

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF TOURISTS VISITING CHANDRAGIRI ESTUARY, KERALA

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**ABSTRACT :** The socio-economic status of visitors plays an important role in increasing the economic status of the country in the tourism sector. The data was collected by interviewing 50 people randomly. The survey showed that the majority of the recreation visitors were men. Most of the respondents were young people and less senior individuals. Students spend more time at the estuary. The majority of respondents had less than or equal to 8 years of schooling. The average monthly salary of the respondents was less than 5,000 rupees. Most drove their own vehicle and travelled less than 10 kilometers. Respondents indicated the main reason for visiting the estuary was to enjoy the aesthetic beauty.

**Key words :** Estuary, recreation, socio-economic, tourist.

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### INTRODUCTION

The tourism and recreation sector is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the world and plays an important role in the social and economic development of the country. Tourism is usually considered a solution to macroeconomic problems and a factor of social change (Khaled, 2009). In India, tourism is one of the most important sectors of the country's economy, contributing a significant share of the national income and generating employment. Therefore, to accomplish socioeconomic development, small countries give more priority to the tourism sector than large countries (Louca, 2006).

Socioeconomic studies are very important for the formulation of effective developmental programmes in any industry. A socio-economic study requires knowledge of both sociology and economics. Some authors defined it as a branch of knowledge that expresses the conditions of people within the existing social structure and economic framework. In other words, socio-economic factors apprise the social and economic factors that affect the quality of life of a community. According to Maclver (1924), economic phenomena are constantly influenced by various social needs and activities, which in turn constantly change, create, shape and alter the social needs

and activities of all people. The social impact lies in the unity in diversity and in the possibility of learning about the way of life of others, which can be very interesting for tourists as well as for the local population. Tourism has a great impact on the economy of the destination, allowing the development of various businesses and infrastructures.

The objective of this study was to identify the socioeconomic components that influence visitors. This will allow policymakers and managers to develop tourism policy proposals that favour tourism management and contribute to the further development of the estuary, especially in these areas still in preliminary stages, thus time to promote an appropriate planning and management model.

### METHODOLOGY

A total of 50 respondents were randomly selected from tourists visiting the Chandragiri estuary. Questionnaires were developed to collect primary data on socioeconomic conditions, gender, marital status, age distribution, literacy, occupation and other economic activities. The collected data were tabulated numerically and analyzed using simple statistical methods in Microsoft

Excel (2016 version).

## RESULTS

### Gender and marital status

The gender and marital status of the visitors are shown in Table 1. About 64% of the respondents were men, and the remaining 36% were women. More than 58% of the respondents were married, 34% were single and 8% were widows or divorced

**Table 1 :** Gender and marital status of tourists.

S. no.	Particulars	Status	Frequency	Percent to total
1.	Sex	Male	32	64
		Female	18	36
2.	Marital status	Single	29	34
		Married	17	58
		Divorced/ Widowed	4	8

### Age group of tourists

The age range of visitors is shown in Table 2. Over 32% of the respondents were below 25 years age group, 24% of respondents were between 35 and 45 years old, 20% were between 25 and 35 years old, 16% were between 45 and 55 years old, 4% were between 55 and 65 years old and the remaining 4% were beyond 65 years.

**Table 2 :** Age group of tourists.

S. no.	Age group (years)	Frequency	Percent to total
1	<25	16	32
2	25-35	10	20
3	35-45	12	24
4	45-55	8	16
5	55-65	2	4
6	>65	2	4

### Occupational status

Table 3 shows the occupational status of respondents in the sample. The highest 24% of the respondents in the sample were students, 22% were workers and 14% were who run their own businesses. The percentage of those employed in the private sector was 12%. About 10% of the respondents were non-working spouses, 8% were government employees and the rest were farmers and retired officials.

### Educational level

Table 4 indicates the educational level of visitors seeking recreational benefits from the Chandragiri estuary. The respondents were divided into four educational categories based on the number of years they

**Table 3 :** Occupational status of tourists.

S. no.	Occupation	Frequency	Percent to total
1	Govt employee	4	8
2	Private employee	6	12
3	Retired from service	2	4
4	Farmers	3	6
5	Labourers	11	22
6	Non-working spouse	5	10
7	Own business	7	14
8	Students	12	24

**Table 4 :** Educational status of tourists.

S. no.	Years of schooling	Frequency	Percent to total
1	≤ 8	20	40
2	8-12	17	34
3	12-16	9	18
4	>16	4	8

had spent in school. About 40% of the respondents had less than or equal to 8 years of education, while 34% had between 8 and 12 years. Only 18% of those interviewed had completed 12-16 years of schooling, while only 4% had completed more than 16 years.

