

Rebuilding Tourist Destinations from Disaster – A Study at Coorg in Karnataka

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Abstract:

This paper discusses about the post disaster rebuilding and development of a tourist destination in order to attract tourists to visit the destinations again. The paper outlines the impact of natural disasters that can cause to a tourist destination in numerous ways. The loss of resources, attractions, along with the negative image in the media can lead to distraction of tourists to other destinations offering similar activities and resources. The aim of the paper is to provide suggestions for tourism disaster management and to rebuild tourist destinations post disaster. The paper concludes that lack of proper disaster management as a matter of fact that tourism stakeholders are not well sensitized and equipped to handle such natural calamities and address them in best possible manner thereby resulting in the delay of destination rebuilding and distraction of tourists to other destinations.

Keywords: *Tourist Destinations, Dark Tourism, Rebuilding Tourist Destination Image, Destination Branding*

Introduction:

The violent forces of nature have been part of this world long before arrival of mankind. With all advanced technology available today, Scientists are able to predict the occurrence of natural forces and intensity. But we do not have any device or system to prevent the natural forces devastations. The natural forces become disaster when they begin to disrupt the life of people. The natural forces may be in the form of hurricane, forest fire, tsunami earth quake etc. A hurricane that remains at sea far from populated coast is only a storm, not a disaster. However, when a natural force strikes an area populated by people and developed with real estate and businesses it becomes a disaster because there is the potential for great loss in terms of lives and property.

Tourism is the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purpose. Tourism has become an important sector that has an impact on development of country economy. The main benefits of tourism are income creation and generation of jobs at tourism destinations. The tourism destination can operate successfully when the

infrastructure facilities in the destination are stable. Due to natural forces, the infrastructure facilities like roads, lands, electricity etc. can affect the tourism destination at large and leads to loss in tourism related businesses.

In this regard a research study has been conducted at Coorg district, which was severely affected by recent heavy rain in August 2018. The objective of this research paper is to understand the devastating effect on tourism and measures to propose a rebuilding exercise to recover from the disaster.

Coorg – Tourism Components:

Tourism components includes location details like altitude, climate, precipitation, temperature population and tourism attractions, transportation facilities, tourism season, flora, fauna details, specialties of the destination, accommodation and food facilities. The beautiful hill stations of South Karnataka have tourism components as follows:

TABLE 1
TOURISM COMPONENTS

Sl.No	Elements	Detail
1	Location	Kodagu District, Karnataka.
2	Coordinates	12 ^o 33' 75'' N 75 ^o 80' 69''E
3	Climate	Tropical wet humid.
4	Elevation	1150 meter
5	Temperature	11 to 28 degree Celsius.
6	Precipitation	3800 mm
7	Season	October to May
8	Attractions	Waterfalls, Temples. Hill views, Park, Fort, Wild life Sanctuary etc.
9	Flora	Coffee, Pepper, Paddy etc.
10	Fauna	Tiger, Indian Bison, Asian Elephants, Leopards, Wild dogs etc
11	Avi- Fauna	Great Hornbill, Thrush, White-bell Tree pie, Bulbul
12	Specialties	Honey, spices.
13	Accommodation	Hotels, Resorts, Homestays are available
14	Food facilities	Good restaurants are available.
15	Approach road	Moderate to Good.
16	Parking	Available
17	Guides	Not available
18	Local People Hospitality	Moderate to Good
19	Shopping Facilities	Spices, Honey, fruits are available.
20	Established	16 th Century
21	Total Area	4102 sq. km

22	Population In Kodagu & Madikeri	5.5 lakhs (Madikeri 40000)
23	Nearest city	Mysore and Mangalore.
24	Nearest Airport	Bangalore and Mangalore
25	Train Facilities	Available at Mysore
26	Transportation Facilities	Buses and Trains are available

Tourism Attractions detail:

Coorg district has many tourist attractions like waterfalls, temples, valley view points, parks, gardens etc.

TABLE 2

TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

Sl. No	Tourism Attraction detail	Nature of Attraction
1	Abbey Water Falls	Gushing through the rocks. Located between coffee estates and Spices estates.
2	Raja's seat	Scenic place and popular sun set point. It provides breath taking view of the green valley and the surrounding hills. Sun set is famous here.
3	Madikeri Fort	Built in 17 th century by Mudda Raja.
4	Talacauveri	Origin of Cauvery located at 1276 meter.
5	Dubare Elephant camp	Elephants being given a bath. Coracle ride on the river Cauvery and spot a crocodile, gaur, the wild dog, sloth bear and peacocks.
6	Omkareswara Temple	Very peaceful and traditional temple.
7	Bhagamandala	Situated on the River Cauvery in its upstream stretches. It is a TriveniSangma.
8	Tibetan Monestery	The second biggest Tibetan settlement in India, the main attraction is the typical Tibetan style of architecture.
9	Mandalpatti	Best trekking point and valley view point. Sun rise is famous here.
10	Chettalli	Small village on Madikeri and Siddapur road. Great place to enjoy the serenity and relax.

