Eco-Tourism Market at National Parks of Telangana State: Development of path model for Tourist Attraction

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ABSTRACT

Eco-tourism is one of the most attractive forms of tourism which includes travel to various naturally endowed areas such as national parks, forest reserves and sanctuaries. Past half decade, tourists rush was increasing at eco-tourist destination all over the country focal to the states Kerala and Madyapradesh. The present study investigates the major factors that pressure the tourist's attraction at eco-tourist destinations of Telangana state. The primary data has collected from 223 inbound tourists who visited the selected national parks. The opinion towards the dimensioned factors has been utilized for the execution of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and for the path model. The result of the study shows that, absolute fit indices have an acceptable fit to the sample data as well as the proposed model. This would be an aid to the states eco-tourism organizers (TSTDC) to have a focus on those factors while formulating the marketing strategy that helps the tourist attractions and to stimulate the local employment.

Key words: *Eco-tourism, Path model, Tourist satisfaction, Tourist attraction, marketing strategy.*

INTRODUCTION

Eco-tourism is one of the fast growing sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry in the worldwide (Bjork, 2000, Buckley, 2000). The Eco-tourism industry has seen massive growth since the early 1990's growing 20 percent to 34 percent per year (Steven William-2016). Polluted environment and busy life is becoming the major factors of the tourists to travel to the eco tourist destinations all over the world. Eco-friendly Travel survey-2018 noted that almost 73 percent of the tourists planned to make eco friendly travel choices. In view of accelerating ecotourism, the United Nation's declared the year 2002 as International year of Ecotourism. India with its highly diversified nature is one of the popular eco tourist destinations in the world (Swairik Das-2014). India has about 80 national parks, 441 sanctuaries and numerous Botanical and Zoological gardens. Ecotourism industry has been providing around 3.8 percent of direct and indirect employment opportunities in India. Both the Ministry of tourism and Ministry of Environment and Forest have responded to the development in the field of ecotourism with policy initiatives (Pradeep Kumar-2015). The Indian government sanctioned around Rs. 1719.11 crores in 2017-2018 for the development of eco tourist destinations in India. Eco tourism is developing by Indian tourism department as a new way to attract the tourists and stimulate the local economies through generating tour revenues. According to press information bureau of India dated on 31st July 2018, the Ministry of tourism recognized the eco-tourism as small scale industry and initiating the development of eco circuits under Swadesh Darshan Scheme.

Tourism Marketing

According to WTO "Tourism Marketing is a management philosophy that in the light of tourism demand makes it possible through research, forecasting and selection to place tourism products on the market most in line with the organization's purpose for the greatest benefit". Tourism marketing is a "continuous sequential process which the management plans, researches, implements, monitors and evaluates activities which have been designed for satisfying the needs and wants of the tourists and for fulfilling their organisational objects".

Eco-tourism

Eco-tourism is a sub category of sustainable tourism market. The eco-tourism is a 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people (The International Eco-tourism Society, 2010). Eco-tourism involves (Martha Honey-2009) travel to nature destinations, minimising negative environmental impact, Building environmental awareness, financial benefits and empowerments of local people.

Eco-tourism product/services

Tourism product can be defined as the sum of the physical and psychological satisfaction it provides to tourists during their travelling to the destination. The tourist product focuses on facilities and services designed to meet the needs of the tourist. The noted products or services available in eco-tourists destination includes Greenery and verities of plants and Eco-restaurant, Woody plants and tree shaping and basic infrastructure, Professionalism of employees, security, cleaning and parking facilities Pollutions free and fragrance environment.

Eco-tourism market in Telangana state

Telangana state has naturally endowed areas such as national parks, forest reserves and sanctuaries that provide ample scope for promoting ecotourism. Telangana state has 9 Wildlife sanctuaries, 3 National parks, 2 Zoological parks and 27292 square kilometer of forest area. Among the total forest area, only two spots of the area have been promoted as eco-tourists designation. It envisages that the eco-tourism of the states is still at a very nascent stage. Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation, water tourism market is in the top whereas the eco-tourism market is in bottom to generate the revenue. During the year 2017-18, the Central Government has sanctioned Rs. 91.62 Crore to develop the eco-tourists destinations in newly formed Telangana state. The state government initiated to develop the eco-tourism in Kawal, Kadem, Jannaram (Adilabad district) and Amrabad (Mahabubnagar) forest areas.

