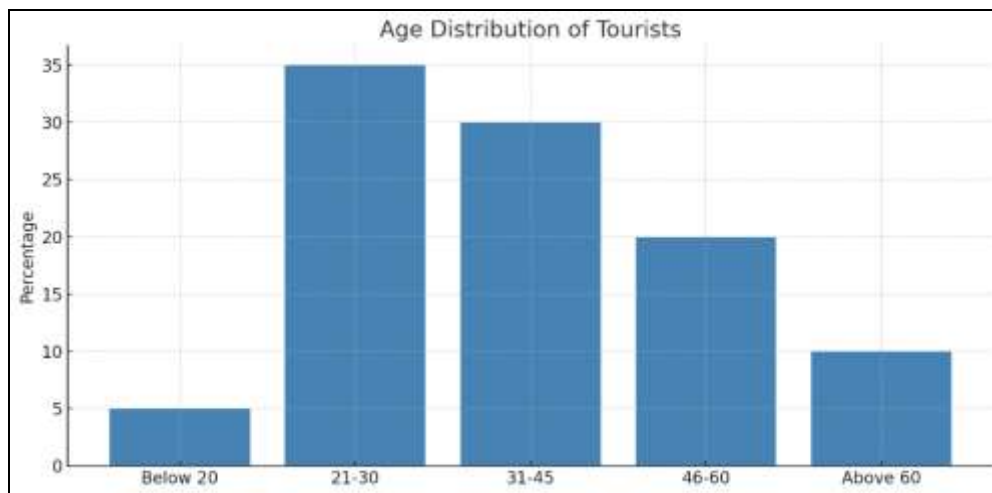
Analysis: Regression analysis and Pearson correlation test were used to test the linkages between perceptions and behaviour and descriptive statistics was used to describe the data. Thematic analysis revealed the qualitative responses allowed more depth insights.

In this way we could more easily mint ourselves a comprehensive understanding of modern ecotourism marketing's effectiveness at different sites.

Data Analysis:

