

## **Problems and Prospects of Eco Tourism, with Special Reference to Konni**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes." Eco tourism means responsible travel to natural areas, conserving the environment, and improving the well-being of the local people. Konni Ecotourism is situated in Pathanamthitta district in Kerala. The main attraction in Konni is the elephant capturing and taming activities which dates back to 1810. The study is helpful in finding out the opinion of tourists coming to the eco tourism site of Konni about the sites and the facilities provided at the site. Data were collected from 50 tourists who visited Konni eco tourism site. The study tries to throw light on the prospects of Konni as an eco tourism site.*

**Keywords:** Tourism, Eco-Tourism, Konni.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Tourism is travel for pleasure; also the theory and practice of touring, the business of attracting, accommodating, and entertaining tourists and the business of operating tours. Tourism is one of the World's largest and fastest growing industries. The world Tourism organizations (WTO) statistics indicate that tourism industry will continue to expand over years. According to WTO, international tourists arrivals worldwide will reach 105 billion by 2020. It was felt that both international and domestic tourism can contribute towards regional development within a country.

Ecotourism is a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural areas, intended as a low-impact and often small scale alternative to standard commercial tourism. Its purpose may be to educate the traveller, to provide funds for ecological conservation, to directly benefit the economic development and political empowerment of local communities or to foster respect for different cultures and for human rights.

Konni, a forested village in the State of Kerala in South India, situated on the bank of Achencoil River. The forests, repository of rich biodiversity were constituted into Konni Reserve Forests and Achencoil Reserve Forests by Maharaja of Travancore way back in 1897 and 1901 respectively, which are among the oldest reserve forests in the state.

The elephant camp at Konni serves as a hub of forest-based ecotourism activities in Southern Kerala. Various locations in forest areas also have been developed, which can be accessed through trekking in forest.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

Tourism industry is one of the industries in which Kerala has a lot of potential to develop. Konni is one of the famous tourism sites in Kerala attracting a large number of tourists. The present "study on the problems and prospects of ecotourism with special reference to Konni" is helpful in finding out the opinion of tourists about Konni as a tourist site and their opinion about the facilities provided there. Because of the cited importance it is worthwhile to conduct a study on the above mentioned topic.

## OBJECTIVE:

The study was carried out with the following objectives:

1. To find out whether the facilities provided to the tourists are adequate.
2. To assess whether the pollution control measures taken in the area are adequate.
3. To understand the challenges in the site.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

**Population:** Population of the study consisted of all tourists coming to Konni.

**Sample:** 50 tourists were selected using convenient sampling.

**Source of data:** Both primary and secondary data are used. Primary data were collected from selected respondents and secondary data collected from articles, journals, web sites etc.

**Tools of Analysis:** Simple percentage method is used in analysing the data.

Simple percentage = Number of respondents/ Total number of respondents\* 100

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Kathleen L. Andereck and Christine A. Vogt(2016): The study "The Relationship between Residents' Attitudes toward Tourism and Tourism Development Options" explores the relationship between resident attitudes toward tourism and support for specific tourism development options. In addition, attitudes and support for development in seven diverse communities are compared. Results indicated that communities differ with respect to residents' support for specific tourism development options and attitudes toward tourism. In general, residents perceive tourism positively and support most specific types of development. There is a relationship between attitudes and support for development, although the nature of the relationship is different for each community.

Manika Singla (2014): " A Case Study on Socio-cultural Impacts of Tourism in the city of Jaipur, Rajasthan: India" is paper that focuses on the community perceptions of the socio-cultural impacts of culture and heritage tourism in particular and examines the extent to which they coincide with the tourism impact literature. This study not only deals with socio-cultural impacts perceived by residents as the impacts of tourism development but also identifies the effects of demographic variation on the residents' attitudes towards tourism. Considering the relationship between residents and tourism, the study also tries to analyze this relationship in the context of what residents consider as important: community or personal issues. The paper uses Rajasthan as an example to illustrate the multifarious impacts of tourism.

