

The Blue Flag Programme and Destination Image: A Study on Eden Beach, Puducherry, India

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INTRODUCTION

Beach tourism offers enormous economic benefits to local communities and also causes many environmental and social impacts on the coastal environment. Many people choose to take a holiday at a beach destination because they want to relax, escape and participate in beachfront recreation (Lucrezi and Vander Walt, 2016). India, with a coastline of 7516.6 km (Centre for coastal zone management and coastal shelter belt, 2017), has a wide variety of beaches on its shoreline that offer recreational activities to tourists. Foundation for Environment Education in Denmark (FEE) has awarded Blue Flag Certification to two new beaches in the year of 2021, namely Kovalam in Tamil Nadu and Eden beach in Puducherry, India. A Blue Flag beach is an eco-tourism model that aims to offer tourists clean and sanitary bathing water, facilities/amenities, and a safe and healthy environment while providing sustainable development to the local community. Around the globe, only 47 countries have achieved this blue flag certification for its beaches.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researchers have studied the destination image of Puducherry as a beach tourism destination, with special reference to Eden beach, Puducherry. With the support of literature studies, the assumption that a positive destination image also promotes the intention of tourists to revisit, thus bringing sustainable development to the destination, is justified.

RESULTS

The results are theoretical. The study is based on Eden beach, Puducherry. The results show that the destination image encourages the intention of tourists to revisit and loyalty to the destination. This research is significant for the future as it helps to propagate India's image as a clean and green beach tourism destination, thus creating a positive destination image among domestic and international travellers.

DISCUSSION

On achieving this Blue flag certification, the destination image of Pondicherry as a beach destination, a union territory in India, creates loyalty to destination that encourages the intention to revisit the destination among tourists that ultimately benefits the stake holders of the destination and helps in achieving sustainable development.

CONCLUSIONS

The connection between the destination image, destination loyalty and intention to revisit is clear and proven in many other research findings. Therefore, future researchers can also focus on other beaches in India with Blue flag certification and their role in promoting tourism in that region, as well as the image of a tourist destination and the tourist's perception of a tourist destination on other blue flag beaches of India.

KEYWORDS: Beach tourism, Blue flag, Destination image

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