Tourists' Perception - A Study on Tourism in Kovalam, Thiruvananthapuram District

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the largest industries of the world today. Many nations rely on this industry as a primary source for generating revenue, employment, private sector growth and infrastructure development. It plays a key role in development, prosperity and well-being of a nation. It's increasing demand and provisions for relaxation and peaceful environment makes it one of the most important industries. The study area is Kovalam, which is one of the famous beach destinations of Kerala located in Thiruvananthapuram district. This paper analyses the major attractions around Kovalam and the tourists' perception regarding various facilities available in the destination.

Keywords-Tourism,Foreign Tourists,Domestic Tourists,Kovalam,Chi-square test.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a major phenomenon of the modern society, which has emerged as economic activity of immense global importance. Tourism has been gaining socio-economic relevance and is being considered as an engine of economic growth (Cooper et. al 1993). It is widely regarded as the means of achieving development in tourism destinations. Throughout the world, the most compelling reason for pursuing tourism as development strategy is its positive contribution to the local and national economy. Internationally, tourism represents an important source of foreign exchange earnings, indeed it has been suggested that the potential contribution to the national balance of payments is the principal reason why governments supports tourism development. (Tourism and development concepts and issues – Richard Sherpley and David. J. Teffler).

For tourism industry measuring tourist satisfaction is of utmost importance as it helps to market tourism products and services. The success of a tourism destination depends on the facilities provided to the tourists. Some tourists revisit a destination many times, clearly indicates the preferences for previous experiences in the destination.

1.1 Study area

The area selected for the present study is Kovalam. It is an internationally renowned beach destination located in Thiruvananthapuram district. It is favourite destination not only for foreigners but for the domestic tourists also. It is located in the intersection of $8^0 40'$E latitudes and $76^0 97'$N longitudes. Kovalam is very near to the city centre, just 16km away from the city. There are three beautiful and magnificent beaches along its 17 km coastline of Kovalam, namely, Hawa beach, Light house beach and Samudra beach.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the present study are given below.
➢ To explain major attractions in Kovalam.
➢ To understand the perception of tourists regarding various facilities available in the destination.

1.3 Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through questionnaire surveying. Foreign and domestic tourists were selected for the study. A total of 200 questionnaires were equally distributed among foreign and domestic tourists. The collected details were tabulated and analysed with the help of simple statistical techniques. Chi –square test has been applied to test the hypotheses. Secondary data were collected from various books, journals and internet sources.

II.   MAJOR ATTRACTIONS IN KOVALAM

Kovalam is known for its magnificent beaches and offers many beach activities such as beach volley ball, surfing, sunbathing etc. Kovalam has three major crescent shaped beaches in its 17km coastline and they are separated by promontories. The three main beaches are the Light house beach, Samudra beach, and Hawah beach. Major attractions near Kovalam are discussed below.

Beaches
Light house beach

Among the three beaches, this is the largest and most popular beach in Kovalam. In the southern end of the beach there exists a 35 m tall light house painted in red and white mounted on top of palm-covered Kurumkal hill. The light house is officially called Vizhinjam light house. There is an observation platform on top of it. The light house started functioning in 1972, when Vizhinjam was a busy seaport. It was modified in the year 2003 to offer more convenience.   Light House beach is the most crowded beach in the area. Facilities for beach swimming, surfing and parasailing are available here.

Hawah beach

Lying north of light house beach is the Hawah beach. The beach is also known as 'Eve's beach' encircled with palm groves, the beach is popular for its unique elegance and scenic beauty. The beach is comparatively less crowded, so it is ideal for those who look for peace and relaxation. In the morning, the beach is occupied by native fishermen. The beach provides a dazzling experience especially at sun rise and sun set. The beach is not ideal for swimming, because the water current is very strong here.

