

Assessment of the quality of tourist destinations in The Nilgiris district based on tourist perception

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Abstract: Tourism industry is rapidly increasing and is fast becoming the driving force of many countries economic growth. Due to huge number of tourist arrival tourist destinations start lacking in quality, services and satisfaction. Nilgiris district which is experiencing mass tourism due to various factors is considered for my study. For measuring the quality and present condition of tourist destinations, an attempt has been done by 6A's of tourism based on tourist perception. It also compares the destinations in terms of individual quality aspects. This can give important understanding to the policy makers and officials into the push and pull components of the tourist destinations through which vital and strategy level interventions can be taken to improve the quality of destinations.

Keywords: Tourist destinations, Assessment of tourism services, Quality of tourist destinations.

I. INTRODUCTION

Study area Nilgiris district lies between 100 38' and 110 490'N latitude and 750 44' and 770 87' E longitude. As the climate is one of the major pulling factors of the Nilgiris, April, May and June are the hottest months with a variation of 10° C minimum and 25° C maximum temperature. December, January and February are the coolest months varying temperature as high as 20° C and as low as 0° C. Tourism is an important source of revenue for the Nilgiris district. The district is home to several beautiful tourist destinations for which it is a very famous hill station in South India. In Tamilnadu Nilgiris district comes 3rd in number of tourist arrivals. Nilgiris is renowned for its eucalyptus oil and tea, and also produces bauxite. Some tourists are attracted to study the lifestyles of the various tribes living here or to visit the sprawling tea and vegetable plantations(Tamilnadu tourism, n.d.)

The Nilgiris has more than 30 tourist places, which attract tourists from other parts of the state and country, of which the famous places are Botanical Garden, boat house, the Rose Garden and the Doddabetta peak in Udthagamandalam. Sim's park, Katherine falls, Pasture Institute, Dolphin's nose and Lamb's rock are the Important Tourist spots in Coonoor. In Kotagiri block Kodanad view point, Nehru Park and St. Catherine's falls are main tourist attractions. In Gudalur block the main tourist attraction in Mudumalai wild Life Sanctuary and Natural forest wealth are the key factors for the beauty of the district. In Udthagamandalam, tourism industry is growing exponentially. In this town a tremendous growth in the tourist arrival and overall tourist activity have taken place.

Due to exponentially growth in tourism the Nilgiris district start getting affected in terms of natural scenic beauty because of manmade interventions eg. Construction, Pollution etc. considering Nilgiris district important in terms of tourism this study seeks to identify the quality of tourist destination or the present condition of tourist destinations. It is important to maintain the tourist destination in terms of all the facilities etc. for that first step is to understand the present condition of the tourist destinations.

For the study 6A's of tourism has been selected for assessing the present condition of tourist destinations with the tourist perception or expectations of tourist. In 6A's of tourism indicators are attractiveness, accessibility, amenities, alertness, accord and attendance. These all indicators can be measured with many method. Some research have been done on the basis of attribute table and survey to identify the attractiveness of tourist destination in terms of attractiveness(Gearing, 1974)). Here in my study we have selected few indicators which will measure the attractiveness of the tourist destinations on the scale of 5.

“In tourism, accessibility is a function of distance from centre part of town where tourist resides and market use to there, which enables tourist destination should be reached properly(Medlik, 2003). Which is most important is term of reach to the destinations. So all the tourist destination should having good accessibility. Here in study few detailed indicators has been taken to understand the accessibility condition of each sit with tourist point of view. For successful tourism development, the need for more intensive investment in modernization of infrastructure is increasingly

appearing as a necessary condition.(JOVANOVIC, 2016). Before investing or setting up the infrastructure there is the need to assessing the present condition of the amenities and infrastructure each destinations. Studies also shown that for better tourism there is others factors too which are important security , safety and other social needs(Masoud Pourkiyani, 2015). Those indicators also included in study named as alertness, accord and attendance.

II. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

The objective of this study is to assess the quality of tourist destinations in Nilgiris district based on tourist perception.

III. TOURIST DESTINATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

There are more than 30 tourist destinations in the Nilgiris district, which attract tourists from different parts of the state and country. Map showing the total number of tourist arrivals at each destination in 2016.

