

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256442092>

Title: The Kabini River Lodge: A Case Study of Culture and Conservation in Ecotourism in Karnataka, India

Article · December 2012

READS

171

2 authors, including:



Nichola A. Ramchurjee

University of Mysore

7 PUBLICATIONS 3 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Title: The Kabini River Lodge: A Case Study of Culture and Conservation in Ecotourism in Karnataka, India.

Nichola A. Ramchurjee MSc. (Env. Sci.)

Corresponding Author:
Nichola Anastasia Ramchurjee
Research Scholar
Department of Studies in Environmental Science,
University of Mysore, Manasagangotri,
Mysore, 570 006, India
E-mail: nichola_ramchurjee@yahoo.com

Abstract

Ecotodges are an increasingly popular form of accommodation. The purpose of this article is to explore the concept of ecolodges as a tourist destination. The study found that ecotourists were typically highly educated, willing to stay about 2-5 days, travelling with friends or family to learn and explore nature, new cultures and customs. The study determined demographics and trip characteristics as well as the travel motivations of ecotourists. The findings revealed that ecotourists are primarily attracted by the destination attributes such as (natural attractions, wildlife, culture, traditions and lifestyles of the local people, and eco-activities) and location the ecolodges. It is important for ecolodges operators to establish a positive balance among environmental impacts and conservation benefits, provide environmental education for the ecotourists and to conserve and protect their surrounding natural resources since these are the motivating factors for the ecotourists.

Keywords: ecotourists, ecolodges, conservation, culture, environmental education.

Introduction

Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing categories of international tourism, attracting the attention of governments, the tourism industry, and the popular press. However, recently, researchers have begun to investigate ecotourists themselves, identifying their demographic, psychographic, motivational, and value-related characteristics. Some have focused on information sources used during trip planning, while others have used this information to discover relevant segments or “clusters” of ecotourists (Keng & Cheng, 1999; Weaver & Lawton, 2002). Ecotourist spending habits and specific trip behaviours also have been documented (Tian-Cole, Crompton & Wilson, 2002).

Tourist accommodation, such as ecolodges, constitutes overnight sleeping facilities that generate experiences. They are specifically designed to attract and serve ecotourists. Weaver and Lawton (2002) even state that ecolodges are probably the most distinctive component of the ecotourism industry and one that most attempts to embody the criteria and ideals of the sector.

From the service experience perspective, understanding the practical nature of consumption and attitudes of the consumers are vital as these can be translated into future action, both from the economic and personal perspectives.

Despite the widespread acknowledgement that ecolodges are nature dependent and an experience management unit of accommodation, there is limited literature on the ecolodge experience and little empirical evidence or academic research that focuses on the guests during the evaluation on guest experiential reactions and their satisfying experiences dimensions in ecolodge accommodation. Hence, it is logical to identify and understand the underlying attributes of the experiences from the guest perspective. Such evidence may offer a significant contribution towards the offering of sustainable ecolodge experiences in terms of their management and operations, especially since they can form part of the core dimensions of ecotourism destination attractiveness.

Thus, given the lack of such published research evidence, the study was designed to investigate the guest practical reaction and their satisfying experiences in ecolodges at the Kabini River Lodge and to suggest strategies for achieving a more sustainable management of ecolodges.

Literature Review

The ecolodge industry emerged in the 1980s and grew rapidly over the next 20 years (Sanders & Halpenny, 2001). An ecolodge is a nature-dependent tourist lodge that attempts to meet the philosophy and principles of ecotourism (Hawkins *et al.*, 1995), including environmentally responsible principles of design, construction and operations (Pigram, 2003). Therefore, ecolodges can play a role in contributing to enhanced tourist awareness of and support for, conservation and participation in environmental management practices. This is further supported by the need to improve sustainable management and operations for tourist accommodation (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998; Traucer, 1998).

Previous studies also allude to the fact that some ecolodge accommodation uses environmentally friendly building aspects/design, which play an important role in shaping the motivations or experiences of guests and environmentally conscious operators ([Wight, 1996b](#); [Boo, 1990](#); [Eagles, 1992](#); [Ryel and Grasse, 1991](#); [Whelan, 1991](#)). It is argued that the ecolodge has the potential to generate high levels of tourist satisfaction via the creation of memorable (authentic) experiences and value added products which can lead to profit maximisation ([Chan and Baum, 2007](#)). Hence, the attraction of ecolodges depends on their ability to provide unique experiences derived from substantial biodiversity, wildlife activities and pristine landscapes.

It was found that tourists generally choose the natural environment that they wish to experience before they consider accommodation ([Wight, 1997](#)). The importance of “planning orientation” has long been recognized as an important variable in classifying vacation consumers ([Keng & Cheng, 1999](#); [Perreault, Darden & Darden, 1977](#)). When and how trips are planned logically has a large impact on choosing among lodging alternatives, and should therefore also affect the marketing decisions of lodging managers.

Ecolodge operators need to give primary focus to the experiencing of natural areas, which fosters guest satisfying experiences by enabling guests to relate to the environment and nature, thereby understanding and appreciating the need for conservation. So in order for ecolodge operators to provide sustainable quality experiences in the ecolodge, it is crucial to get into the mind of guests to understand their desires in terms of experiential dimensions. The understanding of guest satisfying experiential dimensions can contribute to more sustainable practices and operations of ecolodges as well as enhancing guest satisfaction. These key satisfying dimensions may be key critical components for marketing strategies of ecolodge accommodation. They can be converted into memorable guest experiences and can be capitalised on by ecolodge operators to produce flawless services to the said guests.