Shihabudheen N, (2012), conducted a study entitled "Problems and Prospects of Ecotourism in Kerala: Some Empirical Evidence from 'Kumbalangi' Panchayat In Ernakulam District (India)", to make a case study of the problems and prospects of ecotourism in Kerala based on a field based survey at Kumabalangi panchayath. The study revealed that The most important issues associated with the tourists at Kumbalangi tourism spot in Kerala is the poor infrastructure facilities. Poor publicity regarding the tourism services is another problem. The study suggested to provide better road lines, air ports, accommodation facilities, drainage and sanitation facilities etc. at the tourism area to improve the potential of tourism in the selected area.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

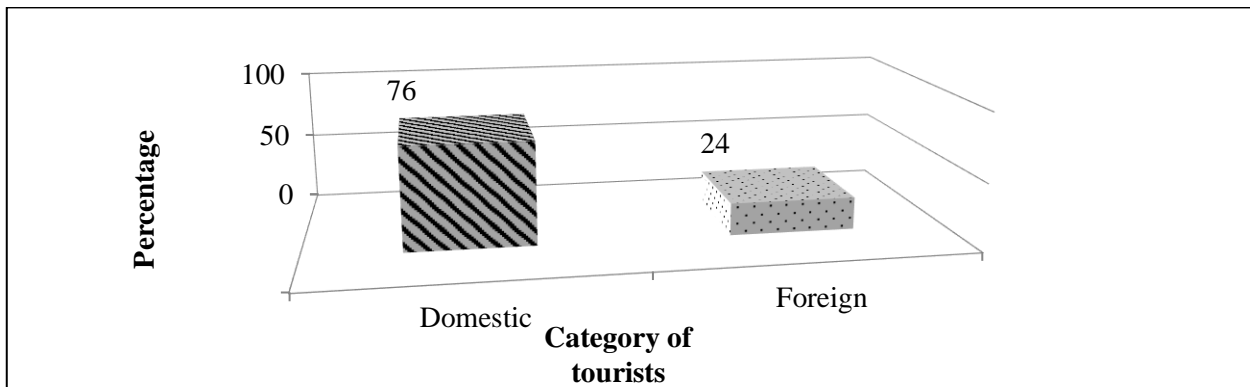
**Table No 1: Table showing the category of tourists**

Category of tourists	No. of respondents	Percentage
Domestic	38	76
Foreign	12	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Primary data

**Interpretation:** The above table shows that the most number of tourists arriving Konni is domestic tourists. Foreign tourists are second in position.

**Chart No 1: Chart showing the category of tourists**



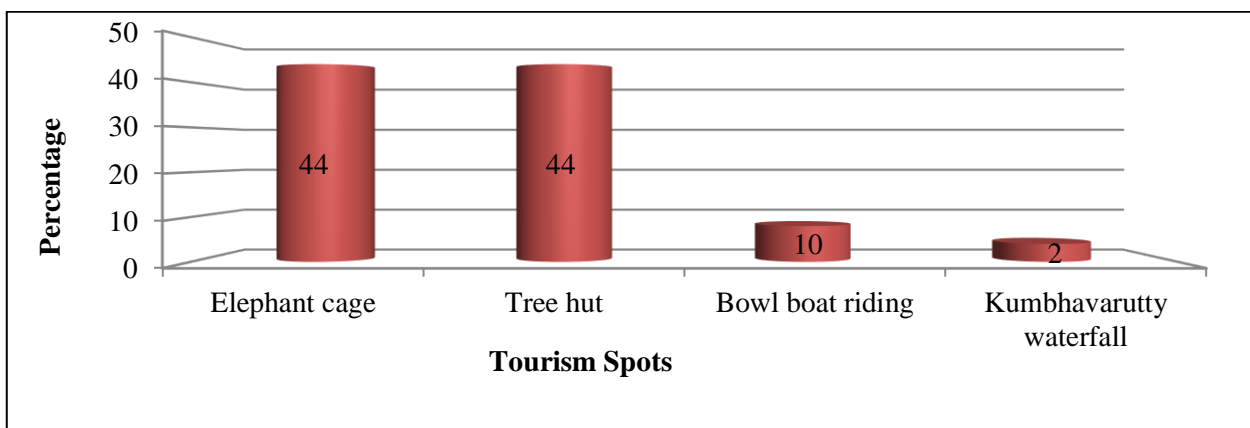
**Table No 2: Table showing opinion about the most attracted site in Konni**

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Elephant cage	22	44
Tree hut	22	44
Bowl boat riding	5	10
Kumbhuvurutty waterfall	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Primary data

**Interpretation:** 44% opinioned that elephant cage is the most attracted site and other 44% opinioned that tree hut is the most attracted one. 810% have the opinion that bowl boating is most attracted to them and only 2% thinks kumbhuvurutty waterfall is the attracted site.