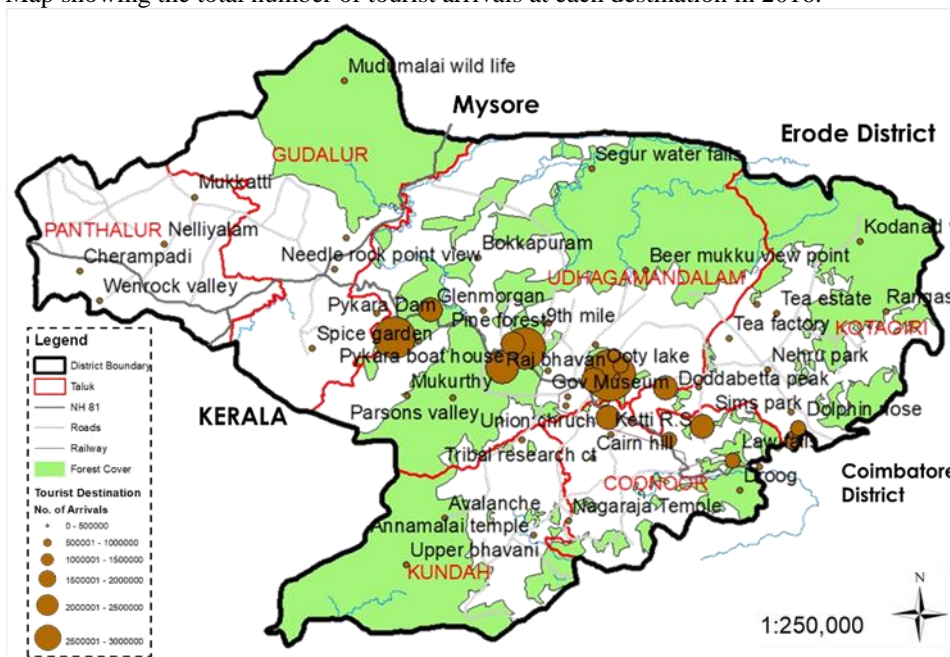


Figure 1: Number of tourist arrival to each destination in 2016

Based on the number of annual tourist arrivals of 2016, we have selected the few important tourist destinations for assessing the quality and present conditions of tourist destinations. Selected destinations are:

- Botanical Garden
- Ooty Lake and Boat House
- Rose Garden
- Doddabetta Peak
- Pykara Water Fall and Dam
- Ketti Valley View
- Sim's Park
- Mudumali Wildlife Sanctuary
- Avalanche Lake, Dam and Valley
- Kodanad View Point

IV. PARAMETER SELECTED FOR ASSESSMENT OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Tourism analysis is done on the basis of 6 indicators namely Attractiveness, Accessibility, Amenities, Attendance, Accord and Alertness. For each indicator different variables are selected to assess the present condition of destination according to tourist perception.

1) ATTRACTIVENESS :

Attractiveness or attraction is a quality that causes an interest or desire to visit the destination.

- **Exposure to nature:** How much tourists are exposed to perceive nature?

- **Cultural heritage:** Cultural heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values. (Europe, 2015). Cultural heritage is often expressed as either intangible or tangible cultural heritage. This indicator questions tourists on how much they can identify the spot as cultural heritage site.
- **Built heritage:** Built heritage is the unique and irreplaceable architecture with historic background that merits preservation for future generations. In broadest sense, built heritage does refer not only to ancient history, but also to modern period. According to the indicator tourist perception on the place as built heritage is identified.
- **Experience with nature and wilderness:** This indicator is about tourists experience in most intact, undisturbed wild natural areas in those last truly wild places that humans do not control and have not developed with roads, pipelines or other industrial infrastructure (Union, 2013)
- **Adventure element:** This indicator gives information on how much tourists are considering the tourist spot with regard to experiencing an unusual, exciting and daring experience.
- **Fare of tourist spot:** The money paid for visiting and experiencing the spot.
- **Leisure and recreational activities:** It talk about how are the activities which are done for enjoyment, amusement, or pleasure at the spot according to tourists.

2) ACCESSIBILITY:

It is one of the most important factor in tourism. There should be proper accessibility to each tourism destination. If there is no accessibility to a destination then it is presumed as of less importance or reaching to destination is difficult. Indicators of Accessibility are as follows.