Samudra beach

This beach is located north of Kovalam. By disjointed fissures and big promontories, the beach is separated from the other beaches. It is the calmest beach and is not crowded. The local fishermen prefer this coastline for fishing. For those travellers who want to be away from noisy howls and rushes of routine life, it is the perfect location where complete privacy can be enjoyed. Even though, Kovalam tourism has flourished a lot, this beach became unnoticed due to the huge promontory between the north and south coastlines.

Other attractions
Vizhinjam fishing harbour

Another significant spot is fishing harbour. The place is famous because the establishment of a plant which converts energy from sea waves to electricity. For boosting tourism in this harbour, some grand projects on the anvil monitored by ministry of tourism. It is a perfect place for tourism thanks to its unique marine ecology and rich biodiversity. A diving school, marine museum, research centre, mari-culture system development unit have been planned to promote tourism and most of them are in the stages of execution.

Thiruvallam backwaters

It is the prime backwater destination of Thiruvananthapuram, and is located very near to Kovalam. It is important destination and it is famous for water based activities like Canoe ride, kayaking, etc.

Halcyon Castle

Halcyon castle, gorgeous mansion, is located just 2km away from the international beach resort of Kovalam. One of the important tourist spot of Kovalam, Halcyon castle was built in the year 1932, by Sri Rama Varma Valiya Koyi Thampuran. The traditional Kerala style architecture of the palace, the beautiful beaches and lush green river banks of the surroundings capture the minds of the visitors. The palace reflects historical past and, heritage and it is marvellous to see the architectural relics of the castle. The palace can be visited any time and the entrance here is free. It is open in all days. The visiting hours are restricted to 30 minutes to 1 hour. There are restricted zones in the castle, where entry is not allowed to the visitors. There is also no entry in that part of the corridors which are part of luxury hotel. Cameras are permitted in the castle.

Kovalam art gallery

The art gallery is located on Hawah beach. Works of various artists from the world is exhibited here. Ancient paintings are the main highlight of the gallery. It is a perfect place for art loving persons.

Vizhinjam marine aquarium

A marine aquarium is another attraction here, which houses many fishes like clown fish, moon wrasse, squirrel fish, butterfly etc. There are also displayed pearl images of Christ, Virgin Mary and many Hindu gods and goddesses.

Pilgrim centres
Aazhimala Siva Temple
As the name suggests, the temple is devoted to Lord Siva. The temple is located near Aazhimala beach, on the way to Kovalam - Poovar road. Many devotees visit here to get the blessings of Lord Siva. The temple gives a panoramic view of the Arabian Sea and the golden shore of Azhimala beach as it is located in an elevated place.

Thiruvallom Parashurama Temple
This 2000 year old temple, located on the banks of Karamana river. It is less than 10 km away from Kovalam. The temple is dedicated to Lord Parasurama believed to be creator of Kerala, as per myths. It is a famous centre of ancestor worship. Devotees make offering to the departed souls as part of *balitherpen*. The temple is situated where Killi River, Karamana river and Parvathi Puthanar merge. This makes it a holy site for *balitherpanam*.

Vizhinjam rock cut cave temple
The temple, constructed in the18th century is a marvellous sculpture which shows the skill of workers behind it. The deity here is Vinadhera Dakshinamurthi. Outside the cave are semi carved statues of Lord Shiva and goddess Parvathi. The temple will remain closed on Mondays.

Kovalam Juma Masjid
It is situated near Asoka beach in Kovalam. Opposite to it, there is located Lord Ganesha temple, which shows religious harmony of the destination. An architectural wonder, the mosque highlights the traditional architecture of Kerala.

3 Perception of tourists
This part deals with the analysis of questionnaire surveying. Eight questions regarding tourism in the destination were asked to the tourists. In the first part percentage analysis is done and in the second part Chi square test has been applied to test the hypotheses.