**Chart No 2: Chart showing the opinion about the most attracted site in Konni**



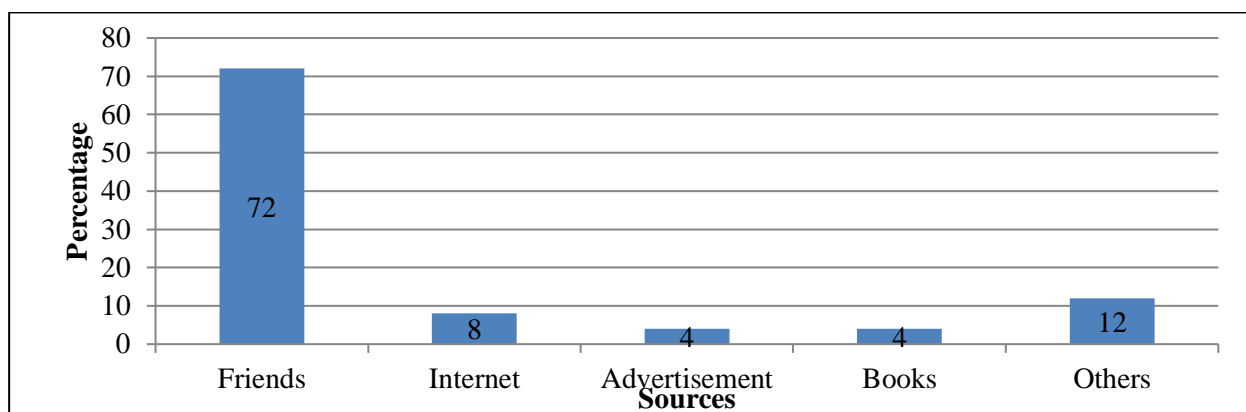
**Table No 3: Table showing from which source they came to know about Konni**

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Friends	36	72
Internet	4	8
Advertisement	2	4
Books	2	4
Others	6	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Primary data

**Interpretation:** 72% of respondents know about Konni from their friends, 12% get information from other sources, 8% get idea about Konni from internet and 4% came to know about Konni from advertisements and books.

**Chart No 3: Chart showing from which source they came to know about Konni**



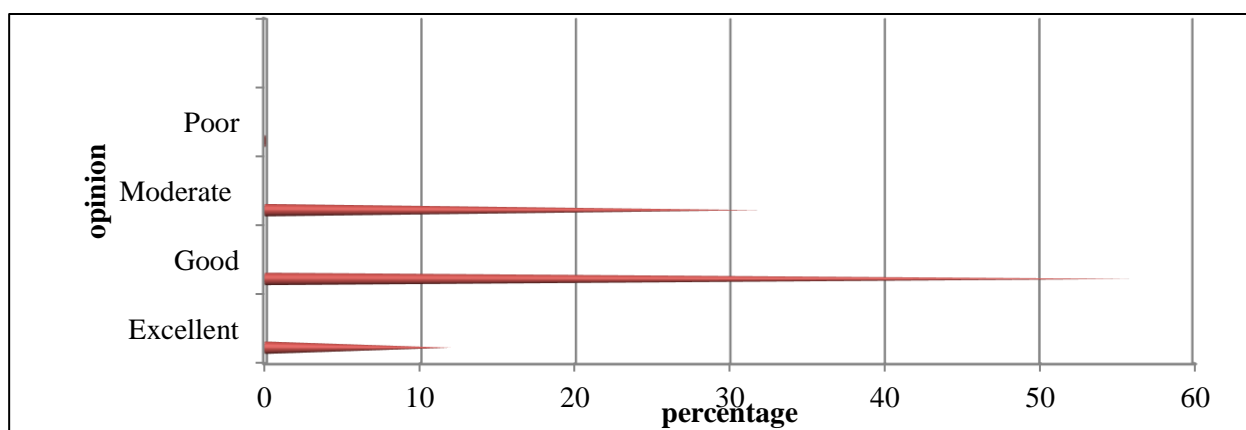
**Table No 4: Table showing opinion about the transportation facilities**

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Excellent	6	12
Good	28	56
Moderate	16	32
Poor	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

**Interpretation:** 56% thinks that the transportation facilities provided are good, 32% have the opinion that transportation facilities provided are moderate, and 12% opinioned that the facilities are excellent.