- **Local engaged in transport:** It is about degree of involvement of local communities in transport sector in terms of income generation as direct employment or indirect benefits. For example locals involved as drivers, cleaners, mechanics, travel managers etc.
- **Public transport availability:** Availability of public transport to each spot.
- **Traveller comfort:** A state of physical ease during journey according to the tourists.
- **Travel cost:** The perception of tourists on money paid for using the mode to travel to tourist spot.
- **Information about reaching:** Tourist awareness on how to reach the spot, which mode they should use.
- **Information signage:** Availability of Signage at destination.
- **Frequency of public transport:** No. of different public transport arriving or departing from a spot in a particular time period.
- **Pedestrian Comfort:** Perception of tourist on using walkways in the spot or to and fro the spot.
- **Distance from railway station:** Distance of the tourist spot from railway station. It is given 5 rating by tourist if it is less than 1 Km distance and 4 for 1Km to 2Km, 3 for 3Km to 5Km, 2 For 5Km to 10Km and 1 for more than 10 Km.
- **Distance from bus station:** Distance of the tourist spot from bus station. It is given 5 rating if it is less than 1 km distance and 4 for 1km to 2km, 3 for 3km to 5km, 2 for 5km to 10km and 1 for more than 1km.

3) AMENITIES:

Facilities or features of the tourist spot which are desirable or useful future for tourists. The indicators for estimating amenities at each spot are as follows.

- **Availability of local products:** Different kind of local handmade products are famous in ooty. These products attract tourist. The tourist perception on availability of these products for sale have to be analysed under this indicator.
- **Recreation and landscaping:** Under this indicator the perception of tourist on landscaping at the tourist spot is measure.
- **Banks/ATMs:** The rating of this indicator is given by the proximity of banks and ATMs at the tourist spot.
- **Convenience in shopping:** The tourism products use to sell at tourist spots. The tourists are asked their perception on how much they are at ease to shop at various location.
- **Health care:** Proximity of health care facility from spot.
- **Drinking Water facilities:** Water quality and availably according to the tourist.
- **Sanitation facilities:** The availability of toilets and the maintenance at each tourist spot.
- **Restaurants availability:** The proximity for a place where people pay to sit and eat food that are cooked and served at the same place and quality of that food according to the tourists.

4) ATTENDENCE:

Number of people willing to visit the place i.e. the tourist destination. It depends on the following indicators.

- **Willingness to visit again:** It depends on the tourist willingness to visit the place again, it also depends on the other components of tourism.
- **Number of tourist:** How many people are coming to each site.
- **Time spent:** Number of days/hours spent by tourists at the spot.

5) ACCORD:

The degree of harmony of tourist with tourist environment. The indicators for this variables are as follows:

- **Friendliness of local people:** Companiability or sociability of local people with the tourist. It can be in terms of experience of local culture or local food.
- **Ambience:** The character and atmosphere of the place according to the tourists.
- **Uniqueness:** The individuality of the tourist spot according to the perception of the tourists.
- **Knowledge gained:** Facts, information and skill acquired from each spot to the tourist.

6) ALERTNESS:

The tourist condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk, or injury at the destination. The measure of alertness at each spot is by following indicators:

- **Safety of belongings:** Level of protection to the luggage of tourists.
- **Personal safety:** It refers to the freedom from physical harm and threat of physical harm and freedom from hostility, aggression, harassment and devaluation by anything to the tourist. The safety includes worry about victimized as well as actual incident.
- **Disaster safety:** Protection from any sudden ecological phenomenon which causes damage ecological disruption, loss of human life, deterioration of the health and health services.
- **Low crime rate:** It is measured in terms of tourist and perception survey.

V. METHODOLOGY

The method adopted in this study is termed as both quantitative and qualitative. The perception survey was on 10 visitors at each of the selected tourist destinations. Visitors were asked to give rating on a scale of 5 where, 1 is termed as the lowest score and 5 is termed as highest and best score. Depending on the score obtained by each tourist destination, on the basis of tourist perception, graphical analysis was done for each tourist spot. The results in each aspects compared with respect to an average value of 2.5. From this we get an idea about the condition of tourist destinations in each and every aspects. The results give the distinctive report about each destination that, which aspect it is lacking in and which component of tourism need to be focused. This will also help to come up with certain strategies to improve the quality of the destinations.