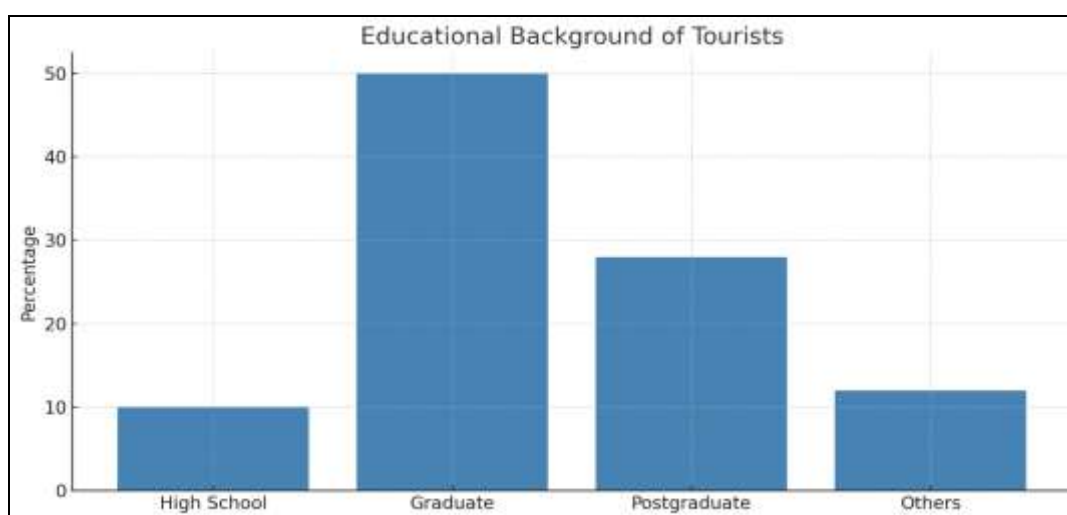
1. Age distribution of tourists

Age group	Percentage (%)
Below 20	5%
21-30	35%
31-45	30%
46-60	20%
Above 60	10%



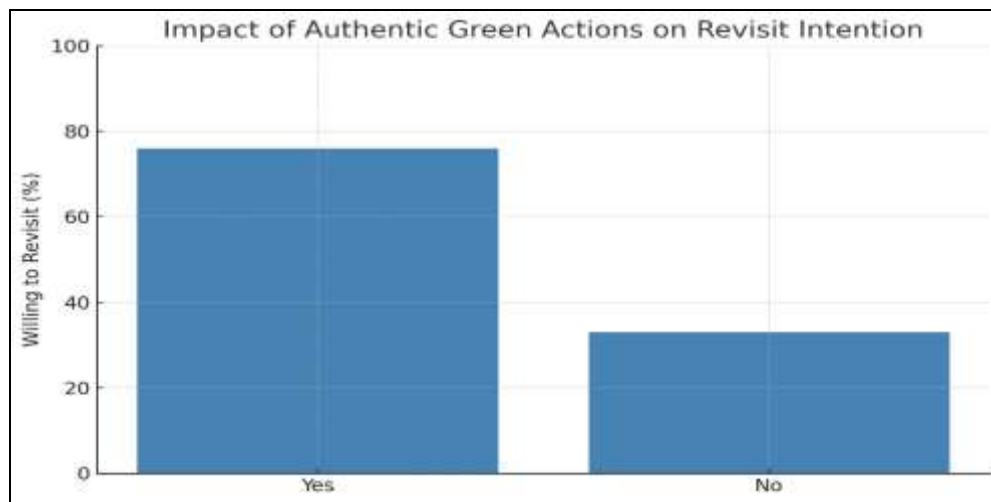
2. Educational background of tourists

Education level	Percentage (%)
High school	10%
Graduate	50%
Postgraduate	28%
Others	12%



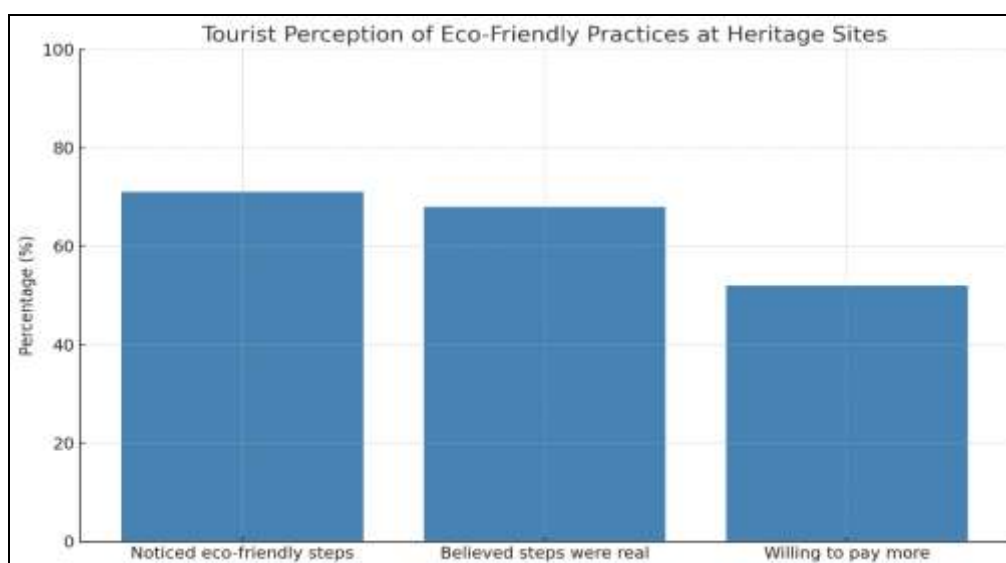
3. Willingness to green action

Green actions perceived as real	Willing to revisit (%)
Yes	76%
No	33%



4. Tourist perception of Eco-Friendly practices at heritage sites

Tourist insight	Percentage (%)
Noticed eco-friendly steps	71%
Believed the steps were real	68%
Willing to pay more for eco-certified sites	52%



Discussion:

Tourists are fond of places that actually care about the environment and local culture. Rather than just being places of false or bloated promises, they are more likely to be drawn to ones that strive to preserve the environment. Today, however, many tourists know about 'greenwashing', whereby establishments arrogate to themselves, ecologically friendliness in order to attract tourists. In other words, if the reality of the promises isn't what they were promised, this can lead to disappointment, and the lack of trust.

Visitors like to see that there has been a sincere effort to protect cultural heritage, to utilize renewable sources of energy or to manage their garbage. They will feel like they are part of doing something good, and that their time out of the office has meaning.

If heritage sites are to thrive in a robust and sincere manner, they must be transparent about how they care for the environment. Examples could be given through concrete activities, participation in environmentally useful activities, and being open about difficulties and advances. When travelers feel part of something authentic, they are much more likely to act correctly and support the destination over time.