Unlike other types of tourist accommodation, ecolodges aim to offer tourists/guests an educational and participatory experience; they focus on environmental standards and long-term sustainability ([Andrews, Baum and Morrison, 2001](#)) and provide a high-contact service environment.

Ecolodges are usually individually owned, rather than being part of a chain, and are usually located in or near national parks and protected areas and provide educational programmes. Even though there are some similarities between hotels and ecolodges (they both provide accommodations, amenities, and facilities for tourists), the differences are significant enough that ecolodge patrons are worth of separate study.

A survey of 26 ecolodges in 12 countries by [Russell et al. \(1995\)](#) found that ecolodges were small scale business located in isolated natural settings, with facilities designed with a local or exotic quality. Food, comfort, relaxation and experiences involving learning and interacting with nature were emphasised. However, few studies profiled the characteristics of ecolodge patrons. This is a disadvantage because without knowledge of the client base, ecolodge managers may fail to meet the needs of their clients, ultimately compromising the sustainability of their business.

In the 1990s, a consensus emerged in the empirical research of the profile of ecotourists. They typically ranged in age between 35 and 54 years old. The majority of the ecotourists were college or university graduates, likely to be in a high-income bracket, with a preferred trip length of 8–14 days. Ecotourists were more likely to travel as a couple and less likely to be with families. Their major motivations for taking their trips were learning about nature, attractive natural environments, attractive wildlife species as well as parks and protected areas. Hiking and walking were popular activities among ecotourists. Their source of information usually depended on word of mouth and travel brochures (Eagles & Cascagnette, 1995; HLA & ARA Consulting Group Inc., 1995; Sanders & Halpenny, 2001; [Wight, 1996b](#)).

Comprehending what tourists seek at ecolodges allows tourism marketers to better identify this target market and tailor the environment, services, and facilities at their properties to the needs of the current and future customers.

Studies on ecolodges have focused on several areas, namely ecolodge performance goals and evaluation ([Osland and Mackoy, 2004](#)), the definition of an ecolodge (Rusell, Bottrill and Meredith, 1995) resort ecotourism ([Ayala, 1996](#)), ecotourist characteristics, behaviour and needs and market segment (Wight, 1996a; Weaver and Lawton, 2002). Importance–performance analysis (IPA) was originally designed to assist with decision-making in service industries ([Chu & Choi, 2000](#); [Dolinsky, 1991](#); [Dolinsky & Caputo, 1991](#)). The IPA technique has not been applied to ecotourists' perceptions of ecolodge attributes.

The purpose of this study was to determine the socio-demographic and trip characteristics and travel motivations of ecotourists in the Mysore District of Karnataka. This study provides lodge owners with critical marketing information, and determines how ecotourists rank the various hospitality, personal service and environmental attributes provided by an ecolodge, it also expands the current literature on ecolodges.

Method

Study Site

The Karnataka state in southwest India is a favourite destination for ecotourists and the chosen site for this investigation. Mysore, one of the 30 districts in Karnataka was chosen because it has a well-established ecolodge industry ([Palacio and McCool, 1997](#)). The District has a commitment to conservation, culture and ecotourism. 60% of the state encloses the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve in 1986, a UNESCO designation ([Seville 5, 2007](#)); it also contains five National Parks, twenty five Wildlife Sanctuaries, of which seven are bird sanctuaries ([Manjrekar, 2000](#)). This large amount of natural area provides a readily available base for the development of an ecotourism industry.

Nestled in the southern fringes of the Nagarhole National Park, the Kabini River Lodge (Figure 1) is a perfect getaway for nature lovers. The breathtaking locale with the tranquil backwaters of the River Kabini presents an ideal setting for a long-awaited vacation. Once the hunting lodge of the erstwhile Maharaja of Mysore, Kabini River Lodge is today rated by the British Tattler's Travel Guide as one of the top 5 wildlife resort/ecolodge in the world. Kabini is pure elephant

country as one can see numerous herds at a time. However, the blaze of the elusive tiger always haunts you as you roam through the verdant jungle here. Once widely known for the mass elephant-trapping operations called 'Khedda', Kabini stands as the one of the brightest beacons for wildlife preservation in India today. There are a variety of lodging styles, dining facilities, amenities, nature trails, organized guided tours, nature-related activities, nature centers and other interpretation programmes.

Study Methodology

The sample population in this research was composed of tourists, who stayed at the Kabini River Lodge between February and August, 2011. For this study, 180 surveys were distributed. The goal was to give a survey form to each person upon check-in, until the 180 surveys had been distributed. Upon check-in, each person was told by the front desk staff that the survey asked for information about their demographic and trip characteristics and travel motivations. On completion of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to place the completed questionnaire into a drop box at the front desk during check-out.

Of the 200 questionnaires distributed, 157 were returned (78.5% response rate). The survey instrument was a six-page questionnaire, divided into three sections. The first and last sections consisted of questions on travel characteristics and demographics. The questions on travel motivation attributes used a 4-point scale from not at all important, to very important. The second section consisted of 32 ecolodge attributes for which the tourists were asked to evaluate their perception of importance and performance of each attribute. The attributes were chosen using both hotel (Atkinson, 1988; Callan & Kyndt, 2001; Callan & Bowman, 2000; Chu & Choi, 2000; LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1996; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Wilensky & Buttle, 1988) and ecotourism (Eagles, 1992; Hawkins *et al.*, 1995; Mehta *et al.*, 2002; World Tourism Organization, 2002) literature. Each attribute was ranked on a 5-point Likert scale for both importance and performance.