VI. RESULTS OF PERCEPTION SURVEY

Table 1: Legend for each indicator

S.N	INDICATORS	VARIABLE
a	Attractiveness	Cultural Heritage value
b		Built heritage value
c		Exposure nature and wilderness
d		Adventure element
e		Fare of tourist spot
f		Onsite information
g		Leisure and recreational activity
h	Accessibility	Public Transport availability
i		Traveller comfort
j		Travel cost
k		Information Signages
l		Information about reaching
m		Frequency of public transport
n		Pedestrian Comfort
o		Distance from railway station
p		Distance from Bus station
q		Local engaged in transport
r	Amenities	Tourist information centre/Guides
s		Seating
t		Banks/ATMs
u		Convenience in shopping
v		Health care
w		Drinking Water facilities
x		Dustbins
y		Sanitation facilities
z		Restaurants availability
aa		Availability of local products
ab	Attendance	Street Lights
ac		Recreation and landscaping
ad		Willingness to visit again
ae	Accord	Number of tourist
af		Time spent
ag		Friendliness of local people
ah	Alertness	Ambience
ai		Uniqueness
aj		Knowledge gained
ak		Personal safety
al	Alertness	Safety of belongings
am		Safety of belongings
an		Disaster safety
ao	Low crime rate	

The result of the analysis are shown in the below graphs. Black line in each graph denotes the 2.5 out of 5 the average score. The indicator which are below the line or having score less than 2.5, need to be taken care.

1) Botanical garden

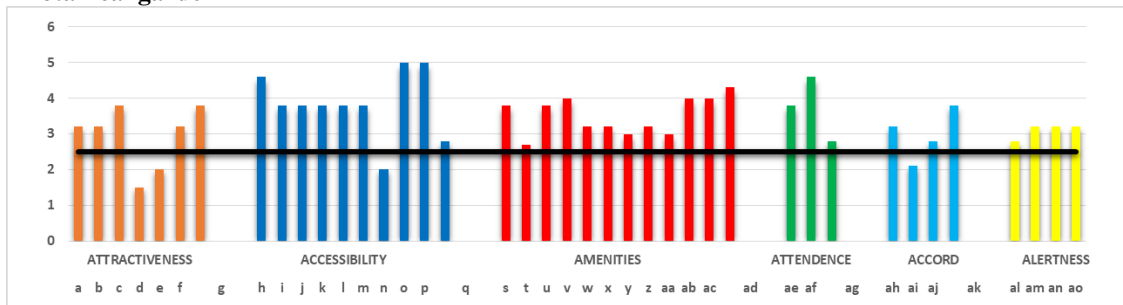


Figure 2: Assessment of indicator at Botanical garden

The tourist perception survey shows that the site is lacking in adventure element, pedestrian comfort and ambience. In alertness too botanical garden having score near to average scores.

2) Ooty Lake

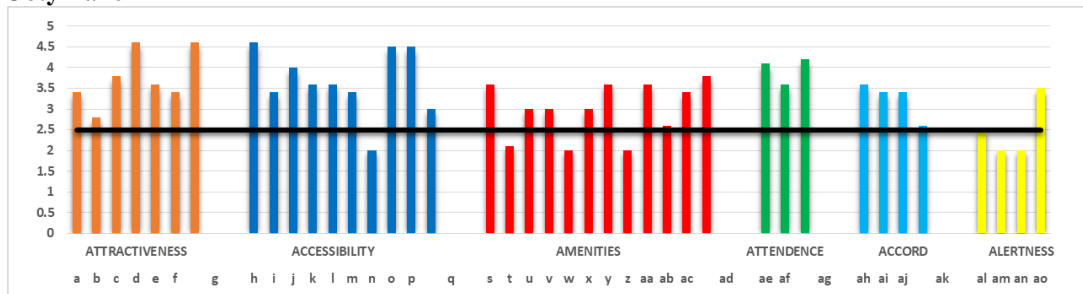


Figure 3: Assessment of indicator at Ooty Lake

According to tourist perception survey Site is lacking in safety parameters. Also site is lacking in few amenities eg. Seating, health care and sanitation facilities.

