

Chapter 16

The Sustainable Development of Mountain Tourism at the Hills of Munnar in the State of Kerala: A Destination Branding Perspective

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ABSTRACT

India has many mountain destinations to offer to the international mountain enthusiasts. However, these destinations are known to the outside world as holiday, leisure, and recreation destinations. But ample scopes are there to promote them and brand them as “mountain destinations.” The Munnar Hills located in the Idukki district of the state Kerala is one such destination which could be promoted as a mountain destination. The goal of this chapter is to examine and map the destination’s current resources in order to create a detailed plan for re-branding Munnar as a mountain destination. To obtain information on the expectations of millennial visitors and adventure seekers visiting Munnar Hills, surveys are administered to them regarding their expectations regarding their experiences at mountain destinations. A new product line has been developed based on the data acquired from them, keeping up with global trends in the mountain tourism industry. Input from policy makers, government representatives, and community leaders is being sought for the re-branding of Munnar as a mountain destination.

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 epidemic in late 2019 had a profound impact on how tourists perceive tourist spots all around the world. Travellers have to reconsider their vacation plans and preferences as a result of social segregation policies, lockdown, and international travel restrictions. Mountain locations became a distinctive niche in the tourism sector as a result of these changes. Mountain regions have grown in appeal

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as a result of their innate qualities that encourage social isolation. These areas are desirable during a pandemic because they include wide-open spaces, clean air, and the ability to participate in outdoor activities. Mountainous areas have enticed tourists looking to reduce their chance of contracting the illness.

The epidemic has made travel-related health and fitness more important. Mountains provide chances for physical activity, including hiking, skiing, and yoga retreats, which are in line with travellers' preferences for experiences that are wellness-focused. Popular metropolitan areas had trouble controlling crowds and avoiding social awkwardness. Mountain areas were better able to deploy safety measures and provide visitors a sense of security since they had lower population densities. In the post-pandemic era, it is anticipated that demand for mountain destinations would remain high. These places have attracted travellers' attention, and they may do so in the future for the reasons listed above. To keep up with this demand, destinations must adjust to shifting consumer demands and uphold a high level of hygienic practise.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mountain tourism has become increasingly popular in recent years as a result of its distinctive natural sceneries, leisure activities, and cultural attractions. An overview of the most important research findings and developments in the area of mountain tourism is the goal of this survey of the literature. We can learn a lot about the difficulties, effects, and sustainable growth of mountain tourism destinations by studying the existing literature.

"Introduction: Tourism in the Mountain Environments" provide an overview of the tourism industry in mountainous regions (Hall, C. M., and Weiler, B., 1992). The introduction by Hall and Weiler provides a foundational overview of the difficulties associated with mountain tourism while stressing its benefits and drawbacks. It paves the way for further in-depth discussions regarding eco-friendly tourist methods and efficient management plans for mountain destinations later on in the book.

Another work (Price, M. F., and Price, L. W. (2000) present a comprehensive exploration of the geographical aspects of mountain tourism, emphasizing its connection to place and space. They discuss strategies for destination development, marketing, and infrastructure planning of Mountain Destinations, with a focus on responsible and sustainable approaches.

(Mieczkowski, Z., 1995) discusses the concept of tourism climatology, which is the study of how climate and weather conditions influence tourism and recreation activities in Mountain areas. He emphasizes the importance of understanding climatic factors in destination planning and marketing at mountain destinations.

(Gössling, Scott, and Hall, 2013) pinpoints the urgency of addressing water-related issues in mountain destinations and the need for interdisciplinary research and collaboration between the tourism industry, water resource managers, and policymakers to develop sustainable solutions in such destinations. The authors examine how tourism activities in mountains interact with water, the environmental and socio-economic impacts of these interactions, and the challenges posed by managing this critical resource within the context of tourism development.

(Frey, N. M., & George, R., 2019) introduce the significance of mountain destinations in the global tourism industry and highlight the unique environmental and sociocultural attributes of these areas. They emphasize the need for sustainable tourism practices to protect these sensitive ecosystems and communities. They examine the strategies implemented in Jasper National Park, which is a popular mountain

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