**Chart No 4: Chart showing the opinion about the transportation facilities**



**Table No 5: Table showing opinion about service provided by the local people**

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Excellent	14	28
Good	34	68
Moderate	2	4
Poor	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

**Interpretation:** 68% opinioned that the services provided by local people are good, 28% are of the opinion that services provided are excellent and 4% opinioned as moderate.

**Chart No 5: Chart showing the opinion about service provided by the local people**



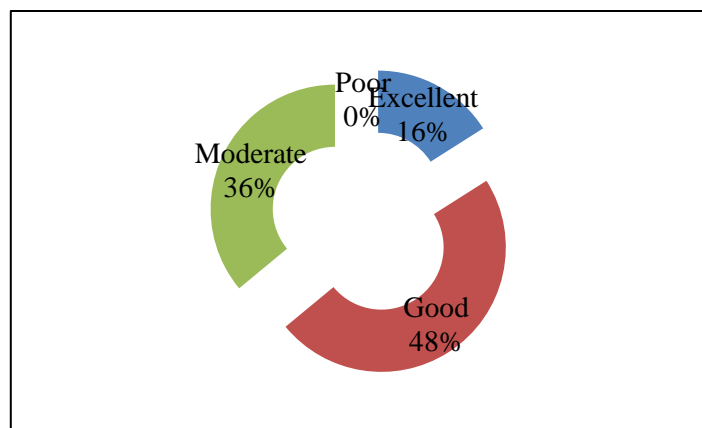
**Table No 6: Table showing opinion about facilities provided in the site**

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Excellent	8	16
Good	24	48
Moderate	18	36
Poor	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

**Interpretation:** It is inferred from the above table that 48% of the respondent thinks that the facilities provided in the site are good, 36% responded that the facilities are moderate, and only 16% have the opinion it is excellent.

**Chart No 6: Chart showing the opinion about facilities provided in the site**



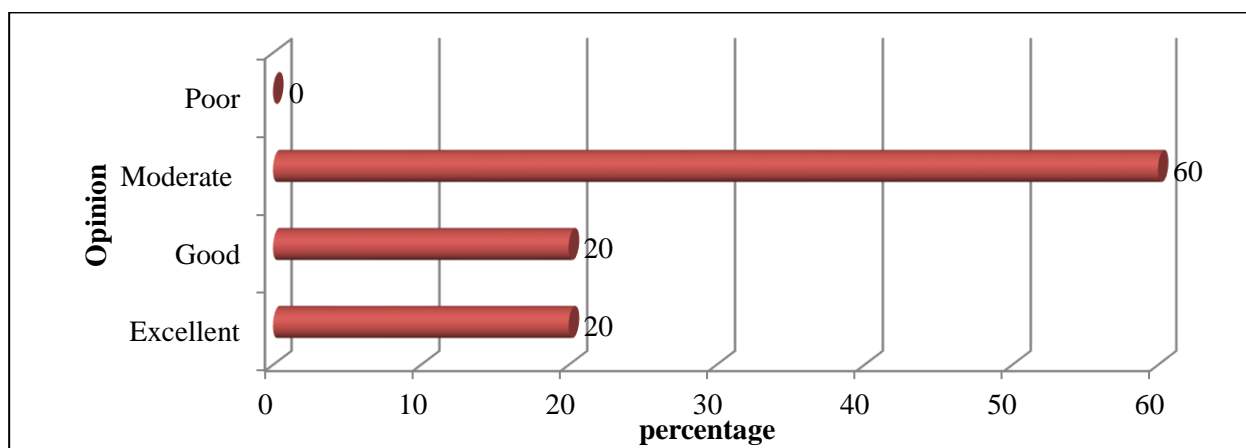
**Table No 7: Table showing opinion about security measures taken by the authority**

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Excellent	10	20
Good	10	20
Moderate	30	60
Poor	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

**Interpretation:** The above table shows that 60% of respondents say that the security measures taken by the authority are moderate and 20% are of the opinion that the security measures taken are excellent and good.