3) Rose Garden

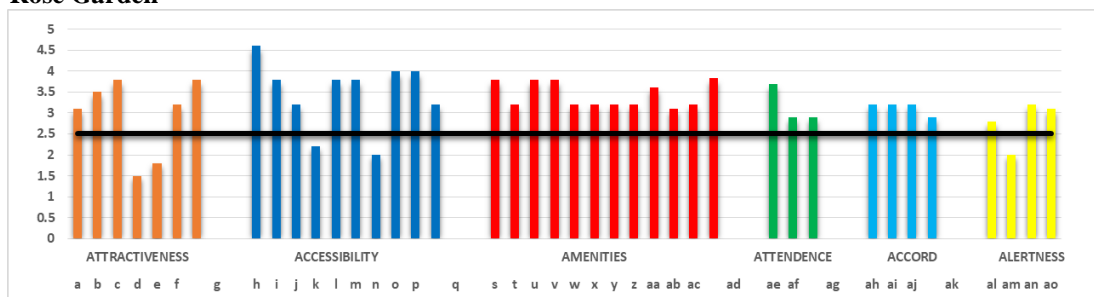


Figure 4: Assessment of indicator at Rose Garden

According to tourist perception survey Site is lacking in adventure element. Also fare of site visit is high according tourist. In accessibility site is lacking in information Signage's and pedestrian comfort.

4) Dobabetta Peak

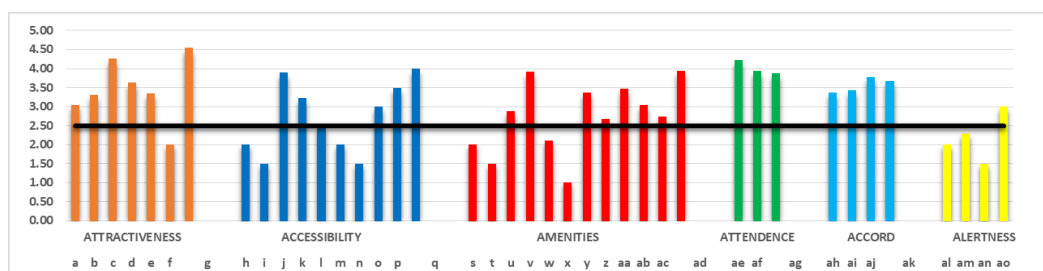


Figure 5: Assessment of indicator at Dobabetta peak

According to tourist perception survey Site is lacking in onsite information. In amenities too site is lacking in terms of water, seating and health care. Public transportation facility is not available for the site also travel and pedestrian comfort is lacking according to tourist. Site also having less score in alertness in terms of safety of belongings and disaster.

5) Pykara dam/Water Fall

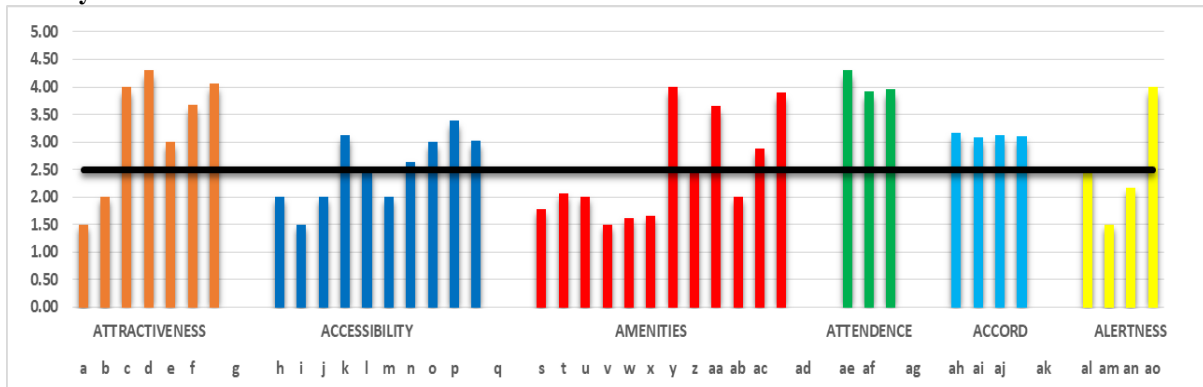


Figure 6: Assessment of indicator at Pykara

According to tourist perception survey Site is lacking in cultural and built heritage. Site is lack in amenities, alertness and accessibility still attendance at site having good score due having good adventure, recreational activities available to site.