### Income status

Respondents were classified into six categories based on their monthly income. The income status of visitors surveyed for this study is shown in Table 5. About 36% of the respondents earned less than 5,000 rupees per month, 22% earned more than 30,000 rupees per month, 16% earned 5,001 to 10,000 rupees per month, 12% earned 10,001 to 15,000 rupees, and 12% earned 15,001 to 20,000 rupees per month. Only 2% of the respondents earned Rs. 20,001-25,000 per month.

### Mode of travel

Table 6 shows the mode of transportation used by the tourists to reach the estuary. According to the table, 60% of the respondents used their vehicle, 26% used rented vehicles and the remaining 14% of respondents used alternative modes of transportation including buses, trains *etc.*

### Distance travelled

The distance travelled by respondents to visit the estuary is shown in Table 7. The table shows that 62% of respondents travelled a distance of less than 10 kilometers, 22% travelled a distance between 10-20 kilometers, 10% of respondents travelled between 20-30 kilometers and 4% travelled 30 to 40 kilometers. Only 2% of respondents travelled a distance of more than 40

**Table 5 :** Household income of tourists.

S. no.	Monthly income (Rs)	Frequency	Percent to total
1	< 5000	18	36
2	5000-10000	8	16
3	10001-15000	6	12
4	15001-20000	6	12
5	20001-25000	1	2
6	> 30000	11	22

**Table 6 :** Mode of travel to the estuary.

S. no.	Mode of travel	Frequency	Percent to total
1	Own vehicle	30	60
2	Hired vehicle	13	26
3	Others	7	14

**Table 7 :** Distance traveled to the estuary.

S. no.	Distance (Km)	Frequency	Percent to total
1	<10	31	62
2	10-20	11	22
3	20-30	5	10
4	30-40	2	4
5	>40	1	2

**Table 8 :** Reasons for visiting the estuary.

S. no.	Reasons	No. of respondents	Percent to total
1	Recreational fishing	8	16
2	Enjoy the aesthetic beauty	42	84

kilometers to reach the estuary.

### Reasons for visiting the estuary

Table 8 shows the reasons given by respondents for visiting the Chandragiri estuary. The main reason for visiting the estuary was to relish aesthetic beauty (84%) and recreational fishing attracted 16% of the visitors to the estuary.

## DISCUSSION

The majority of respondents seeking recreational benefits were men whereas, women avoid visiting such places alone. Since the majority of respondents were married and arrived in groups or with families. Similarly, Dardis *et al* (1981) and Hong *et al* (1996) suggested that tourists' marital status also has an impact on tourists' spending behaviour. It was found that the majority of visitors were young, seeking recreational opportunities depending on their interests and leisure time. For senior adults, age-related issues may have restricted them from travel, even if they were free. Visitors were distributed

among the various occupational groups. The top two groups were students and workers. This may be due to the availability of time to visit the estuary. In addition, people who work in the private sector and those who own their businesses are more likely to visit, probably to take a break from their daily chores. Non-working spouses were also quite common among female tourists, as they had more time to spend with their families. There is a close relationship between the level of education, employment status, and income. The educational level of visitors is satisfactory. About 40% have less than or equal to 8 years of schooling, including students and only 4% have studied for more than 16 years. Income has been identified as the most important variable in determining tourist demand (Crouch, 1994). The majority of visitors belonged to the low-income category, as they were local visitors living near the Chandragiri estuary; it was not difficult for them to reach the site, and there was no entrance fee to visit the site. Unisa *et al* (1990) also concluded that young persons came in large numbers and frequently, and visitors from all educational levels as well as from all occupational categories visited places of worship.

The majority of visitors drove themselves to the location as they were from local areas and were convenient to travel. Because of less transportation services in the area, 13% of respondents used hired vehicles as their source of transportation. Most visitors came in the owned vehicles as they were from the surrounding area and it was more convenient to drive there. Since there are few bus services in the area, 13% of the respondents used a rental vehicle as a means of transportation. The majority of visitors come from local areas to view the estuary, within a 10-kilometer distance. Local tourists from farther places may not prefer the place because other places like Bekalfort, Ranipuram, and Ananthapura Lake Temple offer better amenities. Consequently, the number of visitors traveling more than 40 kilometers is quite low. The aesthetic and scenic beauty would be the main incentive to visit. The majority of respondents are giving major importance to enjoying the aesthetic beauty of the Chandragiri estuary. Only 16% of people came to the estuary for recreational fishing. Tourism is also not well developed in the Chandragiri estuary due to a lack of boating and resort facilities. Lin *et al* (2021) concluded that creating parking spaces, providing a comfortable resting place, facilitating the exchange of ideas, and improving the environmental literacy of the public will increase public attention to issues such as village visibility, people interaction, ancient architecture, culture and totems, public health and

transportation, and entrepreneurial development, as well as address the concerns of local residents.

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