

# Tourism Plan For Bekal: A Case Of Bekal fort, Special Tourism Area Of Kerala

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**Abstract** - Kerala is the third fastest urbanizing state in the Country and 48 percent of the people are residing in urban area (Census, 2011). Bekal fort is the largest and best preserved fort in Kerala, situated in Coastal region of Kasaragod District in Kerala. By National Action Plan of 1992, Bekal fort has been identified as a 'Special Tourism Areas' for integrated development. Kasaragod is a town having population of 54,172 where most of the tourists visit Bekal fort in Kasaragod.

The aim of study is to identify the potentials and significant contribution to Bekal fort for reimagining of bekal region. The objective of the study is to examine the role of Bekal fort for tourism development. This paper identifies a conceptual framework within which the effect of Bekal fort tourism development for reimagining Kasaragod Town. This study is mainly based on secondary sources of data and opinion survey which was conducted by covering about 100 structured interview questionnaires. This paper attempts to analyze the impact of tourism development on Kasaragod town through Bekal fort. The study concludes that Bekal fort tourism activities certainly contribute to reimagining of Kasaragod town.

**Keywords-** Tourism Plan, Special Tourism Area, Reimagining, Tourism Development Plan

## 1.INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the third important sector among industries that attracts foreign money to the country. The interest among people to travel and explore the world has drastically increased. Although the trend existed even before a very long time the near decade has seen its rapid growth in this environment friendly industry owing to the reason, that it allows influx of foreign money.

Tourism has expanded from a relatively small activity of limited importance in the early 19th century to arguably the largest industry in the World today. Olden days human beings had a pursuit for wandering, people used to move for food and shelter after it became a wealthy affair of some opulent people visiting places for leisure activities. Now globally, tourism is a vital industry, recognized as an activity essential to the life of nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational and economic sectors of national societies and their international relations (*Manila Declaration of World Tourism, 1980*).

India is one of the most popular destinations in Asia, bounded by the Himalayan ranges in the north, and surrounded on three sides by water (the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, and the Indian Ocean), with a long history and diverse culture.

Kerala has always been a favourite destination for the foreign as well as domestic tourists. Until the early 1980's, Kerala was a relatively unknown destination. However, marketing campaigns launched by the Kerala Tourist Development Corporation laid the foundation for the growth of the tourism industry in the state. Today, Kerala tourism is a Global super brand and regarded as one of the most famous tourist destinations. In 2017, Kerala attracted one million foreign tourists and 14 million domestic tourists. An annual increase of 10 per cent in foreign tourists and 11.3 per cent in domestic tourist arrivals (Kerala Tourism statistical report, 2017)

## 2. Need for Study

As tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world, it has become one among the world's most competitive industries. Kerala as a state blessed with unique biodiversity and natural beauty; Unfortunately is not able to make use of these possibilities. We have not been careful in productively using these advantages and focused only on a few tourism destinations, totally ignoring the wonderful and promising features other centres. We have been oblivious to the fact that our neighbouring states and countries like Srilanka, Maldives are providing their best; services to visitors similar to that of Kerala, there by the concept of quality tourism which once has been exclusive and unique to our state is replicated and the same has created a competent tourism market where stakeholders are many. Hence, a comprehensive tourism plan envisioning the region in mind should exigently be framed. The most unfortunate side of Bekal fort region and Kasaragod is that tourism market in this area has simply failed to identify and popularize all the beautiful spots. Much of Kasaragod's enchanting places, still remain unexposed to the nature lovers. Hence, it is necessary to develop well designed marketing strategies and plans by branding such spots by organizing tour packages and propagating other types of tourism products in the region. The present study is to identify the potentials and significant contribution of Bekal fort in resketching the Kasaragod town. The planning should make sure that every single issue is addressed positively and eliminate all the obstacles that hinders the expected growth of tourism. An integrated approach which includes the utilisation of resources of region followed by the upgradation of already existing system will definitely serve useful. Above all measures should be undertaken for the involvement of localites in the tourism related programs.