Results:

Findings: Information obtained from questionnaires acquired new, valuable data on how the visitors view green operation at Indian historical sites.

- 1. Tourist Awareness:** More than half of the visitors (71%) saw environmentally friendly activities take place at historical sites (e.g. trash management and using solar energy).
- 2. Perceived Authenticity:** Only 32% stated that online information purporting to provide 'real' eco-friendly actions taken by these sites were purely promotional.
- 3. Willingness to Pay:** It was found that green marketing in the travel industry seems to be well received with 52% of travelers indicating that they would pay more for eco certified services.
- 4. Age and Educational Background:** The majority were between 21 and 45 years of age (65%) and 78% had a doctorate degree or higher.

5. Effect on Intentions to Return: The visitors who were convinced that the eco-friendly actions were genuine are more willing to revisit (76 percent) than those who had some doubts (33 percent).

Conclusions:

The study therefore highlights how green marketing and eco-friendly practices have influenced on how the visitors perceive and have fun with a certain historical place in India. The visitors were mostly well-educated and young, between 21 and 45. In practice, these demographics are usually more environmentally conscious and more willing to support eco-friendly travel.

When the visitors saw the eco-friendly measures that were carried out on the locations, many of them thought that they were not just fake.

This is because if visitors believe that the destination is doing so in good faith, they will be more likely to back it up. The data shows it well, 76 percent of visitors would return to a green place they believed offered authentic green activities, while only 33 percent disapproved of the attempts of the business to be 'green.' And this proves you must act and honesty is key.

Additionally, more than half (52%) of all of the visitors said they would be willing to pay more for eco-Certified heritage sites. Thus, tourists care about the environment, and even agree to help finance it. This is an obvious indication that ecotourism may be simultaneously meaningful and economic.

Summarily, travelers want something tangible instead of platitudes. Heritage sites that are clearly committed to preserve nature and culture can gain trust, increased tourism, and even promote responsible behavior. If green marketing is carried out honestly and honestly, Indian heritage tourism may be beneficial to both people and the environment.

Recommendations

For increasing popularity of eco-tourism promotion of Indian heritage sites, it is necessary to set up a transparent and trustworthy system for the verification on eco-friendly measures. Heritage sites, to ensure that visitors can trust the information, need to verify their green initiatives with outside means. A larger audience will be reached by simple, unambiguous, and multilingual green marketing messaging. Sites should also use social media and narratives to highlight their environmentally friendly practices for the purpose of enhancing visitors' sense of connection to the location. Furthermore, employees should be trained on communicating why sustainability matters to visitors to better understand and appreciate their trip. These suggestions can help maintain India's culture and environment as well as attract more similar visitors.

References:

1. S. P. Bansal & J. Kumar, 2011. Ecotourism for community development: Great Himalayan National Park: a stakeholder's perspective. Sustainable development behavior: A review of the literature and the theory of planned behavior, International Journal of Social Ecology and Sustainable Development, 2(2), 31–40.
2. Das, M., & Chatterjee, B. (2015). Ecotourism: A panacea or a predicament? Tourism Management Perspectives, 14, 3–16.
3. Chand, M. (2017). Green marketing in tourism: consumer perception. A study of Indian tourists. 7(2), 64–75 in International Journal of Research in Management, Economics and Commerce.
4. Kumar, S., & Tiwari, P. (2020). Green marketing strategies and eco-tourism: An Indian perspective. Journal of Tourism Studies, 11(1), 45–53.
5. K. K. Sharma, A. Thapliyal (2016). Eco-tourism and the sustainable development in India An overview. Tourism concerns: A South Asian perspective. South Asian Journal of Tourism and Heritage, 9(1), 1–12.
6. Babu, S., & Mishra, S. (2018). This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Victoria University of Technology in the Faculty of Business, Faculty of Arts, and Graduate School of the Humanities. In Indian Journal of Economics and Development, 14 (3): 451– 456.

7. R. K. Verma and T. V. Singh (2021). Eco-tourism in India: Consumer behaviour A study of heritage destinations. *Journal of Heritage & Tourism*, 17(2), 210–227.
8. S. K. Yadav and M. Gupta (2019). Marketing green heritage: Positioning Indian heritage sites as sustainable destinations. *Tourism and Hospitality Research, International Journal*, 11(4), 120–132.