Number of Tourists visiting Coorg:

The pleasant climate and the green environment of Kodagu or Coorg attract more number of tourists. This place is called as Scotland of India and it has adventure tourism, temples, historical places, waterfalls, valley views

and wildlife parks.ⁱThe average number of tourist visiting Coorg is 25 lakhs per year. This would cross 35 lakhs very soon say V.Paneesh, Assistant Director of Tourism Department, Government of Karnataka. The accommodation facilities are available in the form of Hotels, Lodges, Resorts and Home stays. ⁱⁱThere are nearly 500 registered Homestays and 1500 numbers unregistered Homestays are available in Coorg district.

Natural force disaster at Coorg district:

Coorg district is located at elevation of 1150 meter in the Western Ghats section of Karnatakaⁱⁱⁱ. It is located at a distance of 110 kilometer from Mysore town towards west. The climate is cool throughout the year and ^{iv}the temperature is ranging from 11 degree Celsius to 27 degree Celsius. The Coorg district head quarter is Madikeri, a small town having population nearly 40,000. It is the famous tourist place having attractions like Waterfalls, Park, Heritage sites, Temples, valley view points, beautiful rivers etc. This region is covered with coffee plantations, pepper etc. The natural condition of this place attracts lakhs of tourists every year. It estimated that nearly twenty five lakhs of people visiting place every year. The accommodation facilities available in this region are Hotels, Guest houses, Lodges, Homestays, Resorts etc. The average stay of tourist is 1 to 2 days. The district consists of three taluks namely Madikeri, Somavarpet and Virajpet. The average annual rainfall of this area is between 2500mm and 3900mm^v. In the first six months of 2018, the rains in Coorg had been just perfect and coffee planters have expecting a good harvest. Heavy rains continued to lash the district in July and August.



The first landslide occurs in Makkandur, a village with a rain-fed stream running through it, left hundreds homeless^{vi}. Then came a series of landslides, taking out several villages like dominoes. The second casualty

occurs in Mukkodlu village followed by Kalur village. Around twenty five homes have lost to the landslides in Mukkodlu. The coffee beans started dropping from coffee plants^{vii}.

^{viii}Hattihole is another village in North Kodagu, which severely affected by landslide. The tourist trapped in Homestay also safely evacuated from that place. Nearly three hundred affected people were evacuated through river rafting conducted by some private companies. The affected people were walked five to eight kilometer to reach relief centers. The northern area of Kodagu lies under piles of slushy mud.



Another area Bhagamandala have marooned due to over flowing river and connectivity to the parts of districts has been severely affected due to land slide. A release from the meteorological department said Bhagamandala received 195 mm rainfall in the 24 hour period, Sampaji received 156mm, Napoklu 131 mm, Madikeri 111mm of rainfall^{ix}. Virajpet received 94.2mm and Srimangala 88.4mm. Other places in Kodagu where rainfall was heavy included Hudikeri 94.5 mm and Ponnampet 80.2mm

The roads connecting Mysore, Periyapatna, and other parts of Kodagu were severely affected due to heavy rains and there is no transportation facilities available for the people.^x The traffic movement between Kodagu and Mysore was severely affected due to bridge collapse. The Cumulative rainfall in the district since January is 1034.44 mm as against 554.95mm of rainfall during the corresponding period last year.

^{xi}Incessant rains caused landslide in some parts of Kodagu district of Karnataka on 28TH August 2018. Madikeri, Suintikoppa, Napoklu, Bhagamandala, Jodupala, Makkandooru, Madapura and Somwarpet areas of the districts received heavy rainfall (Deccan Herald, report, 28th Sep.2018).

At least 17 people have been killed and 2200 houses damaged in the flood over the past two weeks. According to State Relief Commissioner Gangaram Baderiya, 51 temporary relief shelters arranged to help the people affected by the intense rainfall. Nearly 5000 people were used the relief camp. ^{xii}Data provided by the State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre shows that Kodagu has been the worst affected among Karnataka's 30 districts, recording 237 percent excess rainfall in the third week of August 2018 and 46 percent this monsoon. The district received an average of 535 mm rainfall against the normal of 159 mm over this period.

Chief Minister's visit:

The Chief Minister of Karnataka HD Kumarasamy made visit to flood affected area on 18th of August 2018 and told the reporters that at least 1500 people are stranded in various parts of district and the rescue official have not been able to reach the affected people due to bad weather and landslides ^{xiii}. Kumarasamy cited available information to state that 845 houses had been completely destroyed, 743 partially damaged, 143 kilometers of road washed away and 57 bridges damaged ^{xiv}. He expressed that the amount required to rebuild the infrastructure alone is estimated to Rs.2000 to 3000 crores ^{xv}. As many as 1725 officials of the district administration, police reserve police and armed forces and civil defense personnel have been deployed to involve in rescue operations. Kumarasamy ordered for Rs.3800 for each affected family to buy necessities and provisions through ration shop at free of cost.