REVIEWS OF LITERATURE

Yasa Selman & Osman Uzun and Pinar Gultekin (*Turkey-2017*) the study focused on the local people participation in the development of Eco-tourism in Turkey using SEM model. The study concluded that it is possible to use SEM as a method for solving problems related to ecotourism management with local people. It will also be possible to obtain guidance on how the ecotourism sector should develop with different stakeholders in different land use policies and how it is likely to develop in future years. The authors used five dimensions like 'ecotourism activities, ecotourism resources and ecotourism development and management strategies'.

N Kencana and T Manutami (*Indonesia-2017*) the study was directed to observe the effect of local community participation and visitor's satisfaction on ecotourism in Indonesia using Structural Equation Model (SEM). The author explained the relationship between community participation, ecotourism sustainability, tourist satisfaction and the economic benefits of the local peoples. The sustainability of the ecotourism was significantly affected by local community participation and tourist's attraction is the ultimate factor to keep ecotourism in Indonesia.

Ven S (Japan-2015) the study focused on understanding of the host resident's attitude towards tourism development, especially Community Based Eco-tourism (CBET) by Chambok's model of SEM. The study concluded that in addition to the determinants of resident's attitude to tourism found by earlier studies such as community attachment, community concern, etc.; natural resource dependency, and socio-economic status also influence resident's attitudes towards CBET. The study suggested that residents perceived impacts of CBET on livelihood assets and outcomes are likely to affect support for CBET.

Subchat Untachai (*Thailand-2015*) the author has tried to develop and empirically test the residents' perception with the ecotourism model in the upper northeast of Thailand. The study concluded that the Residents' perceived ecotourism model direct causal influences on perception of costs of ecotourism, benefits of tourism, use of the ecotourism resource, state of the local economy, and eco-centric attitudes. The author suggested that ecotourism managers have to find out which of the many extrinsic and intrinsic cues residents use to signal ecotourism development.

Zhang Jie and Yang (*China-2015*) the authors focused on tourist's environmental attitude and behavior intention using SEM model. The study concluded that the tourists have

direct and positive influence on environmental behavior intention, the government and tourism administration can improve environmental protection by enhancing the affection of tourists to the natural environment. It is also suggest that there is a strong association between environmental knowledge and behavior intention so that there is a necessary to instill environmental knowledge to tourists through various channels.

Yusof and F Rahman (*Malaysia-2014*) the study focused on tourist's perspectives of service quality in ecotourism destinations in Malaysia. The observed dimensions were tangible sustainability, sustainable practice, tangibility, reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness. The authors concluded that when SERVQUAL is applied within the ecotourism context, new dimensions of tangible sustainability and sustainable practice may emerge.

Prasert Chaitip and Chukiat Chaiboonsri, (*Hungary- 2014*) the authors applied SEM to test the casual relationships between tourists arrival motivation and tourist destinations in Greece. The study concluded that the travel cost satisfaction has a positive influence on tourism products as well as on tourism products attributes, and has a positive influence on tourism product management. It is also concluded that tourist's demographics has a positive influence on tourism products.

Markovic and Raspor (*Croatia-2014*) the author tried to test the service quality measurements in wellness tourism. The study concluded that the service quality in wellness settings depends on both tangible and intangible attributes that are part of the overall wellness experience. The main dimensions concerning customers expectations are 'staff quality and service reliability', 'empathy and assurance' and appearance of facilities and staff.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Eco-tourism is one of the most attractive forms of tourism which includes the travel to various naturally endowed areas such as national parks, forest reserves and sanctuaries. Past half decade, tourist's rush was increasing at eco-tourist destinations all over the India like Kerala, Madyapradesh, etc. whereas the eco-tourism market is not as popular as other states in Telangana state though allocating huge funds Rs. 91.62 in 2017-2018 by Government of India to develop the eco-destinations and tourists attraction. According to TSTDC reports, eco-tourism market is in bottom to generate the revenue. Therefore, there is a high need to investigate the major factors that pressure the tourist's attraction at eco-tourist destinations. This would be an aid to the Telangana Government to formulate marketing strategy that helpful to attract the eco-tourists and stimulate the local economies through generating employment.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study is restricted to investigate the factors that pressure the tourists towards eco tourism by using Structural equation model (SEM). Although varieties of eco-tourist destination exist, the study has selected samples only from the National Parks.

METHODOLOGY AND MEASUREMENT

The present study identified three dimensions with sub-variables (see Table 1) which were closely related to measure the eco-tourists satisfaction and attraction. Those three

dimensions were Tangible Factors (TF), Intangible Factors (ITF) and Value Added Factors (VAF) which lead the Tourist Attraction (TA) and the Tourist's Satisfaction (TS).