## 3. Study Area: Bekal fort area region

Bekal region is located on the western coast of Kasaragod the northern most district of Kerala. The Bekal region spreads through 4 coastal panchayats of Chemmnad, Uduma, Pallikere and Ajanoor. The Bekal fort overlooking the sea is the most significant land mark. The well preserved fort with its breath taking views of the coastline to the north and south will form the focal point around Bekal area. People in this region are mainly involved in fisheries and agriculture activities.

Kasaragod, the maritime district was the gateway to Malabar Coast for seafarers from the world around. Foreign trade and invasions down the centuries left the land with rich cosmopolitan culture. It is the face of Kerala to the Northern states. Kasaragod Municipality has a high potential for Tourism and it is the main commercial node between Kannur and Mangalore. Kasaragod attains importance because of its proximity to the business cum commercial centre of Mangalore and being one of the tourist centres in the northern Kerala. The region is well connected by road and rail network Besides, an eventful history, Kasaragod also boasts a number of different art forms among which theyyam stands unique. In general, the district is widely known as Saptabhashabhoomi, which means Land of Seven Languages. People over here are able to speak many languages that include Marathi, Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, Konkani etc. The district stands bordered by Kannur on south and Mangalore Arabian sea borders it on the west. Presence of 11 rivers makes this piece of land entirely different from that of other districts. Chandragiri, Payaswini, Tejaswini and Shiria are a few to name. The district was formed in the year 1956 based on the recommendations of state reorganizing commission's report. Cashew, rubber, arecanut and tobacco are the major crops and a large chunk of population depends mainly on

agriculture. Localities follow various traditional customs and rituals, among which, as mentioned already, theyyam has an important space



(figure 1.1 Existing Land use- Site Level (author generated))



(figure 1.2 location map of study area (author generated))

## Tourism Potential

Speaking of Tourism Potential Bekal is a unique and spectacular beach destination.

About 300 year old Bekal Fort is exuding an irresistible old world charm. Appealingly landscapes of beaches, rivers and vegetations, hypnotic art forms, fascinating traditions, this quiet little seaside village in the northernmost district of Kerala has every ingredient that would go into the creation of an international tourist destination.

### Rich cultural heritage to Kasaragod

Kasaragod, boasts a tradition of vibrant art forms. The temple arts have flourished in this area where different dynasties have major contributions. Needless to say that, the 6th century's resurgence of Hindu dynasties pan India, produced a characteristic change in the cultural fabric in the south India and Kasargod as a district cannot stay isolated from this. Traditional art form, namely Theyyam is integrated deeply with the culture of Kasagodians. Originated in North Malabar, Theyyam as a folklore art enjoys the attention of thousands. It is independent and considered widely with a divine perspective where Gods and heroes, demons and spirits are given prominence and myth and legend speak volumes. As a solo folklore dance, it has attracted the accolades of many more from different corners of the world. The rich cultural heritage that Kasargod enjoys is inseparably associated with Theyyam in all the way.

### **Bekal enjoys the advantages of Kerala**

Making Bekal even more exclusive is that it is backed by all the intrinsic advantages of Kerala Kerala is an established tourism destination for majority of international tourists.

Excellent healthcare systems, 100% literacy and more make Kerala India's most advanced State with the highest physical quality of life index.

Though lack of attention is still a concern, Bekal in Kasargod still stays first in Malabar tourism map. tourism plans introduced by DTTC has promoted Bekal tourism to a greater extent. A confluence of local culture with that of the modern style makes this place unique in giving unparalleled service to travellers. situated on the shore of Arabian sea, Bekal enjoys, at the same time reminds us of the beauty of history coupled with colonial influence. The fort made centuries symbolizes the valour and bravery that warriors of freedom fight have shown.