Data from both the close-ended questions and open-ended questions were coded. They were then computed and analysed by using Microsoft Excel 2007 and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including simple frequencies and mean ratings, on the respondents' demographic and trip characteristics were computed.

Result

The following section of the paper provides a summary of the data collected from the 157 respondents. Firstly, the demographic characteristics will be presented, followed by the trip characteristics and then travel motivations of the respondents are explored.

1) Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The five variables discussed include: 1) Sex, 2) Age Group, 3) Education, 4) Employment Status and 5) Country of Origin.

a) Sex

From the data, it can be seen that 41.4% of the respondents (n=65) were males and 58.6% (n=92) were females.

b) Age Group

The data shows that the most frequent age group among the respondents from the sample was 26-33 years old (n=17, 10.8%), followed by 34-41 age group (n=25, 15.9%), 42-49 age group was (n= 65, 41.4%) and the 50-57 age group (n= 50, 31.8%). Many studies examining the characteristics of ecotourists have found that the average ecotourist was older than the average tourist and that the average ecotourist was between the ages of 36 and 55 ([Ballantine, 1991](#); [Cascagnette, 1992](#); [Eagles and Cascagnette, 1995](#); [HLA Consultants & ARA Consulting Group Inc., 1995](#); [Wight, 1996a](#)).

c) Education

The majority of the respondents were all educated. Of the total respondents, (n=124, 78.9%) had a Bachelors degree or above. About (n= 145, 92.3%) of the sample had at least some post-secondary school education. There is agreement in the literature that ecotourists are highly educated, with the majority possessing at least a bachelor's degree ([Ballantine, 1991](#); [Cascagnette, 1992](#); [Crossley & Lee, 1994](#); [Eagles, 1992](#); [Fennell, 1990](#); [Higham et al., 2001](#); [Saleh & Karwacki, 1996](#); [Wight, 1996a](#)).

d) Employment Status

A large portion of the respondents from the total sample were employed full-time (n=106, 67.5%). The second largest group of respondents contained students (n= 15, 9.5%), the third largest group were those who were self-employed (n= 13, 8.3.0%), Homemakers counted for (n=2, 1.3%) of the respondents. Overall, n=119, 77.8% were employed, whereas n= 21, 13.4% were not employed. Very few other studies examined the employment status of their respondents. [Higham et al. \(2001\)](#) found that 40% of their sample employed full-time, 21.5% retired, 10% students, and 9.1% were self-employed.

e) Country of Origin

Figure 2, shows that the ecotourists came from varying foreign countries with (n= 18, 11.5%) from USA, England (n=13, 8.3%), Sweden (n=2, 1.3%), Denmark (n=4, 2.5%), Canada (n=9, 5.7%), Mexico (n=12, 7.6%), France (n=15, 9.6%), Germany (n=14, 8.9%) and Spain (n=17, 10.8%). The figure also shows that regional ecotourists came from six other states, Andhra Pradesh (n=7, 4.5%), West Bengal (n=5, 3.2%), Maharashtra (n=8, 5.1%), Delhi (n=6, 3.8%), Kerala (n=16, 10.2%) and Tamil Nadu (n=11, 7.0%).

2) Trip Characteristics

a) Total trip length in Mysore

The data indicates that on average the respondents stayed in Mysore for 8–11 days (42.7%), followed by 4–7 days (25.5%), and 1-3 days (18.5%). About 68.2% of the sample stayed for more than 3 days. [Crossley and Lee \(1994\)](#), [Fennell \(1990\)](#), and [Wight \(1996a\)](#) found that ecotourists tended to stay at their ecotourism destination for about 8–14 days, which was longer than the general tourist. This long-term stay in Mysore is quite positive for the ecolodge industry.

Long-term stay typically results in higher economic return to the host community and to the national economy.

b) Average length of stay at the Kabini River Lodge

From table 1, shows when the respondents were asked about the length of stay at the ecolodge, the most frequent answer was three nights (32.5%). About 86% of the sample stayed from two to five nights. The ecolodge stay is relatively long, with stays as long as 8 days reported.

c) Travel Companion

The data in (Table 2) shows that a large portion of the respondents travelled with their family (35.0%), followed by respondents travelling with their spouses (32.5%), followed by friends (15.9%), organised groups (8.9%) and ecotourists travelling alone (7.6%) seen in (Table 1). The Mysore ecolodge market is particularly attractive to married couples. Saleh and Karwacki (1996) and Wight (1996a) stated that ecotourists most often travel as a couple. Saleh and Karwacki (1996) and Twynam and Robinson (1997) found that families make up a sizeable portion of ecotourists; however, neither study distinguishes between adult families and families with children. Crossley and Lee (1994) and Wight (1996a) both found that families with children were a common group of ecotourists.

d) Major sources of information

Major sources of information were gathered differently by foreign ecotourists and domestic ecotourists. Table 3 shows the most important sources of information used for ecolodge selection. It is noteworthy to observe the importance of the Internet to the foreign and domestic ecotourists and the significance use of the television media for the domestic ecotourists. In almost all older studies of ecotourists, the Internet did not make the top four information sources used by ecotourists (Ballantine, 1991; Fennell, 1990; Hatch, 1997; Higham et al., 2001; Meric & Hunt, 1998; Saleh and Karwacki, 1996; Twynam & Robinson, 1997). Books or travel guides or recommendation from friends/relatives were common responses in the majority of these studies. When these studies were conducted, the Internet was still a relatively new phenomenon and was not widespread. Now one of the easiest and most affordable promotional methods to reach the global audience is through the Internet. This study shows the emergence of the Internet as a major element for ecolodge selection. With the promotion of many travel services online and the Government of Karnataka and the River Lodge active promotions in advertising diverse attractions as a whole, this study shows how the Internet encourages ecolodge selection as well as the movement of the tourists among several different destinations during a trip.