Table 1: Major Factors Analyzed for the tourists' attraction in Eco-Tourism Area

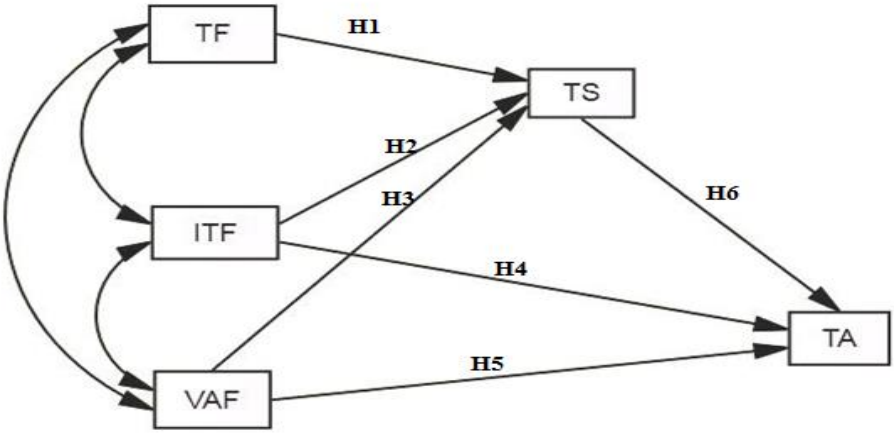
Major Factor	Sub-variable
Tangible Factors (TF)	*TF1*. Greenery and verities of plants are very important.
	TF2. Eco-restaurant is important at eco-destinations
	TF3. Entry fee is considerable factor
	TF5. Basic infrastructure is necessary
	TF11. Woody plants and tree shaping creates interest
Intangible Factors (ITF)	*ITF1*. Professionalism of employee is important
	ITF2. Parking facilities are important
	ITF3. Cleaning and security is important
	ITF4. Pollutions free and fragrance environment
Value Added Factors (VAF)	*VAF1*. Provide Children's play ground with equipment
	VAF2. Provide Booting facility more happy
	VAF3. Provide indoor games
	VAF4. Conduct Entertainment activities
	VAF5. Provide Shopping facility
Tourist Satisfaction (TS)	*TS1*. Greenery and verities of plants is interesting
	TS2. I am happy with the Eco-restaurant at this place
	TS3. I am happy with Basic infrastructure is necessary
	TS4. Professionalism of employee is good
	TS5. Woody plants and tree shaping is good
Tourist Attraction (TA)	*TA1*. I would like to come to this eco-place next time
	TA2. I would like to recommend this destination
	TA3. I encourage my friends to see this place
	TA4. I enjoyed the nature

Source: Primary data collected by questionnaire.

The proposed model of the research frame wok is shown in Figure 1. This framework shows the hypothesized relation between identified dimensions. Based on the proposed research model, this research work attempts to find the answer to the following questions. Based on these questions the hypothesis of this study was framed.

1. What is the impact of Tangible factors (TF), Intangible factors (ITF), Value Added factors (VAF) on Tourist's satisfaction (TS)?
2. What is the impact of Tourists satisfaction (TS) on Tourists Attraction (TA)/Service quality?

Fig1: Proposed Research Model



Hypothesis framed for the model execution

1. H_1: Tangible factors have a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.
2. H_2: Intangible factors have a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.
3. H_3: Value added factors have a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.
4. H_4: Intangible factors have a positive impact on tourist attraction.
5. H_5: Value added factors have a positive impact on tourist attraction.
6. H_6: Tourists satisfaction factors have positive impact on tourist attraction.

The study used the primary data and it has collected from the inbound tourists who visited the Harini Vanastali National Park and Mrugavani National Green Park (Ticketed) in Hyderabad City using a self administered questionnaire. The study adopted the simple random sampling technique to select the simple and the total sample size is **223** respondents estimated through Robert V Krejcie and D W Morgan formula. The most suitable test for examining the reliability and consistency is Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient and item to total correlation. The reliability test result of the instrument at the pilot study stage of this study secure Cronbach alpha value as 0.725 with 25 items which indicates acceptable reliability and consistency as it is above the threshold value of 0.60 (Nunnally, 1978).

CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Confirmatory factor analysis by means of liner structural equation model (SEM) was utilized to examine the factors structure of the questionnaire as it is suggested by Vander Doef & Maes (1999). The main point in using SEM is to find out the extent to which the model is 'fit' or effectively represents the sample data (Byrne, 2000). Confirmatory analysis for the evaluation of validity of the survey instruments was analyzed with the help of AMOS package. The model fit indices results and suggested values are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Model Fit Indices of the Factors

Fit Indies	Results of Factors Considered					Suggested value
	TF	ITF	VAF	TS	TA	
P	0.340	0.115	0.717	0.208	0.017	'P' value>0.05
Chi-square (CMIN)/DF	1.130	2.165	0.525	1.517	4.066	≤5.00 (Hair *et. al.*1998)
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.996	0.993	1.000	0.996	0.992	>0.90 (Hair *et. al.*2006)
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	0.991	0.915	1.031	0.981	0.980	≥0.90 (Hair *et. al.*1998)
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.996	0.935	1.000	0.994	0.993	>0.90 (Hu & Bentler 1999)
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.016	0.062	0.000	0.032	0.078	<0.08 (Hair *et. al.*2006)
Nor mated Fit Index (NFI)	0.970	0.901	0.987	0.984	0.991	>0.90 (Hu & Bentler 1999)
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.996	0.994	1.021	0.994	0.980	≥0.90 (Bagozzi & Yi 1988)
Variables before CFA	5	4	5	7	4	
Variables after CFA	5	4	5	5	4	

Source: primary data collected by questionnaire.

AMOS software was used to perform the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on all the measuring factors that were already confirmed with the sub variables (see Table 2). The CFA executed with the help of AMOS package is exhibited in the Figures 2,3,4,5 and 6 respectively. The measurement model of this CFA was assessed based on the fit measures recommended by different scholars (Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2011). According to the scholars recommendations the Chi-square value (CMIN/DF) should be less than 5.0 and the study results for all major factors were within maximum point 5.0 (see Table 2), the measurement model is attested to be fit. Moreover, RMSEA values of all Individual Factor were more than the standardized value 0.08 which is also indicates a good fit of the measurement model.