Most tourists who visit Kerala come to experience the cultural ethos of the land and the varied attractions. the rejuvenating old culture and of course, a rich repertoire of monuments, museums, arts, crafts and year round colourful festivals. Truly making it a land where the season never ends.

## **4.EXISTING SCENARIO**

### **Bekal Area Attraction**

Bekal area is enriched with coconuts centred golden sand beaches, offering amazing and idealistic sun set ,these shores fringed with vegetation having different type of cultivation this region having variety colourful art forms and festivals the neighbouring region also contains diversity attractions with variety art forms

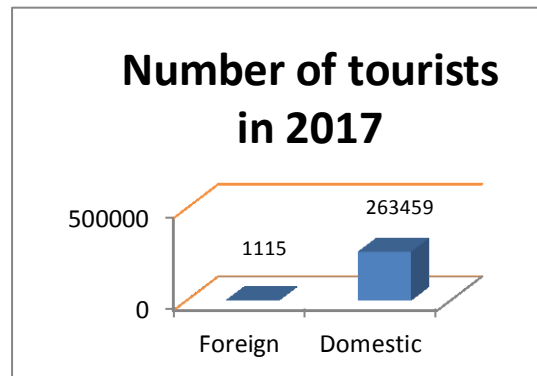
### **Linkages To Other Major Tourist Centers In India**

As indicated above the typical pattern of international resort tourism to India is for one week usually to the golden triangle incorporating Delhi, Agra and Jaipur followed by a week in a resort usually in Goa. This means that the Bekal area needs to be easily accessible to the main tourism centres of the country. As indicated from an accessibility point of view the area seems to be reasonably well placed. It is particularly well situated in relation to the attractions of southern India however in relation to its likely competitor such as Goa to the north and Bhubaneswar on the east coast it may be a disadvantage to some extent ; the additional cost of air transportation. However the cost differences could easily be justified by providing resort amenities and quality standards which exceed that of its competition.

The main tourism attractions of Bekal consist of :

- The Bekal Fort which was constructed around AD 1645
- A long and beautiful coastline comprising long stretches of palm- fringed beaches
- Estuaries and backwaters
- The overwhelming greenery of coconut gardens and hill stations
- Pleasant and pristine environs
- Nearby areas like the Chandragiri fort.
- Exotic art forms like Theyyam

**Tourist flow in bekal region**



(figure 1.3 showing foreign and domestic tourist flow in bekal region)

Source: Kerala Tourism Department)

**5.TOURIST SURVEY**

**Profile of Respondents:** The percentage of male respondents is higher than female respondents with 62 % and 38 % respectively although visitors were approached with no gender discrimination. There are 77 domestic tourists and 23 foreign tourists with a percentage ratio of 77:23, in those 77 % respondents 43% are within Kasaragod district and 57% outside the Kasaragod district.

**Age of respondents**

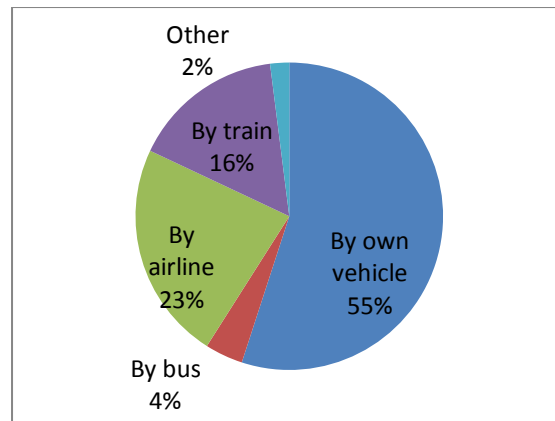
	Frequency	Percent
below 18	13	13
18-25	46	46
26-35	17	17
36-45	16	16
46-55	6	6
above 55	2	2
Total	100	100

(table 1.1 showing occupation wise distribution of respondents source :primary survey)