Statement 1: The attitude of local people towards tourism in the destination is reflected in the table below.
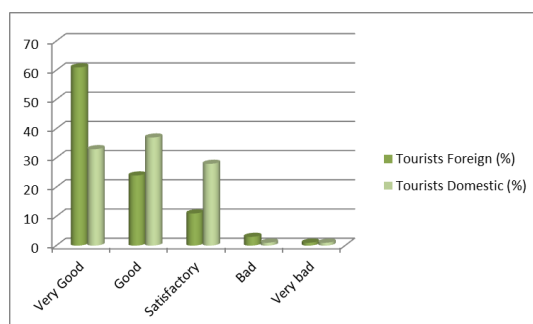
Table 1

Scaling items	Tourists		Total Number (%)
	Foreign (%)	Domestic (%)	
Very Good	61	33	99
Good	24	37	61
Satisfactory	11	28	39
Bad	3	1	4
Very bad	1	1	2
Total	**100**	**100**	**200**

Source: survey data

With regard to the attitude of local people towards tourists, it can be seen that most of the foreign tourists and domestic tourists have good opinion on local people in the destination. Of the total foreign tourists, 61% commented very good opinion, followed by 24% good, 11% satisfactory, 3% bad and 1% very bad. 33% of domestic tourists commented very good, 37% good and 28% satisfactory 1% bad and only 1% of the domestic tourists, expressed very bad opinion on local people's attitude.

Figure 1

Source: researcher's own plot

**Statement 2**: Satisfaction with accommodation facilities in the destination

Table2

Scaling items	Tourists		Total Number (%)
	Foreign (%)	Domestic (%)	
Very Good	28	32	60
Good	38	6	44
Satisfactory	28	41	69
Bad	3	15	17
Very bad	3	6	9
Total	**100**	**100**	**200**

Source: survey data

The table shows data regarding tourists views on accommodation facilities of the destination. Foreign tourists are more or less satisfied with the accommodation facilities. Out of the total foreign tourists 28% expressed very good opinion, followed by good(38%), satisfied(28%) bad(3%) and very bad(3%). In the domestic tourists category 32% expressed that accommodation facilities are very good, followed by good(6%), satisfactory(41%), bad(15%) and very bad(6%).

Figure 2
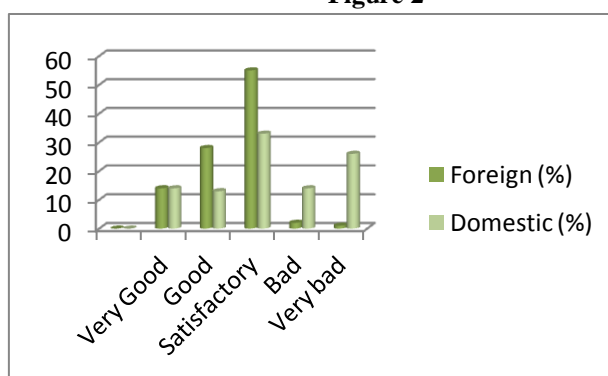
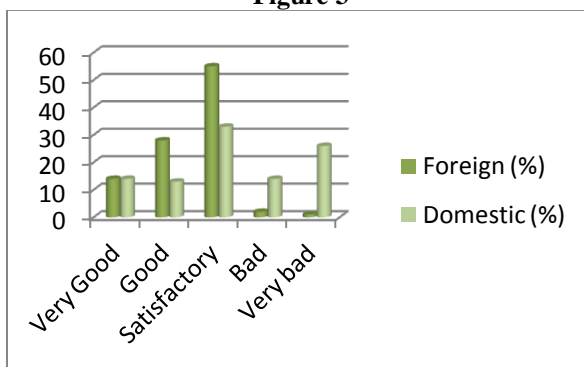*Source: researcher's own plot*

Statement 3: Tourist information services

Table 3

Scaling items	Tourists		Total Number (%)
	Foreign (%)	Domestic (%)	
Very Good	14	14	28
Good	28	13	41
Satisfactory	55	33	88
Bad	2	14	16
Very bad	1	26	27
Total	**100**	**100**	**200**

Source: survey data

With regard to the tourists information services, 14% foreign tourists expressed very good opinion, 28% commented good, 55% gave satisfactory, 2% bad and 1% have very bad opinion. In terms of domestic tourists, 14% expressed very good opinion, 13% good, 33% satisfactory, 14% bad and 26% very bad.