Figure: 2 Confirmatory Analyses for Tangible Factors

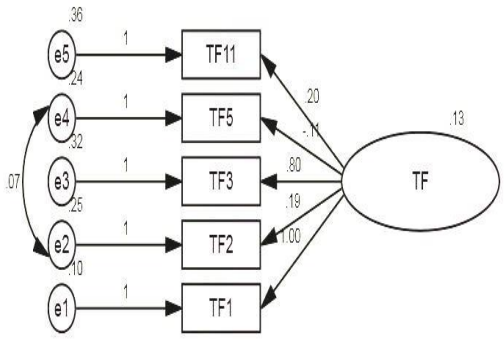


Figure: 3 Confirmatory Analyses for Intangible Factors

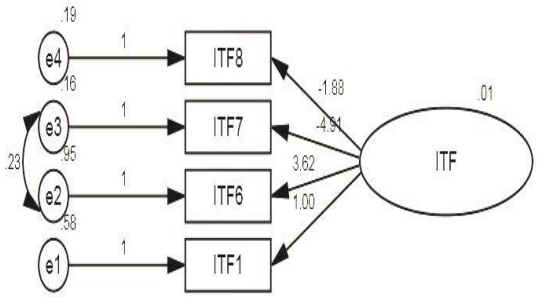


Figure: 4 Confirmatory Analyses for Value Added Factors

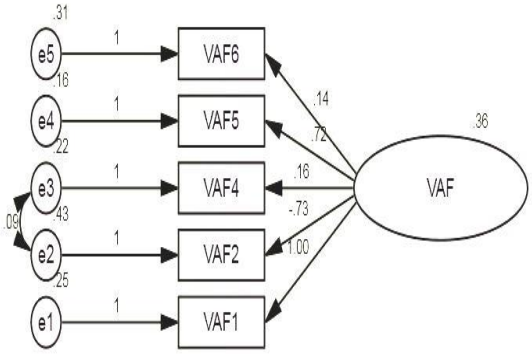


Figure: 5 Confirmatory Analyses for Tourist Satisfaction

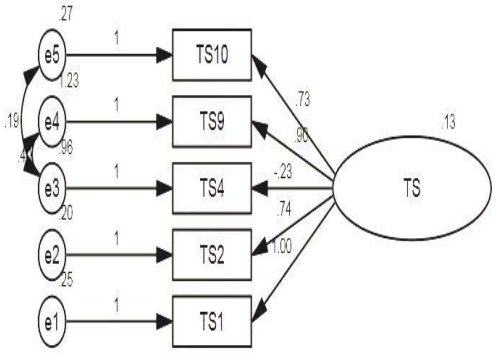
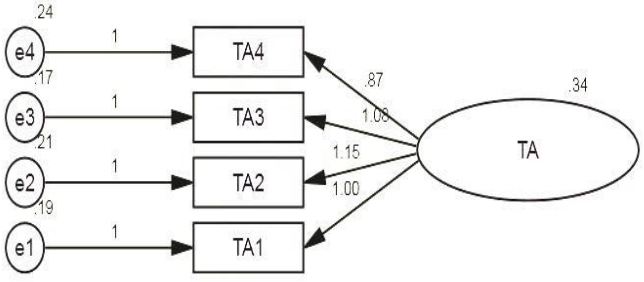


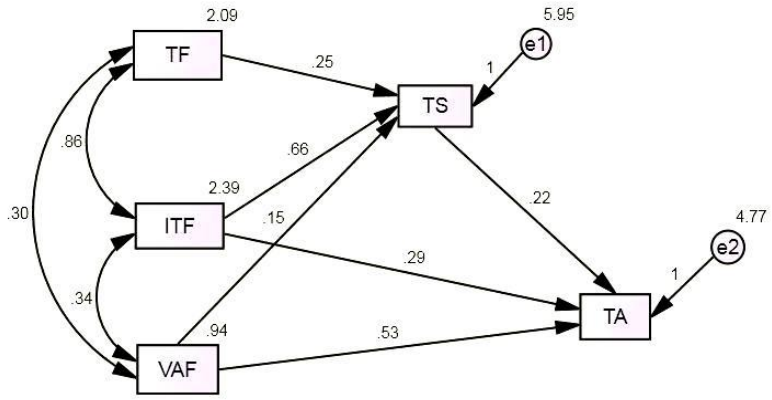
Fig: 6 Confirmatory Analyses for Tourist Attraction



STRUCTURAL PATH MODEL ESTIMATIONFOR ECO-TOURIST ATTRACTION

Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the suitability of the proposed model with the help of the collected data. This SEM estimates evaluate whether the data fit the theoretical model. The structural equation model (SEM) was analyzed by Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) as it is recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). The structural equation model is most useful when assessing the casual relationship between variables as well as verifying the compatibility of the model used (peter, 2011). In this study, after developing the first order CFA and its validation, the structural path model was developed to estimate the structural relationship between the factors. The structural path model verified with the help of AMOS is shown in Figure 7 and its estimates are exhibited in Table 3. The structural path model was assessed based on the following indices: the chi-square test, the comparative fit index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Normated Fit Index (NFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker Lewis index (TLI), Root mean square residual (RMR), and the Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) as per the suggestions of many scholars (Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2011). In addition, the path coefficients were also assessed both for statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) and practical significance ($\beta > 0.20$).

Fig: 7 Structural Frameworks for Path Analysis



Source: primary data collected by questionnaire

The results of this structural model yielded acceptably high goodness-of-fit indices. This indicated that the hypothesized model fits the observed data well. According to the result derived, a Chi square statistic with the p value of 0.172 indicates that this model is under the goodness of fit since the p value is greater than 0.05. The Normed chi-square value (CMIN/DF) for the current hypothesized model was 1.868, which is well below the value of 5.0 as it is suggested by Hair et al., 1998. As stated by Gerbing and Anderson (1992), in order accept a model the value of RMSEA should be 0.8 or lower, the value of CFI should be 0.9 or higher and the value, NFI should be 0.9 or higher. The fit between the data and the proposed measurement model would be tested by Goodness of fit Index (GFI) estimation, if the probability value is greater than or equal to 0.9 the model is a good fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999). In this research, the estimation of GFI was more than 0.9 i.e. 0.999 and the other values CFI, AGFI, NFI, TLI, IFI are also more than the recommended value i.e. 0.9 (see Table 4). And the value of RMSEA, RMR also falls within the recommended value i.e. <0.08

(see table 4). The value of IFI and NFI with the chi square / degree of freedom less than 5 at 0.172 and RMSEA of 0.045 indicates a good absolute fit of the mode1.