Impact on Tourism:

The Coorg district is receiving 25 lakhs of tourists every year. Due to the natural force disaster, the roads leading to destinations are severely damaged. This prevents the tourists to visit this place. So the income from the tourism comes to halt. The floods in Coorg damages hotels and tourism destinations also. It severely damages the home stay facilities available at Coffee estates. The parks are stagnated by water leads to lot of muds and took much time to clear the debris. The rebuilding of the affected area requires excess funds which could not able to tap immediately. The general infrastructure facilities like roads, electricity, water connection and drainage facilities can be repaired by Government department. If there is any delay happens, it leads to heavy loss to the tourism industry. The job opportunity at Hotels and resorts will be reduced due to less flow of tourists. The tourists will have negative perception about the Coorg damages due to heavy rain.

Suggestions to rebuild the tourist destination:

The high intensity rainfall leads to high run off damages soil erosion, crop damage and the water will flow excessively in the streams, gullies and rivers. The excessive run off water enters the human living places damaging the houses, animals etc. In Coorg district, due to high intensity rainfall during the month of August 2018, the flood occurs and damages the houses, tourism hotels, resorts, roads leading to tourist attractions. Due to over seepage of rain water, certain areas are severely affected by landslides damaging the residential areas, hotels and coffee plantations at large. This natural force in the form of floods is even though an unexpected occurrences, this can be controlled by taking certain initiatives at the famous hill tourism destination Coorg as follows.

- The meteorological department should have detailed rainfall data about Coorg district and analyze the available data and provide a clear forecast of the rainfall in that region.
- The entire hilly region has to be delineated with watershed boundaries and appropriate plan has to formulate to manage the excess runoff water in the form floods.
- The upland area of the hills has to be planted with dense green covers to prevent the erosion effect of rainfall run-off.
- The gullies, streams, rivers in the watersheds of Coorg region, have to be desilted at frequent interval to carry more quantity of water during heavy rains.
- The land management practices like ploughing across the slope, construction of contour bund, construction of series of check dams across the gullies, streams and rivers. Construction of Farm ponds leads to harvest the water at the land itself, which could able to reduce the flow of rainwater force.
- The water carrying structure has to be deepened and the banks of structure have to be strengthened by planting tree and green cover.
- Construction of check dams across the water conveying bodies would help to store the rain water and thereby increasing the ground water level of the area. The soil erosion also be reduced considerably, which leads to prevention of floods in the particular watershed areas.
- An assessment committee consisting of tourism officials, tourist operators, Hoteliers, Home stay operators and Forest department officials to evaluate the impact natural disaster due to heavy rain. Using their valuable report action plan has to be formulated to bring the tourism destination to normal situation.
- Awareness and advertisement has to be planned to clarify the misperception of the tourist about the destination.
- Rebuilding of damaged roads to Coorg and the bridges has to be reconstructed to ease the transportation services to Coorg region.
- Local people should participate and provide valuable input for rebuilding the destination.

Conclusion:

Natural disasters can be powerful destructive elements and result in injuries, death and loss of property including homes and businesses. In Coorg, due to high intensity floods and landslides damages the roads, waterways, Coffee estates, Bus stand, Hotels, resorts and few attractions. Due to this the business become paralyzed and inflow of tourists to the Coorg become very less. Communities and individual business suffered great financial hardships. Tourism planners, officials and developers have to spend time and money to reconstruct the attractions that are pleasing to the public. The inflow of tourists can be improved steadily by rebuilding the infrastructures and effectively implementing the above recommendations.

Endnotes:

ⁱ<http://www.coorgnews.in/general-news/another-go-a-number-tourists-kodagu-expected-cross-35-lakh-year/>

ⁱⁱ ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madikeri>

^{iv} ibid

^v<https://www.coorg.com/weather/>

^{vi}<https://scroll.in/article/891183/as-landslides-swallowed-entire-villages-in-karnatakas-kodagu-some-residents-walked-8-km-to-safety>

^{vii} ibid

^{viii}<http://www.uniindia.com/grim-situation-in-kodagu-villages-cut-off-and-several-people-reported-missing/states/news/1322729.html>

^{ix}<https://www.karnataka.com/coorg/could-the-kodagu-flood-have-been-prevented/>

^x<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/heavy-rains-continue-to-lash-kodagu/article24167311.ece>

^{xi}<https://scroll.in/latest/892328/karnataka-heavy-rainfall-landslides-hit-parts-of-kodagu-district>

^{xii}<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/karnataka-cm-estimates-kodagu-rain-damage-at-rs-2-000-3-000-crore/story-Q7dvaCYjCDTK6WF3YVXhBO.html>

^{xiii}<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/1500-stranded-in-flood-hit-kodagu-of-karnataka-cm-kumaraswamy-visits-affected-areas/articleshow/65454972.cms>

^{xiv} ibid

^{xv}<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/karnataka/story/karnataka-cm-demands-rs-2000-crore-from-centre-for-flood-ravaged-kodagu-1322853-2018-08-25>