Figure 3

Source: researcher's own plot

Statement 4: Recreational facilities

Table 4

Scaling items	Tourists		Total Number (%)
	Foreign (%)	Domestic (%)	
Very Good	43	34	77
Good	24	22	46
Satisfactory	21	17	38
Bad	10	12	22
Very bad	2	15	17
Total	**100**	**100**	**200**

Source: survey data

The data collected shows that 43% foreign tourists have very good opinion an recreational facilities in the destination followed by good (24%), satisfactory (21%), bad (10%) and very bad (2%) ,while the domestic tourists are taken into account ,34% of the tourist have very good opinion on recreational facilities followed by good (22%) satisfactory (17%), bad (12%), and very bad (15%).

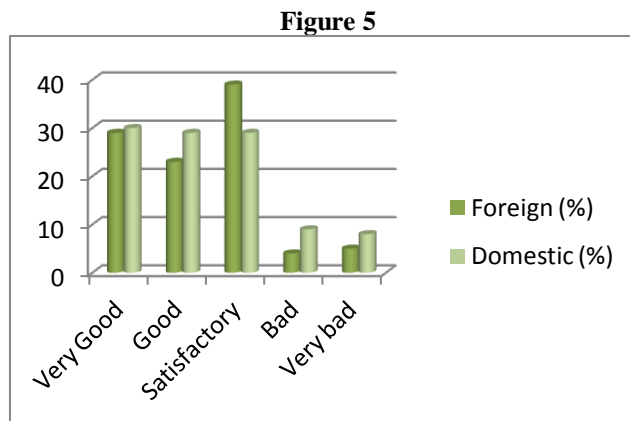**Figure 4**
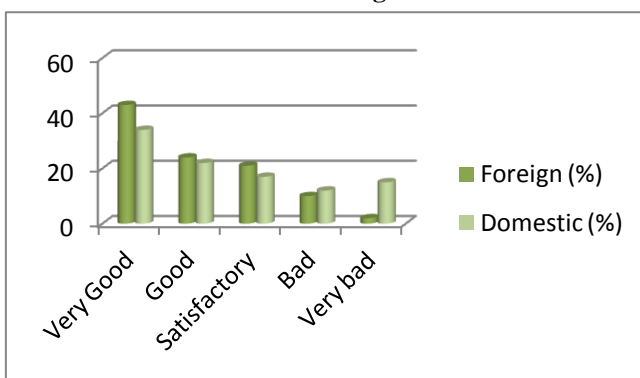
Source: researcher's own plot

Statement 5 : Police protection

Table 5

Scaling items	Tourists		Total Number (%)
	Foreign (%)	Domestic (%)	
Very Good	29	30	59
Good	23	24	47
Satisfactory	39	29	68
Bad	4	9	13
Very bad	5	8	13
Total	**100**	**100**	**200**

Source: survey data

It is very vital for the tourism industry to provide security and safety for tourists in a destination. With a view to help and protect tourists many destinations on Kerala is having tourism police. Out of the total foreign tourists 29% have very good opinion on police protection in the destination, followed by good(23%), satisfactory(39%) bad(14%) and very bad(5%); when domestic tourists are concerned 30% expressed very good opinion on police protection followed by good(24%), satisfactory(29%), bad(9%) and very bad(8%) opinion.