6) Kethi Valley View

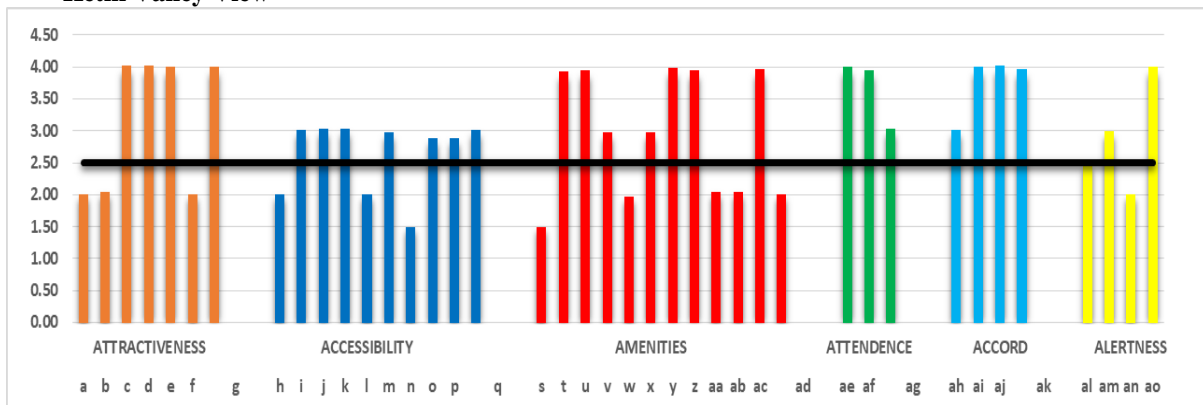


Figure 7: Assessment of indicator at Kethi valley view point

According to tourist perception survey Site does not give information to tourist what to see and also no proper public transportation is available. Also site is lacking in many amenities because spot is outskirts of the towns.

7) Sim's Park

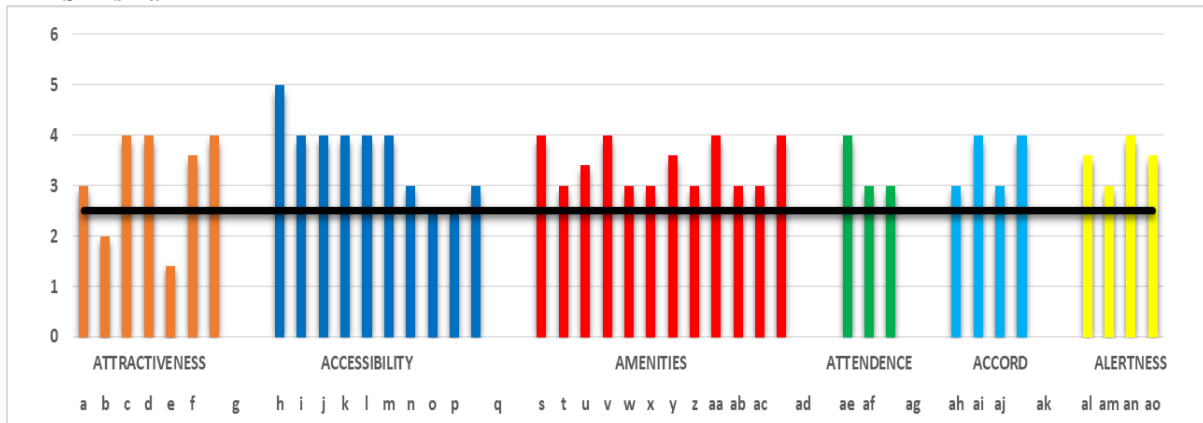


Figure 8: Assessment of indicator at Sim's Park

According to tourist perception survey Site fare for visiting is high so does attendance score not good of the site.