**Chart No 7: Chart showing the opinion about security measures taken by the authority**



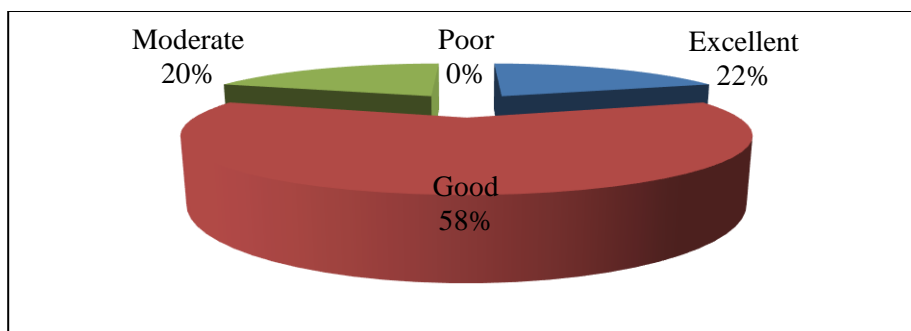
**Table No 8: Table showing opinion about pollution control measures taken by the authority**

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Excellent	11	22
Good	29	58
Moderate	10	20
Poor	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

**Interpretation:** 58% are of the opinion that the pollution control measures taken by the authority are good while 22% opinioned that the pollution control measures taken are excellent and 20% as moderate.

**Chart No 8: Chart showing the opinion about pollution control measures taken by the authority**



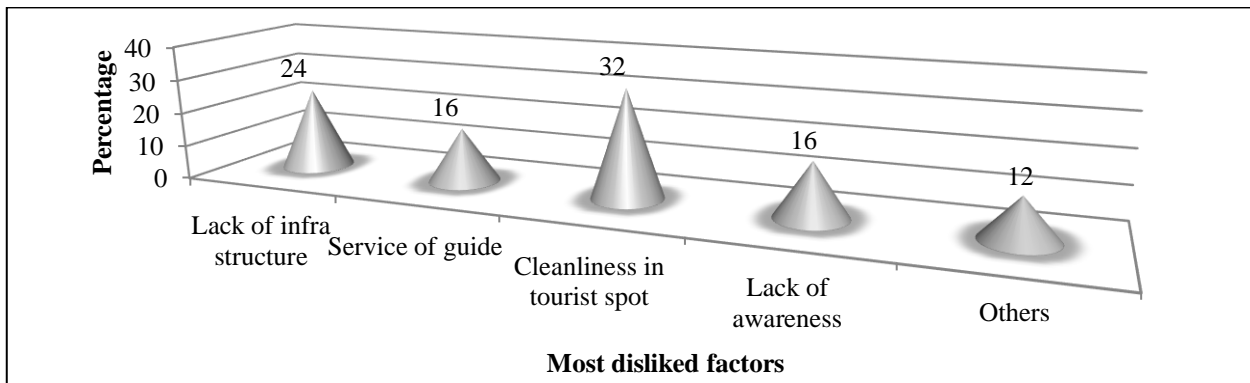
**Table No 9: Table showing opinion about most disliked during the visit**

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Lack of infra-structure	12	24
Service of guide	8	16
Cleanliness in tourist spot	16	32
Lack of awareness	8	16
Others	6	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

**Interpretation:** The above table shows the most disliked factor during the visit. 32% are disliked due to lack of cleanliness in the tourist spot, 24% disliked on the basis of lack of infra- structure facilities, 16% opinioned their dissatisfaction is due to the poor service of the guide and lack of awareness about the site and the remaining says that the other factors disliked them.

**Chart No 9: Chart showing the opinion about most disliked during the visit**



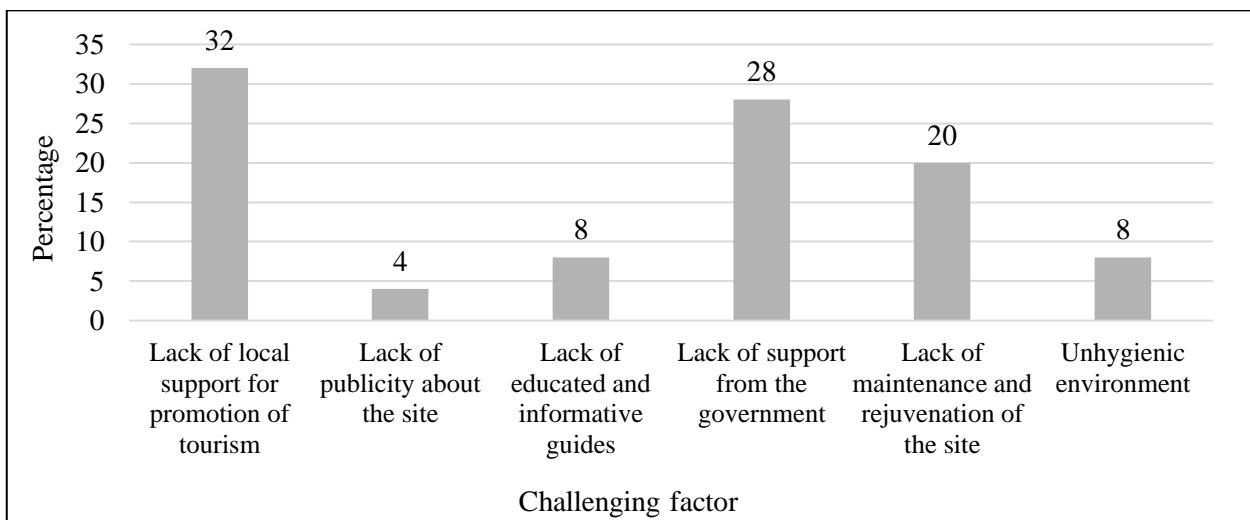
**Table No 10: Table showing the challenges being faced by the ecotourism site**