Figure 5

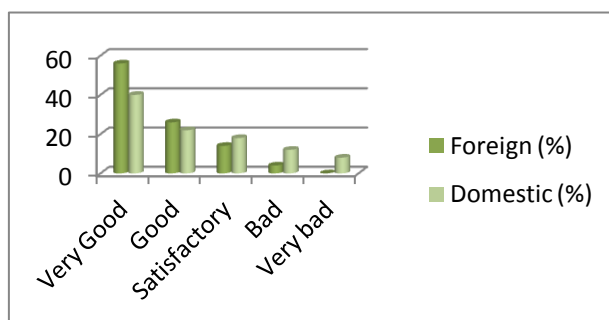*Source: researcher's own plot*

Statement6 Accessibility and transport service

Table 6

Scaling items	Tourists		Total Number (%)
	Foreign (%)	Domestic (%)	
Very Good	56	40	96
Good	26	22	48
Satisfactory	14	18	32
Bad	4	12	16
Very bad	0	8	8
Total	**100**	**100**	**200**

Source: survey data

Accessibility and transport services are very important elements of tourism. A destination will develop only when it becomes accessible and has good transportation facilities. For accessibility and transport, 56% of foreign tourists gave very good opinion; followed by good (26%), satisfactory (14%) bad (4%) no one put very bad remark. According to domestic tourists, 40% have very good opinion followed by good (22%), satisfied (18%), bad(12%) and very bad(8%).

Figure 6

Source: researcher's own plot

Statement 7: The destination is congested.

Table 7

Scaling items	Tourists		Total Number (%)
	Foreign (%)	Domestic (%)	

Agree very Strongly	8	26	34
Agree Strongly	9	10	19
Agree	13	26	39
Disagree	9	6	15
Disagree Strongly	61	32	93
Total	**100**	**100**	**200**

Source: survey data

The data above shows that the foreign tourists strongly disagreed (61%) to the statement that the destination is congested. Those who disagreed with the statement constitute 9%, agreed(13%), agreed strongly(9%) and agree very strongly(8%). As far as domestic tourists are concerned, 32% strongly disagreed to the statement followed by disagreed(6%) agreed(26%) agreed strongly(10%) and agreed very strongly(26%).

**Figure 7**
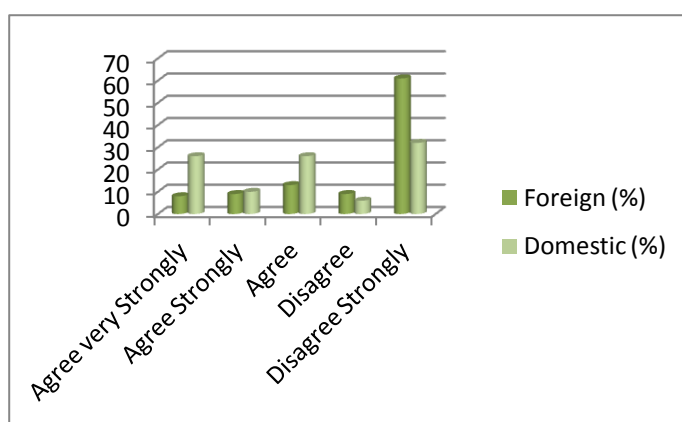
Source: researcher's own plot

Statement 8: Cleanliness

Table 8

Scaling items	Tourists		Total Number (%)
	Foreign (%)	Domestic (%)	
Very Good	16	17	43
Good	10	18	28
Satisfactory	27	39	66
Bad	16	4	10
Very bad	31	22	53
Total	**100**	**100**	**200**

Source: survey data

Attractiveness of a destination primarily depends upon the cleanliness of the destination. The opinion of the tourist towards cleanliness in the destination is not at all positive. Of the total foreign tourists, 16% opined very good, followed by good(10%), satisfactory(27%), bad(16%) and very bad(31%). While domestic tourists, 17% expressed very good, in terms of cleanliness, followed by good(18%), satisfactory(39%) bad(4%) and very bad(22%)