3) Travel motivation factors

a) Attributes considered when selecting an ecolodge

As seen in Figure 3, ecotourists look for a number of factors that will help in them choosing an ecolodge. The most motivating factors for choosing an ecolodge includes but not limited to i) nice atmosphere/people, ii) meals on site, iii) there should be minimal impacts (grounds, roads, trash), and iv) near natural area/Location

- b) Travel motivation attributes
 - i) Attraction motives

From Table 4, the respondents ranked the importance of each of 11 attraction attributes used when planning their trip to Mysore. This ranking was on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 4 (very important). The most important attraction motives were: Nature appreciation and experience (mean =3.53), Have fun and be entertained (mean =3.27), Feel at home away from home (mean =3.20), Local culture and human experience (mean=3.15), Be physically active (mean=3.12), and the warm climate (mean=3.09).

- c) Travel motivation attributes
 - ii) Social motives

Table 5 shows that being together as a family (mean=2.50) was the most important social motive. The overall, the social motive means were ranked higher than the attraction motives. This finding is very similar to that of Eagles (1992) findings in regards to ecotourism travel motivations when choosing a trip.

- d) Importance and performance of ecolodge attributes

Respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of each of 32 ecolodge attributes when selecting the lodge. This was measured by a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very unimportant), 2 (unimportant), 3 (neutral), 4 (important) to 5 (very important). From Table 6, the mean importance was 3.85, with 10 items receiving an importance rating above 4.0. The five highest rated attributes were, in order: (1) scenery (4.50), (2) value for money (4.48), (3) quality of the environment or landscape (4.38), (4) friendliness of staff (4.42), and (5) decent sanitary condition (4.38). Three of these highest-ranked importance values for attributes are concerned with service features: staff friendliness, value for money, and facility sanitation. Two are environmental features: scenery and quality of the environment. This reveals the unique positioning of ecolodges. The ecotourists expect the institutions to cater to standard hospitality service features, as well as provide quality environmental features. The five attributes ranked lowest included: (1) business facilities and conference rooms (2.66), (2) availability of sales and rental services for recreation equipment (2.73), (3) availability of onsite entertainment (3.22), (4) availability of horseback riding (3.32), and (5) availability of research facilities (3.36). The ecotourists place low importance on facilities for business, entertainment, and recreational equipment. They also do not see a need for research or horseback riding.

Respondents were also asked to evaluate the performance of the ecolodge for each of the 32 attributes. This was measured by a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (poor), 2 (bad), 3 (OK), 4 (good) to 5 (excellent). The mean performance ranking was 4.30, with 29 attributes ranked 4 or

above. The five highest ranked attributes for performance were: (1) friendliness of staff (4.91), (2) scenery (4.81), (3) staff provides efficient services (4.72), (4) quality of the environment or landscape (4.62), and (5) decent sanitary condition (4.62). Three of these highly performing attributes deal with service issues: staff friendliness, sanitation, and staff efficiency. Two are concerned with staff services: friendliness and staff efficiency. These ecolodges performed well on both these service and environment attributes. The five attributes that were ranked poorest by the clients in terms of performance were: (1) business facilities and conference rooms (3.52), (2) recreation equipment (3.69), (3) research facilities (3.88), (4) horseback riding (3.1), and (5) onsite entertainment (3.91). Not only did the ecotourists indicate that these five attributes were not very important, they also indicate that the ecolodges performed relatively poorly in their provision of these attributes.

The difference between the value given to importance and the one given to performance is known as the importance–performance gap or IP gap. This value is an indication of the relative difference between how important an attribute is and how well the ecolodge performs with this attribute. In this study, all of the IP gaps were positive.

Discussion

This study showed that 41.4% of ecotourists who responded to the survey were from the European Union Countries, 11.5% from the USA, 5.7% from Canada, and 23.8% were domestic ecotourists. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 42 and 57, highly educated (92.3 had at least a Bachelor's degree), 67.5% worked full-time.

In terms of trip characteristics, the majority of the respondents stayed in Mysore 8–11 days, Most often the ecotourists spent their time site seeing, taking photographs and at cultural festivals and shows. Most respondents travelled with their spouses and their travel motivation to Mysore was usually to learn and explore nature or explore a new country or culture. The Internet, Guide books, and People I have met while travelling were the three most important sources of information that influence the foreign respondents' decision making process for the ecolodge categories. However, television, Internet and Travel agents are the major sources sought by domestic ecotourists. These results were a contrast to older studies (HLA Consultants & ARA Consulting Group Inc., 1995; [Wight, 1996a](#)) whose findings indicate that word of mouth and travel brochures were more influential than the Internet as sources of information that influence ecotourists' decision-making process. This indicates that there has been a change in marketing approaches with the rapid advancement of Internet technology in the past decade.