8) Mudumali Wildlife Sanctuary

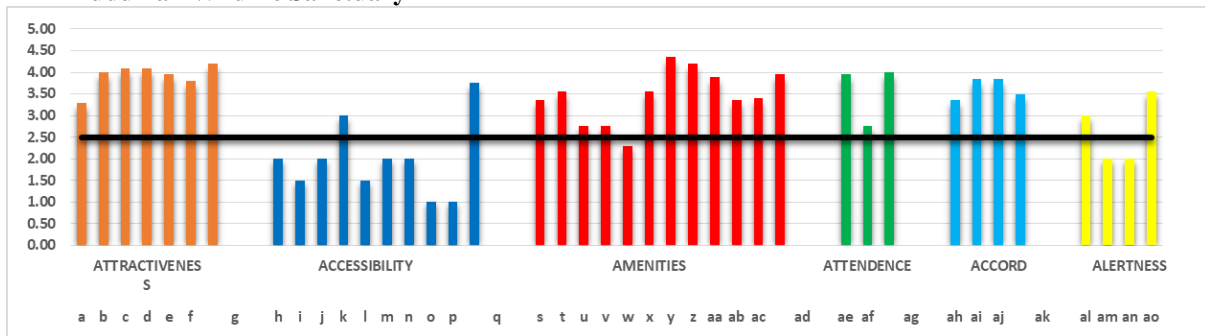


Figure 9: Assessment of indicator at Mudumali wildlife sanctuary

According to tourist perception survey Site is lacking almost all the accessibility indicators. Because Mudumali wildlife sanctuary is far from ooty town people are not able to reach due to lack of public transportation and other accessibility issues. Site also lacking in alertness indicators.

9) Avalanche

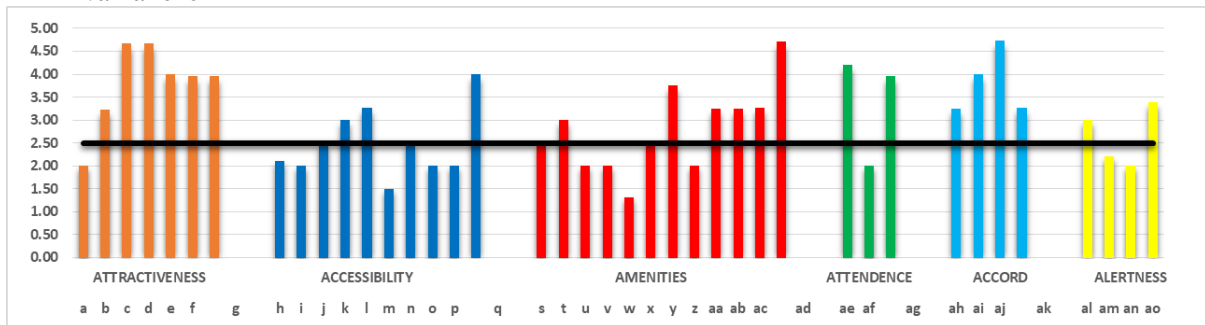


Figure 10: Assessment of indicator at Avalanche

According to tourist perception survey Site is lacking in accessibility and amenities scores. Public transportation is not available for the site due to which number of tourist visitors is also very less.

10) Kodanad View Point

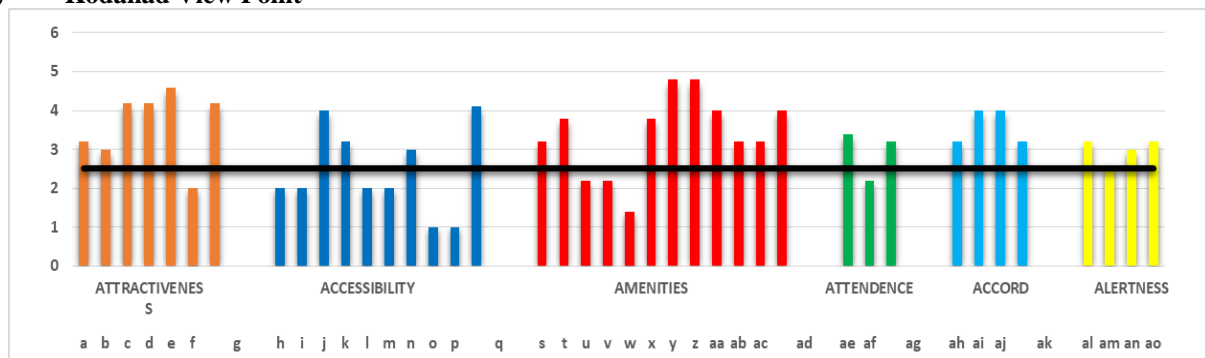


Figure 11: Assessment of indicator at Kodanad View point

According to tourist perception survey Site is lacking in accessibility and amenities scores. Kodanad view point is in Kotagiri taluk which is 35 km from ooty town due to lack in accessibility the attendance and accord scores is also low.

VII. SCORING OF DESTINATIONS ON SIX A'S OF TOURISM

According to scores obtained by each destination on the basis of Six A's indicators of tourism, the important destinations are ranked on the basis of each indicator. This gives an idea about which destination is lacking most in what aspects and helps to identify the highest and lowest ranked destinations on the basis of individual aspects.