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Lack of local support for promotion of tourism	16	32
Lack of publicity about the site	1	2
Lack of educated and informative guides	3	6
Lack of support from the government	14	28
Lack of maintenance and rejuvenation of the site	10	20
Unhygienic environment	4	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Primary data

**Interpretation:** Lack of local support for promotion of tourism is the most challenging factor. 32% of respondents gave it first rank. 28% of respondents opinioned that lack of support from government is the most challenging factor. Lack of maintenance and rejuvenation of the site is in third position. Lack of educated and informative guides and unhygienic environment are the next most challenging factor. Lack of publicity about the site is in the last position.

**Chart No 10: Chart showing the challenges being faced by the ecotourism sites**



## FINDINGS:

The major findings of the study were:

1. The most number of tourists arriving Konni is domestic tourists. Foreign tourists are second in position.
2. 40% respondents visit Konni a first time and other 40% visits Konni for more than twice.
3. 60% select Konni as their destination because of its natural beauty.

4. 44% opinioned that elephant cage is the most attracted site and other 44% opinioned that tree hut is the most attracted one.
5. 72% of respondents came to know about Konni from their friends.
6. 56% thinks that the transportation facilities provided are good, 32% have the opinion that transportation facilities provided are moderate, and 12% opinioned that the facilities are excellent.
7. 68% of respondents are of the opinion that the services provided by local people are good, 28% are of the opinion that services provided are excellent and 4% opinioned it as moderate.
8. It is inferred that 48% of the respondent thinks that the facilities provided in the site are good.
9. The opinion shows that 60% of respondents say that the security measures taken by the authority are moderate.
10. 58% are of the opinion that the pollution control measures taken by the authority are good while 22% opinioned that the pollution control measures taken are excellent and 20% rate it as moderate.
11. 60% have responded that the site is well maintained, 28% opinioned that the site is not maintained properly.
12. 72% of the respondents are of the opinion that the trip meets their expectation, 20% opinioned that the trip does not meet their expectation and the remaining 8% have no opinion.
13. For 32% tourist most disliked factor is lack of cleanliness in the tourist spot and for 24% it is lack of infrastructure facilities
14. Lack of local support for promotion of tourism is the most challenging factor of tourism in the eco tourism site.

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

1. Even though Konni is popular and famous to the tourists in Kerala and other states, the sites need more popularity to bring more tourists from abroad through advertisements, books, social media and other advantageous sources.
2. More improvement is required in transportation, accommodation, and sanitation facilities provided to the tourists.
3. The authorities should place sign boards in important tourist sites so that the tourist can access to the sites without any interruption.
4. The direct intervention of government is necessary to enhance the tourism activities for making the sites more attractive.
5. The attitudes of locals towards tourism and tourists should be modified to bridge the gap between them.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Konni is a hub of a variety of tourism spot which includes elephant training center, Achencoil river and kumbhuvurutty waterfalls. The Adavi Eco-tourism project is jointly launched by the departments of Forest and Tourism is part of the Konni Eco tourism project. The study was an attempt to understand the opinion of tourists about the site and to understand the major challenges and attractions of the site. Elephant cage and tree hut are the most attracting spot for the tourist. Lack of local support for promotion of tourism is the most challenging factor of tourism in Konni and lack of cleanliness in the sites create most dislike in the minds of the tourist.

To put in short, preventive measures must be taken to evacuate the negative aspects and make sure that the potential of the area to be fully utilized so that we can ensure that the total development of Konni by attracting more and more tourists to make the ecotourism more flourishing.

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