The five highest ranked attributes for importance were, in order: (1) scenery (4.50), (2) value for money (4.48), (3) quality of the environment or landscape (4.38), (4) friendliness of staff (4.42), and (5) decent sanitary condition (4.38). It is important to remember that there were 10 items with an importance rating of four or above, which means that a large number of attributes are important to ecolodge patrons. The five highest ranked attributes for performance were: (1) friendliness of staff (4.91), (2) scenery (4.81), (3) staff provides efficient services (4.72), (4) quality of the environment or landscape (4.62), and (5) decent sanitary condition (4.62). There is much similarity between what ecolodge patrons rank as important and the

performance of the ecolodges on these attributes. All the IP gaps were positive for the Kabini River Lodge.

Given the lack of any negative gaps in this study, the IP analysis for the Kabini River Lodge shows a remarkably high level of accomplishment using this type of measurement instrument. The ecolodge is performing remarkably well on a wide suite of service and environmental attraction attributes. This study shows that the Kabini River Lodge is successful in the provision of a wide range of social, physical, and environmental attributes. Ecotourists' perception of importance on ecolodges can be expected to change as the experience of the patrons' increases and the ecolodge programmes mature. Immediately, the Kabini River Lodge should work to improve their programmes dealing with the availability of trail hiking facilities, the comfort of their beds, the recycling of glass, paper and plastic, and the explanation of the services provided for the price.

Ecolodge establishments have become a popular accommodation form for ecotourists. This relatively new accommodation concept has some similarity to mainstream hotels. They both provide accommodation, amenities, food, and facilities for tourists and their level of amenity standards vary. Nonetheless, the main difference between hotels and ecolodge accommodations is that the latter provides environmental features and educational programmes to tourists that hotels do not offer. The ecolodge has extended their accommodation preferences to include not only service quality, but the surrounding natural environment, sustainable design, and wildlife availability. Since ecolodge establishments are still an immature industry, there is a relative lack of investigation on their offerings, facilities, and programmes. This study was an initial attempt to investigate ecolodges from a marketing perspective; it explored the ecotourists' perspectives of ecolodges and provided marketing information for other ecolodges in Mysore. This study provided insight into the characteristics and motivations of ecotourists in Mysore and showed the importance of collecting such information. However, much research is still needed to have a full understanding of ecolodge patrons. Many more studies are needed to validate the results of this study in other countries.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, these types of unique 'eco' establishments have attracted attention and business. Ecolodges will continue to operate, grow, and attract tourists from a larger market. As ecotourism and ecolodge establishments continue to bloom, the ecolodge market will become increasingly competitive. The ability to offer unique products and provide an extension of the ecotourism experience will help ecolodges to compete against each other and against other forms of accommodation and service facilities. Ecolodge operators should continue to concentrate on learning about their patrons and catering to their motivations to achieve a competitive advantage in the global ecotourist industry.

References

Andrews, R., T. Baum and A. Morrison, (2001). The Lifestyle of Economics of Small Tourism Business. J. Travel and Tourism Res., 1: 16-25.

Atkinson, A., (1988) Answering the eternal question: What does the customer want? The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly 29 (2), 12–14.

Ayala, H., (1996). Resort Eco-tourism: A Master Plan for Experience Management. Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 37(5): 54-61.

Ballantine, J.L., (1991). An analysis of the characteristics of a population of Canadian Tourists to Kenya Waterloo. Master's thesis, University of Waterloo, Ontario.

Boo, E., (1990). *Ecotourism: The potentials and pitfalls.* Washington, D.C.: World Wildlife Fund.

Callan, R.J. and L. Bowman, (2000) Selecting a hotel and determining salient quality attributes: A preliminary study of mature British travellers. International Journal of Tourism Research 2 (2), 97–118.

Callan, R.J. and G. Kyndt, (2001) Business travelers' perception of service quality: A prefatory study of two European city centre hotels. International Journal of Tourism Research 3 (4), 313–323.

Cascagnette, J.W., (1992). *A socioeconomic profile of the Canadian ecotourist.* Unpublished dissertation, University of Waterloo, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies.

Chan, J.K.L. and T. Baum, 2007. Ecotourists' Perception of Ecotourism Experience in Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah, Malaysia. J. Sustainable Tourism, 15(5): 574-590.

Chu, R.K.S., and T. Choi, (2000). An importance–performance analysis of hotel selection factors in the Hong Kong hotel industry: A comparison of business and leisure travelers. Tourism Management, 21(4), 363–377.

Crossley, J., and B. Lee, (1994). Characteristics of ecotourists and mass tourists. *Visions in Leisure and Business*, 13(2), 4–12.

Dolinsky, A.L., (1991). Considering the competition in strategy development: An extension of importance-performance analysis. Journal of Health Care Marketing, 11(1), 31–36.

Dolinsky, A.L., and R. K. Caputo, (1991). Adding a competitive dimension to importance-performance analysis: An application to traditional health care systems. *Health Marketing Quarterly*, 8(3/4), 61–79.

Eagles, P., 1992. The Travel Motivations of Canadian Eco-tourists. Journal of Travel Research, Fall, 3-7.

Eagles, P.F.J., and J. W. Cascagnette, (1995). Canadian ecotourists: Who are they? *Tourism Recreation Research*, 20(1), 22–28.

Fennell, D.A., (1990). A profile of ecotourists and the benefits derived from their experiences: A Costa Rican case study. Master's thesis, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario.

Guadagnolo, F.B., (1985). The importance–performance analysis: An evaluation and marketing tool. Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, 3(1), 13–22.

Hatch, D., (1997). Understanding the Ecotourism Market. Paper presented at the 1997 Ecotourism Association of Australia Conference, Port Stephens, and Australia.

Hawkins, D.E., EplerWood, M. and Bittman, S. (eds) (1995) *The Ecolodge Sourcebook*. North Bennington, VT: The Ecotourism Society.