Table 2: Ranking of indicator- Attractiveness

ATTRACTIVENESS	35	Ranking
Kodanad View Point	28.20	1
Mudumali Wildlife Sanctuary	27.15	2
Avalnanche	26.49	3
Ooty Lake	26.20	4
Dobabetta Peak	24.15	5
Pykara dam/Water Fall	22.53	6
Kethi Valley View	22.10	7
Sim's Park	22.00	8
Botanical garden	21.60	9
Rose Garden	20.70	10

Table 3: Ranking of indicator-Accessibility

ACCESSIBILITY	50	Ranking
Botanical garden	39.20	1
Ooty Lake	38.00	2
Sim's Park	36.00	3
Rose Garden	34.60	4
Mudumali Wildlife Sanctuary	27.25	5
Dobabetta Peak	27.12	6
Kethi Valley View	26.33	7
Kodanad View Point	25.20	8
Pykara dam/Water Fall	25.18	9
Avalnanche	24.86	10

Table 4: Ranking of indicator- Amenities

AMENITIES	60	Ranking
Botanical garden	41.40	1
Mudumali Wildlife Sanctuary	41.40	2
Rose Garden	41.14	3
Sim's Park	41.00	4
Kodanad View Point	40.60	5
Ooty Lake	39.60	6
Kethi Valley View	35.32	7
Avalnanche	33.55	8
Dobabetta Peak	32.64	9
Pykara dam/Water Fall	29.56	10

In Attractiveness, ecotourism sites, eg. Kodanad view point, Avalnanche having highest score. And gardens and park having least score.

In Accessibility botanical garden, Ooty Lake comes first because situated near to ooty bus stand. And Kodanad view point, Pykara and Avalnanche comes last because they are far from ooty as well as no proper transportation is available to these spot.

In Amenities botanical garden, Mudumali and rose garden having highest score. And places which are far from ooty town having least score due to lack in infrastructure.

Table 5: Ranking of indicator-Attendance

ATTENDANCE	15	Ranking
Pykara dam/Water Fall	12.18	1
Dobabetta Peak	12.03	2
Ooty Lake	11.40	3
Botanical garden	11.20	4
Kethi Valley View	10.98	5
Avalnanche	10.17	6
Mudumali Wildlife Sanctuary	10.05	7
Sim's Park	10.00	8
Rose Garden	9.50	9
Kodanad View Point	9.40	10

Table 6: Ranking of indicator- Accord

ACCORD	20	Ranking
Avalnanche	15.24	1
Kethi Valley View	15.01	2
Mudumali Wildlife Sanctuary	14.55	3
Kodanad View Point	14.40	4
Dobabetta Peak	14.25	5
Sim's Park	14.00	6
Botanical garden	13.00	7
Ooty Lake	13.00	8
Rose Garden	12.50	9
Pykara dam/Water Fall	12.47	10

Table 7: Ranking of indicator- Alertness

ALERTNESS	20	Ranking
Sim's Park	14.20	1
Kodanad View Point	12.60	2
Botanical garden	12.40	3
Kethi Valley View	11.50	4
Ooty Lake	11.40	5
Mudumali Wildlife Sanctuary	11.20	6
Rose Garden	11.10	7
Avalnanche	10.60	8
Pykara dam/Water Fall	10.16	9
Dobabetta Peak	8.80	10

In Attendance Ecotourism site eg. Pykara and Dobabetta peak having highest score. Place near to bus station attracting more number of tourist. Sim's park, rose garden and Kodanad point having lowest score.

In terms of friendliness and uniqueness avalnche and kethi view point comes first because of different kinds of tourism. and rose garden and pykara comes last.

In alertness or safety indicators eco-tourism sites eg. Avalnanche, Pykara and Dobabetta peak having lowest score.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The study results provides valuable information for stakeholders and policy makers of Nilgiris district as tourism is very important in Nilgiris district. Assessment of tourist destination according to tourist perception will directly depict the quality of tourist destinations from tourist perspective. The result also provide stakeholders understanding of strength and weaknesses of tourism at each assessed destinations and in each aspects. This can also give valuable insight to the policy makers and officials into the push and pull factors of the tourist destinations through which strategic and policy level interventions can be applied to improve the quality of destinations in different aspects. And which will ultimately help to generate economy.

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