Figure 8
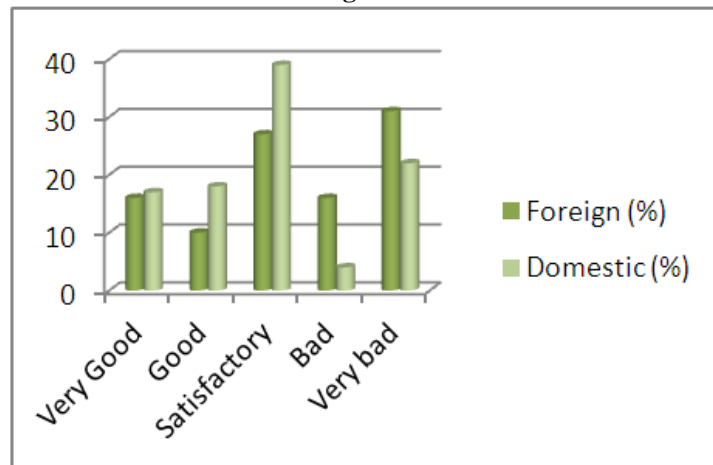
Source: researcher's own plot

4 Hypothesis testing

Here Chi Square test has been employed to test the Hypotheses.
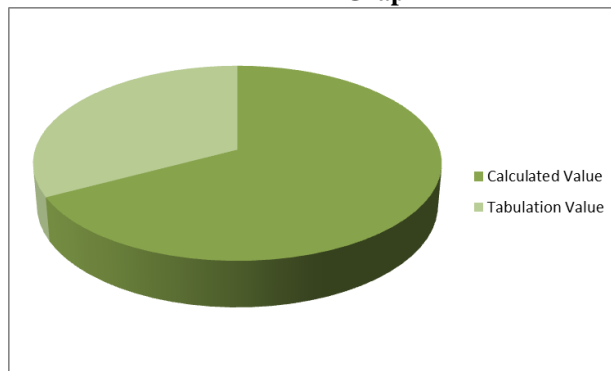
Hypothesis 1

H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between perception of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to residents attitude towards them.

H1: This is significant relationship between perceptions of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to resident's attitude towards them.

Tests of Significance	Calculated Value	Tabulation Value	P- value	Hypothesis
Chi square tests	19.5212	9.49	0.00062	Rejected

Significance level 0.05

Graph 1

Source: researcher's own plot

Inference: Here, the calculated value of Chi square is 19.5212. It is greater than the original table value 9.49, hence the null hypothesis is rejected.
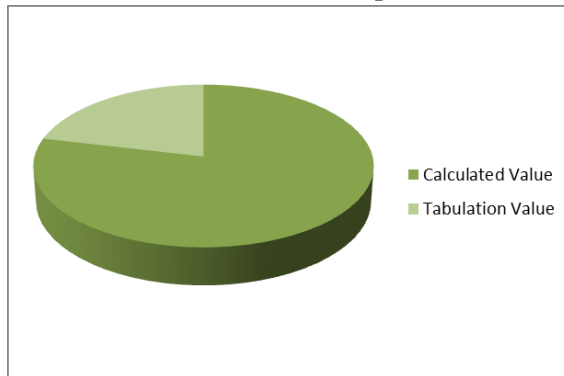
Hypothesis 2

H0 There is no significant relationship between perception of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to accommodation facility of the destination.

H1 There is relationship between perception of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to accommodation facility of destination.

Tests of Significance	Calculated Value	Tabulation Value	P- value	Hypothesis
Chi square	34.987	9.49	4.67×10^{-7}	Rejected

Significance level 0.05

Graph 2

Source: researcher's own plot

Inference

The calculated value obtained is 34.987, which is greater than the table value of 9.49, hence the null hypothesis is rejected
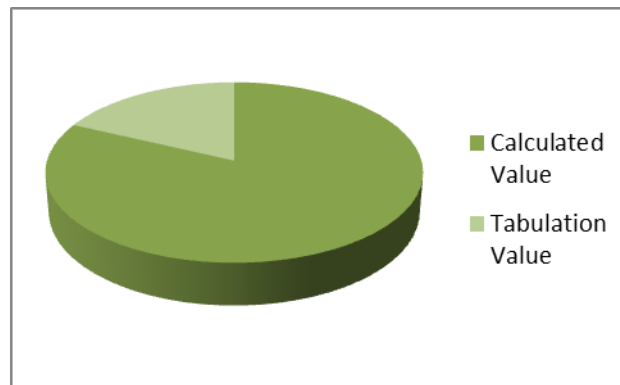
Hypothesis 3

H0 There is no significant relationship between perception of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to Tourists information Services.