Higham, J.E.S., A. M. Carr, and S. Gale, (2001). Ecotourism in New Zealand: Profiling visitors to New Zealand ecotourism operations. Dunedin, New Zealand: Department of Tourism, University of Otago.

HLA Consultants and ARA Consulting Group Inc., (1995). Ecotourism – nature/adventure/culture: Alberta and British Columbia market demand assessment. Alberta, Canada: Alberta Economic Development and Tourism.

Hollenhorst, S., D. Olson, and R. Fortney, (1992). Uses of importance–performance analysis to evaluate state park cabins: The case of the West Virginia State Park system. Journal of Parks and Recreation Administration, 10(1), 1–11.

Keng, K.A., and J. L. L. Cheng, (1999). Determining tourist role typologies: An exploratory study of Singapore vacationers. Journal of Travel Research, 37(May), 382-390.

Kennedy, D.W., (1986). Importance–performance analysis in marketing and evaluating therapeutic recreation services. Therapeutic Recreation Journal, 20(3), 30–36.

LeBlanc, G. and N. Nguyen, (1996) An examination of the factors that signal hotel image to travelers. Journal of Vacation Marketing 3 (1), 32–42.

Manjrekar, N., (2000). A Walk on the Wild Side, An Information Guide to National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries of Karnataka, Karnataka Forest Department, Wildlife Wing.

Mehta, B., A. Baez, and P. O'Loughlin, (2002). International ecolodge guidelines. North Bennington, VT: The International Ecotourism Society.

Meric, H. H., and J. Hunt, (1998). Ecotourists' motivational and demographic characteristics: A case of North Carolina travelers. Journal of Travel Research, 36(4), 57–61.

- Middleton, V.T.C. and Hawkins, (1998). Sustainable Tourism: A Marketing Perspective. Butterworth- Heinmann.
- Oppermann, M. and K. Chon, (1997) Tourism in Developing Countries. London, UK: International Thomson Press.
- Ortinou, D.J., A. J. Bush, R. P. Bush, and J. L. Twible, (1989). The use of importance–performance analysis for improving the quality of marketing education: Interpreting faculty-course evaluations. Journal of Marketing Education, 11(2), 78–86.
- Osland, G.E. and R. Mackoy, (2004). Ecolodge Performance Goals and Evaluations. J. Ecotourism, 3(2): 109-128.
- Palacio, V., and S. F. McCool, (1997). Identifying ecotourists in Belize through benefit segmentation: A preliminary analysis. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 5(3), 235–243.
- Perreault , W.D., D. K. Darden, and W. R. Darden, (1977) . Psychographic classification of vacation life-styles. Journal of Leisure Research, 9(1), 208-224
- Pigram, J.J., (2003) Ecoresort. In J.J. Jenkins and J.J. Pigram (eds) Encyclopedia of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation. London, UK: Routledge.
- Russell, D., C., Bottrill and C. Meredith, (1995). International ecolodge survey in The Ecolodge Sourcebook - for Planners and Managers. The Ecotourism Society.
- Ryel, R. and T. Grasse, (1991). Marketing Eco-tourism: Attracting the Elusive Eco-tourist. In Whelan (Ed.) Nature Tourism: Managing for the Environment, pp: 164-186. Island Press.
- Sanders, E.G., and E. Halpenny, (2001). The business of ecolodges: A survey of ecolodge economics and finance. Burlington, VT: The International Ecotourism Society.
- Saleh, F., and J. Karwacki, (1996). Revisiting the ecotourist: The case of Grassland National Park. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 4(2), 61–80.
- Seville 5, (2007). Internal Meeting of Experts, Proceedings, Pamplona, Spain, 23–27 October 2000" (PDF).
- Tian-Cole, S., J. L. Crompton, and V. L. Wilson, (2002). An empirical investigation of the relationships between service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions among visitors to a wildlife refuge. Journal of Leisure Research, 34(1), 1-24.
- Traucer, B., (1998). Green tourism in the hotel and resort sector: International and New Zealand Perspective. Australia Parks and Leisure, 1(2): 5-9.
- Twynam, G.D., and D. W. Robinson, (1997). A market segmentation analysis of desired ecotourism opportunities. Sault Ste, Marie, Ontario: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada

Weaver, D.B. and L. J. Lawton, (2002). Overnight ecotourist market segmentation in the Gold Coast hinterland of Australia. *Journal of Travel Research*, 40(February), 270-280.

Whelan, T., (1991). Eco-tourism and its Role in Sustainable Development. In *Nature Tourism: Managing for the Environment*, pp: 3-9. Island Press.

Wight, P. A., (1996a). North American ecotourists: Market profile and trip characteristics. *Journal of Travel Research*, 24(4), 2–10.

Wight, P.A. (1996b). North American ecotourists: Motivations, preferences, and destinations. *Journal of Travel Research*, 35(6), 3–8.

Wight, P. A., (1997). Ecotourism accommodation spectrum: Does supply match the demand? *Tourism Management*, 18(4), 209–220.

Wilensky, L. and F. Buttle, (1988) A multivariate analysis of hotel benefit bundles and choice trade-offs. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 7 (1), 29–41.

World Tourism Organization (WTO) (2002) *The Canadian Ecotourism Market* [Special Report No. 15]. Madrid, Spain: World Tourism Organization.

Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Map showing Kabini River Lodge in Mysore, Karnataka

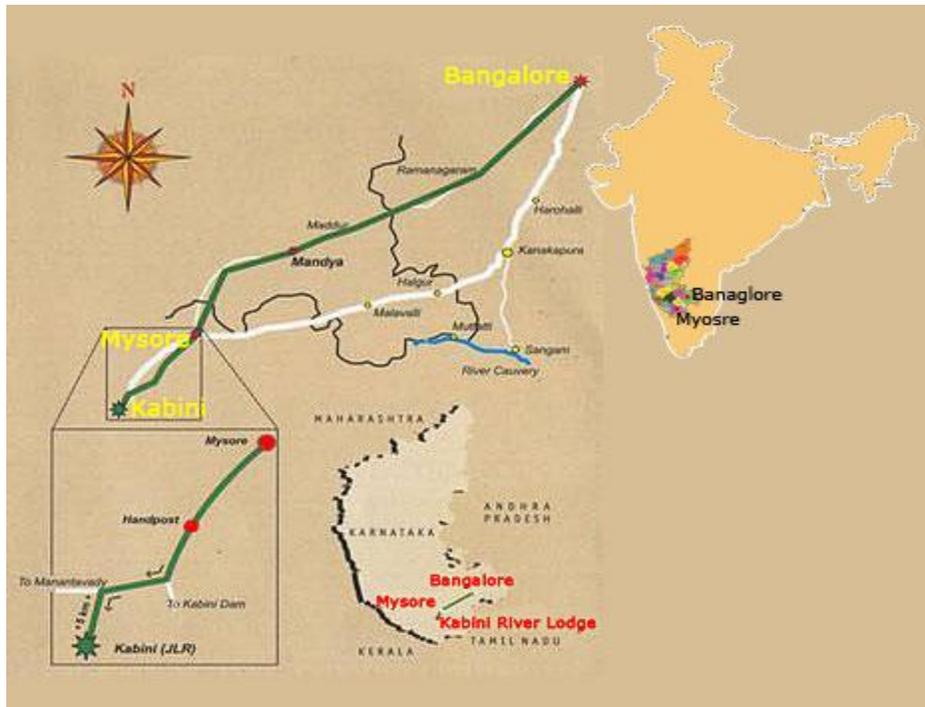


Figure 2: Country of Origin

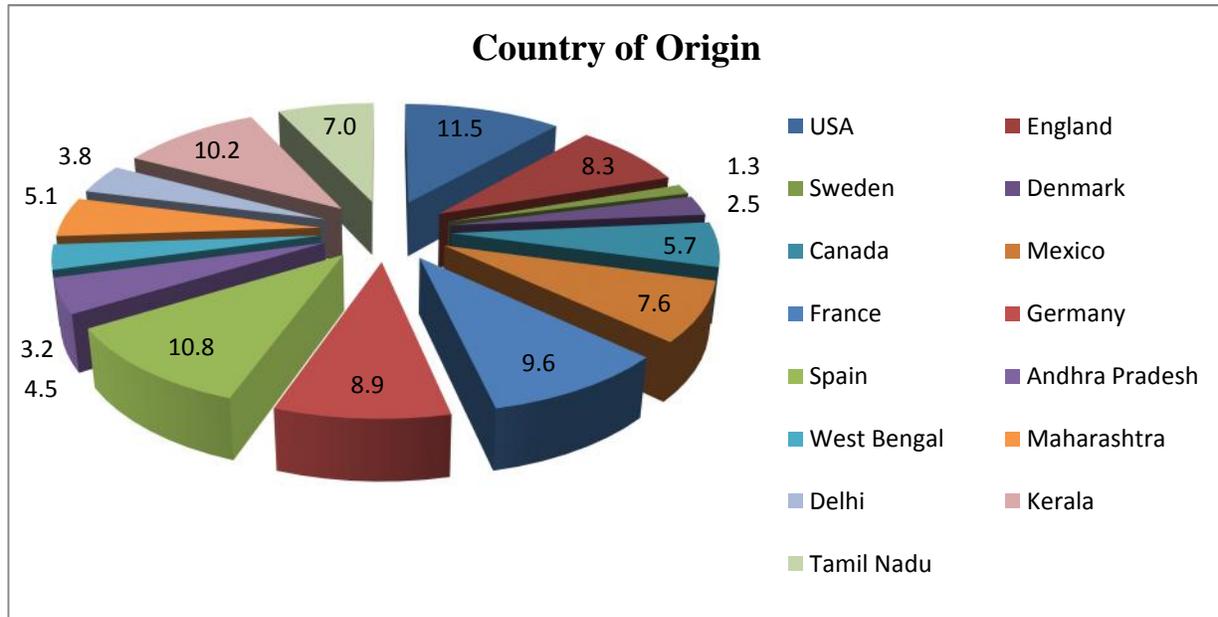


Table 1: Average length of stay at the ecolodge

Number of nights	Total	
	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	11	7.0
2	27	17.2
3	51	32.5
4	37	23.6
5	20	12.7
6	5	3.2
7	4	2.5
8	2	1.3
Total	157	100.0

Table 2: Travel Companion

Travel Companion	Total	
	Frequency	Percent (%)
Alone	12	7.6
Spouse	51	32.5
Family	55	35.0
Friends	25	15.9
Organisational group	14	8.9
Total	157	100.0

Table 3: Major sources of information for both foreign ecotourists and domestic ecotourists