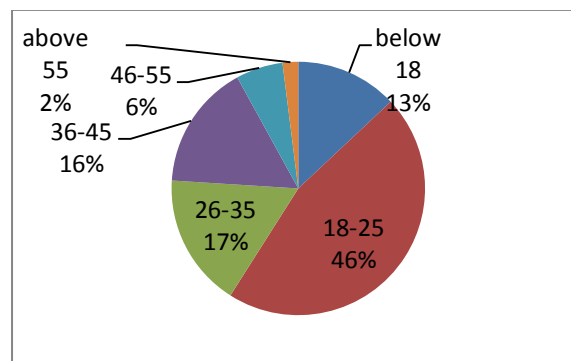
It has been found from the age wise classification of respondents that age of 18-25 years (46%), followed by those in age group 26-35 years (17%), 36-45 years (16%), 46-55 years (6%) and above 55 years (2%).

**Mode of Travel**

According to Primary survey the Domestic tourists in Bekal mode of travel pattern shows that 55 % tourists coming by own vehicle, 16 % tourists coming by train, 4 % tourists coming by Bus, 2 % coming through other modes and foreign tourists coming by airlines



(Figure 1.4 showing respondents Mode of Travel source :primary survey)



(figure 1.5 showing age of respondents source :primary survey)

According to primary survey only 38 % respondents are satisfied with connectivity to the site/ approach road because of bottle neck narrow roads. Kappil beach tourist spot has no proper approach road and approach road towards Chandragiri fort is not maintaining properly.

While considering public transport only 43 % are satisfied with public transport to the site. There is no direct public transport service to the site. They have to depend on the trains and buses servicing in between two urban centres Kanhangad and Kasaragod. Kanhangad and Kasaragod are well connected towns. Kasaragod is district head quarters so it's well connected with all parts of the Kerala and Karnataka state. Mangalore, major urban centre is 50km from Kasaragod town. Mangalore is well connected with major cities in the world. Coming to traffic directions and management, 100% not satisfied with traffic directions and management towards the site. There are no proper sign boards towards the tourist destination.

Tourist place of Stay of respondents:

only 25% people are staying more than one day in the Bekal, 57 % not satisfied with the quality of the accommodation, 100 % satisfied with the price of boarding in this tourist destination which is reasonable.

In tourist spots, presence of Tourists Security Personnel is very less. 39% tourists are not satisfied therefore with their limited services; Chandragiri fort and Kappil beach doesn't have any Security Personnel for that matter.

#### PRESENCE OF RESTAURANT/MOTELS/SHOPPING

Nearest refreshment center is located almost 1km from the site. 100 % tourists are not satisfied with the Restaurant/Motels/Cafeteria etc . 100 % tourists are not satisfied with the lack of possibilities of shopping. There is no tourism related shopping facilities in the Bekal region

62 % Tourists not satisfied with the Toilet facility in the site, because of lack of maintenances Kappil beach don't have any Toilet facility. 77 % Tourists not satisfied with the waste disposal and other sanitary arrangements at the site .

#### TOUR OPERATOR FACILITY

There are some private tour operators in Bekal but they are not mainly concentrating on the Bekal region. They are not operating any daily tour circuits or any other tour activities related to Bekal. There is No Initiative from the Government for Tour Operating in the Bekal Region. In primary survey 61% are not satisfied with Organization of the local transportation services.

### 6.PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The planning strategies to re-imagining of Bekal fort region in Kasaragod

The Site analysis and survey results implied that Bekal and Kasaragod town should expand its Tourism resources and infrastructure to meet international standards in order to be competitive with others districts in Kerala and other regions in the country.

A.region level strategies:

Except Bekal fort, tourism sector in the planning area is in an ascending stage; currently the hotspots are not well-documented, and the tourism activities are unorganized. Hence, the first and foremost need of this sector is identifying and documenting the tourism hotspots, assess the infrastructural needs and shortcomings and identify linkages and supporting infrastructure that have to be created. Tourism circuits, optimally linking these hot spots, and organized tour operations have to be proposed.