H1 There is significant relationship between perception of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to Tourists information Services.

Tests of Significance	Calculated Value	Tabulation Value	P- value	Hypothesis
Chi square	43.136	9.49	9.267×10^{-9}	Rejected

Significance level 0.05

Graph 3

Source: researcher's own plot

Inference

For Tourists information Services ,the calculated value obtained is 43.136, which is greater than the table value of 9.49, hence the null hypothesis is rejected.
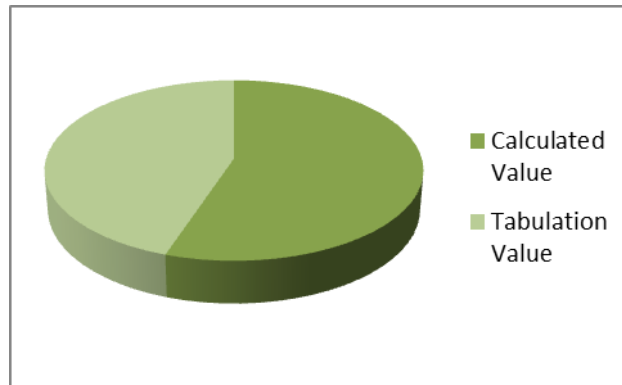
Hypothesis. 4

Ho : There is no statistically significant relationship between perception of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to recreational facilities.

H1 There is significant relationship between perception of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to recreation facilities.

Text of Significance	Calculated Value	Tabulation Value	P-Value	Hypothesis
Chi-square test	11.683	9.49	0.01987	Rejected

Significance level: 0.05

Graph 4

Source: researcher's own plot

Inference

As regard to recreation facility, the calculated value obtained is 11.683, which is greater than the table value of 9.49, hence the null hypothesis is rejected.
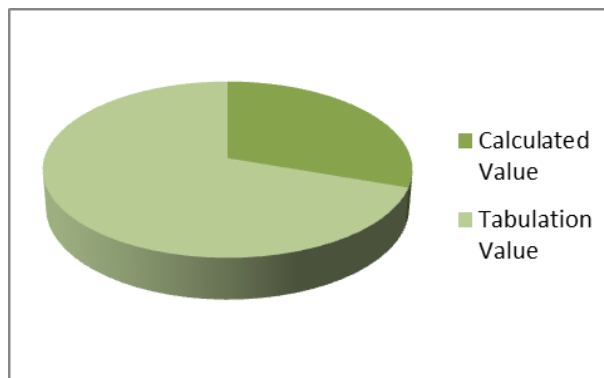
Hypothesis 5

Ho : There is no statistically significant relationship between perception of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to Police protection.

H1 There is significant relationship between perception of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to Police protection.

Text of Significance	Calculated Value	Tabulation Value	P-Value	Hypothesis
Chi-square test	4.1242	9.49	0.3895	Accepted

Significance level: 0.05

Graph 5

Source: researcher's own plot

Inference :

Here the calculated value obtained is 4.1242, which is lesser than the table value of 9.49, hence the null hypothesis is accepted.
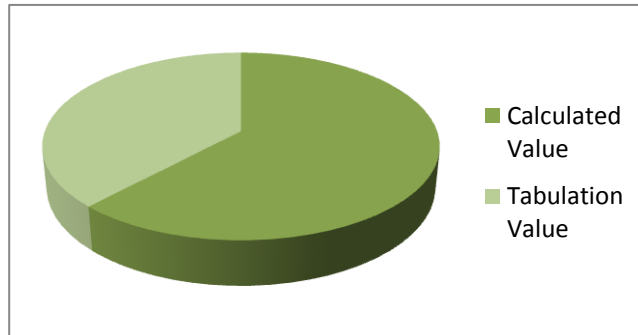
Hypothesis 6