Major sources of information	Total			
	Foreign Ecotourists		Domestic Ecotourists	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Friends/Family	9	8.7	1	1.9
Visitor Information Centre	8	7.7	6	11.3
Travel agents	5	4.8	9	17.0
Guide Books	21	20.2	5	9.4
Television	3	2.9	14	30.2
Internet	29	27.9	10	18.9
Newspaper/Magazine Article	4	3.8	2	3.8
Brochure	10	17.3	5	9.4
People I have met while travelling	15	14.4	1	1.9
Total	104	100.0	53	100.0

Figure 3: Attributes considered when selecting an ecolodge

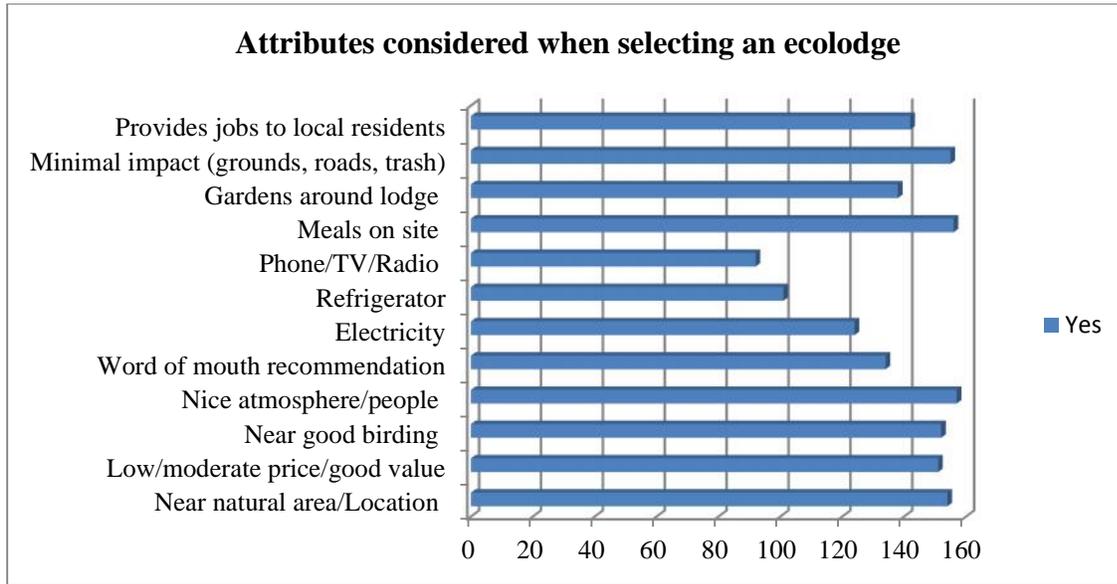


Table 4: Travel motivation attributes – Attraction motives

Attraction motives	Total	
	Mean	Standard Deviation
Nature appreciation and experience	3.53	0.76
Local culture and human experience	3.15	1.05
Feel at home away from home	3.20	0.82
Gain professional nature knowledge	2.95	0.82
See maximum in time available	2.95	0.95
Recreation and relaxation	2.94	0.81
Have fun and be entertained	3.27	0.88
Increase environment protection knowledge	2.88	0.83
Warm climate	3.09	0.94
Be physically active	3.12	0.92

Table 5: Travel motivation attributes – Social motives

Social motives	Total	
	Mean	Standard Deviation
Being together as a Family	2.50	0.76
Meet people with different traditions and customs	2.47	0.80
Experience the culture and cuisine	2.32	0.89

Table 6: Importance - performance rating of ecolodge attributes

Attributes	Importance Rating	Performance Rating	Gap
A variety of food selections	3.63	4.39	0.76
A variety of lodging styles	3.95	4.57	0.62
Authentic design, appropriate to setting	3.54	4.04	0.50
Availability of a particular habitat or species	3.39	4.14	0.75
Availability of horse-back riding facilities	3.32	3.91	0.69
Availability of onsite entertainment	3.22	3.93	0.71
Availability of research facilities	3.22	3.88	0.66
Availability of river trips (canoeing /boating/kayaking)	3.41	4.18	0.77
Availability of sales and rentals for recreational equipment	2.73	3.69	0.96
Availability of security personnel	3.86	4.50	0.64
Availability of trail hiking facilities	3.76	4.03	0.27
Availability of trees and wildflowers	4.27	4.38	0.11
Availability of wildlife	4.27	4.44	0.17
Benefit local communities through provision of jobs	3.65	4.51	0.86
Bird-watching facilities and tours	3.43	4.25	0.82
Business facilities and conference rooms	2.66	3.52	0.86
Cleanliness	4.43	4.67	0.24
Comfort of bed	3.91	4.09	0.18
Convenient location, easy accessibility	3.97	4.07	0.10
Decent sanitary condition	4.38	4.62	0.24
Design sensitive to natural and cultural environment with minimal negative impact	3.80	3.94	0.14
Dining and bar services	3.57	3.98	0.41
Efficient reservation	3.98	4.06	0.08
Friendliness of staff	4.42	4.91	0.49
Guided wildlife tours	3.88	4.32	0.44
Knowledgeable guides	3.36	3.69	0.33
Local food, produced with local ingredients	4.14	4.57	0.43
Meets its energy needs through renewable energy resources	3.85	4.28	0.43
Quality of the environment or landscape	4.38	4.62	0.24

Recycling of glass, paper and plastic	3.84	4.42	0.58
Scenery	4.50	4.81	0.31
Staff provide efficient services	4.33	4.72	0.39
Uses alternative, sustainable means of water acquisition and reduces water consumption	3.57	4.11	0.54
Value of money	4.48	4.50	0.02
Mean	3.85	4.30	0.45