Table 3: Estimates of Structural Path

Impact			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
TS	<---	TF	.246	.083	2.971	.003	Positive Impact
TS	<---	ITF	.665	.078	8.574	***	Positive Impact
TS	<---	VAF	.153	.117	1.312	.189	No impact
TA	<---	TS	.225	.040	5.656	***	Positive Impact
TA	<---	VAF	.527	.104	5.089	***	Positive Impact
TA	<---	ITF	.286	.071	4.008	***	Positive Impact

Source: primary data collected by questionnaire

Table 4: Structural Path Model Fit Indices

Fit Indices	**Results**	**Suggested value**
P value	0.172	'P' value>0.05
Chi squarer(CMIN)/DF	1.868	≤ 5.00 (Hair *et. al.*1998)
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.997	> 0.90 (Hu & Bentler 1999)
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.999	> 0.90 (Hair *et. al.*2006)
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index(AGFI)	0.978	>0.90 (Daire *et. al.* 2008)
Normated Fit Index (NFI)	0.995	>0.90 (Hu & Bentler 1999)
Incremental Fit Index(IFI)	0.998	≥0. 90 (Bagozzi & Yi 1988)
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	0.975	≥ 0.90 (Hair *et. al.*1998)
Root mean square error of approximation (RMESA)	0.042	< 0.08 (Hair *et. al.*2006)

Source: primary data collected by questionnaire

The above hypothesized path model shows a significant result among identified dimensions, except intangible factors to tourists satisfaction, The estimates and p values are shown in Table 3. Tangible factors to tourist satisfaction, intangible factors to tourist satisfaction and tourist satisfaction to tourist attraction were resulted in a positive direction and they were statistically significant, which confirmed the positive impact on tourist attraction. It is also observed that impact of intangible factors to tourist attraction and value added factors to tourist's attraction shown in positive direction. An interesting identification of this study is there is no impact of value added factors on tourist's satisfaction.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Eco-tourism is one of the most attractive forms of tourism which includes the travel to various naturally endowed areas and for the past half decade, tourists rush was increasing at eco-tourist destination all over the country due to polluted environment, busy life, etc. The eco-tourism market is not as popular as other states in Telangana state though allocating huge funds i.e. Rs. 91.62 in 2017-2018 by GOI to develop the Eco-destinations and tourists attraction. According to TSTDC reports, eco-tourism market is in bottom to generate the revenue. The present study is aimed at investigate the major factors that pressure the tourist's attraction at eco-tourist destinations. The findings, conclusions and suggestions of the present study were shown in below.

Finding	Conclusion	Suggestion
The study found that the tangible factors have a positive impact on tourist's satisfaction. (*'p' value is 0.03 which is less than 0.05*)	It is concluded that entry fee, greenery and verities of plants, basic infrastructure, woody plants and eco-restaurants were the considerable factors to satisfy the tourists. Because, they are the basic essentials.	Therefore, it is suggested that the tourism organizers has to give the priority to the tangible factors in their service and according to that the need to formulate marketing strategy. Likewise, the GOI has to allocate more funds on the establishment of tangible factors as a part of eco tourism development.
The study found that the intangible factors have a positive impact on tourist satisfaction. (*'p' value is 0.00 which is less than 0.05*)	It is concluded that employee behavior, parking facilities, cleaning, security and pollution free and fragrance environment were the significant factors to satisfy the tourists. Because, they are the basic essentials.	Therefore, it is suggested that the tourism organizers has to give the top priority to the intangible factors in their services and according to that they need to formulate the marketing strategy. Likewise, the GOI has to allocate more funds on the establishment of intangible factors as a part of eco tourism development.

The study found that the value added factors have no impact on tourist satisfaction.(*'p' value is 0.189 which is more than 0.05*)	It is concluded that the equipments for children's play, booting, indoor games shopping and entertainment activities were not the significant factors to satisfy the tourists. It indicates that the eco-tourist needs basic services in eco tourist destinations.	Therefore, it is suggested that the tourism organizers no need to give the priority to the intangible factors in their service. In the same way, the GOI also no need to allocate the funds on the establishment of value added factors as a part of eco tourism development.
It is also found that the tourist's satisfaction have a positive impact on tourist attraction.(*'p' value is 0.00 which is less than 0.05*)	As per the study, tangible and intangible factors have the impact on tourist's satisfaction whereas the value added factors (VAF) were not significant. It indicates; tourism organizations can attract the tourist's to visit the eco-destination by making them satisfy.	Therefore, it is suggested that the tourism organizers/TSTDC have to focus on tourist satisfaction to attract them and TSTDC can also adopt this model to formulate the marketing strategy to attract the tourists according.

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