For improving tourism, systematic networks for public transport system should be established. Additionally, various modes of transportation within tourist areas should be introduced to serve tourists accessibly and conveniently.

Tourism Promotion Zone

Bekal area is earmarked as Tourism Promotion Zone to promote farm tourism, experience tourism, home stays, etc. The water body in this proposed tourism promotion zone is proposed to be replenished by river, storm water run-off and rain water harvesting and thus making it a perennial water body. Aqua culture shall also be promoted here. Water sports and adventure are proposed to be launched in this water body.

Modernization of existing park at bekal

Some tourism activities have been already started in this area. The existing tourism activities are to be strengthened by providing more facilities and amusement items to the tourists visiting there. The site analysis and survey results implies that Bekal park should expand its tourism resources and infrastructure to meet international standards.

It is suggested to establish a branding of Bekal to enhance its image in the national tourism and create international recognition. The branding of Bekal is to develop tourism image through slogan, logo, emblem etc, to enhance brand equity of destination attractiveness.

Improvements to kasaragod town

Though rich in resources, Kasaragod Tourism Region covering the entire district lacks adequate promotion and supporting infrastructure. The potentials are relatively under explored and it is evident from tourist arrival statistics. This is true for Kasaragod town also. The southern area of the town comprising of riverfronts, small

islands (thuruthus), beach, Central Area and the rest of the peninsula is enriched with both manmade and natural heritage. On the other hand, human interference and activities with little consideration to conservation of the rich heritage still continue; which is expected to grow more in future, needs effective interventions. This place is characterised by environmentally sensitive areas due to presence of riverfront with saline intrusion. This calls for conservation of the same and developments without adverse effect on such areas. However, the standing testimonies of the history and culture of the town and areas of outstanding natural beauty and environmental significance are under threat. The very identity of the town is getting 'endangered'.

Kasaragod town and premises constitute the major commercial complex attracting floating population to the central area. Like in many other towns in Kerala, the location of this land use has its contribution in giving impetus to development of trade and commerce in the central area.

City level strategies

[a] Conservation of Heritage Buildings

[b] Transformation / demolition of other buildings to harmonize with the heritage built space

[c] Creation of additional built space in harmony with the heritage built space

[d] Improving the circulation pattern

[e] Creation of organised parking space

[f] Conveniences to the floating population coming to the premises

[g] Landscaping & general improvement of the layout

- RENOVIATION OF SEA VIEW PARK

Sea-View Park is situated near the central area of the town at Thayalangadi, near the

Thalangara- Karanthakkad road, with a good view of the Chandragiri River. It is famed for its beautiful views and serenity, but requires considerable development. As of now even the existing park and facilities are not being used by the public.

The Development Plan proposes the renovation of Sea View Park, and the project

includes:-

- River front Walkway, Landscaping
- Lighting/Illumination
- View point
- Street furniture
- Boat jetty
- Kiosks and Eateries
- Public comfort stations
- Tourist information centre

Prospects of public –private partnership shall be explored and assigned priority in materialising the project.



## 6. CONCLUSION

Kasaragod is the gateway to Kerala at the North from the State of Karnataka. Bekal Fort is a main attraction of the region and is an established tourism spot of international acceptance and fame. The site analysis and survey results implies that Bekal should expand its Tourism resources and infrastructure to meet international standards in order to compete with others districts of Kerala and regions through systematic networks of public transport system. Additionally, various modes of transportation within tourist areas, promoting new locations and circuits - as a part of marketing campaign, is recommended to develop and leverage new venue for revenue generation, from tourism, through establishment of Arts and crafts village, Development of new location (Hidden sports) and development of new Tourist circuits. Bekal Tourism should be given immediate attention and the developmental procedures should be accelerated. It will enhance the local run business and the attitude of localites also will change .Many resorts are already functioning in and around the area, which need a scientific Approach for refreshing them

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