Ho : There is no statistically significant relationship between perception of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to accessibility and transport services in the destination

H1: There is significant relationship between perception of foreign and domestic tourists with regard to accessibility and transport services in the destination

Text of Significance	Calculated Value	Tabulation Value	P-Value	Hypothesis
Chi-square test	15.5	9.49	0.00376	Rejected

Significance level: 0.05

Graph 6

Source: researcher's own plot

Inference:
With regard to accessibility and transport services, the calculated value obtained is 15.5, which in greater than the tabulated value 9.49, hence the null hypothesis in rejected.
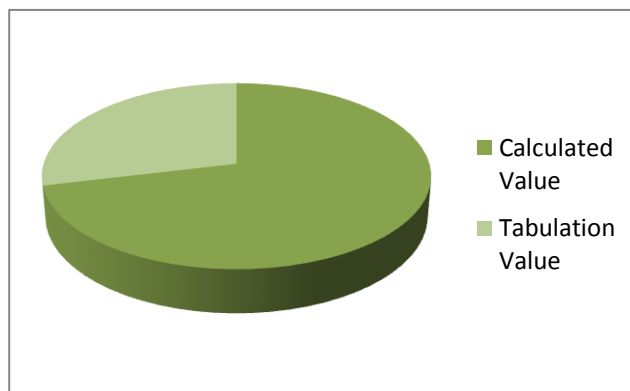
Hypothesis 7
Ho: There is no significant relationship between perceptions of foreign and domestic tourists on overcrowding/congestion the destination.
H1: There is significant relationship between perceptions of foreign and domestic tourists on overcrowding/congestion the destination.

Text of Significance	Calculated Value	Tabulation Value	P-Value	Hypothesis
Chi-square test	23.558	9.49	0.00009792	Rejected

Significance level: 0.05

Graph 7

Source: researcher's own plot

Inference:
As regard to overcrowding/Congestion, the chi-square value obtained is 23.558, which in greater than the tabulated value of 9.47, hence the null hypothesis in rejected.
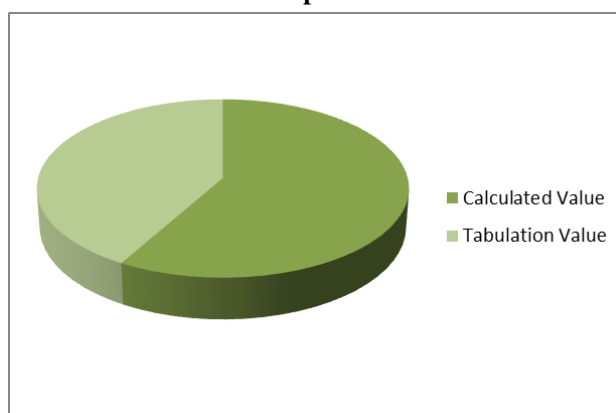
Hypothesis: 8
Ho: There is no significant relationship between perceptions of both foreign and domestic tourists with regard to cleanliness in the destination.
H1: There is significant relationship between perceptions of both foreign and domestic tourists with regard to cleanliness in the destination.

Text of Significance	Calculated Value	Tabulation Value	P-Value	Hypothesis
Chi-square test	13.2261	9.49	0.01022	Rejected

Significance level: 0.05

Graph 8

Source: researcher's own plot

Inference:

As regard to cleanliness in the destination, the calculated value in 13.2261 which in greater than tabulated value 9.49, hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

III.   CONCLUSION

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries of the world today. It generates more revenues and provides employment to large number of people.

In addition to attractions, a tourism center also needs the more facilities for the tourists. The opinion of the tourists visiting the tourist center is very important so that steps must be taken to promote tourism effectively.

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