

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM: KERALA PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Responsible tourism is the form of sustainable tourism, however as often the word sustainability is often hackneyed and not understood, responsible tourism has been taken on as a term used by the industry. Responsible tourism is any form of tourism that can be consumed in a more responsible way. Responsible Tourism initiatives at Kerala came up with outstanding results and emerged as the model for all other states those who interested to implement this initiative. In addition to this, the programme scored different national and international recognitions. Responsible Tourism (RT) - A pioneering and extensive concept of Kerala Tourism completed its phase one program with noticeable milestones. As the initial phase, this initiative was introduced at four destinations viz. Kovalam, Kumarakom, Thekkady and Wayanad. Among these destinations Kumarakom evolved as the success model for responsible tourism and was honored by Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India for the best Responsible Tourism initiative in Kerala.

IndexTerms - Kerala, Tourism, Responsible Tourism, Sustainability.

1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism means “travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes”. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people who “travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited.” Tourism is the popular global leisure time activity. In dictionary of Geography tourism is defined, “as making a holiday involving an overnight stay away from the normal place of residence. This activity may be based on the cultural, historic, and social attractions of an urban centre, or on the appeal of a different environment. “Tourism increases the importance of the central place while tourism at the periphery can provide the income for economic development.”

1.1 RESPONSIBLE TOURISM (RT)

“Responsible tourism complies with the principles of social and economic justice and exerts full respect towards the environment and its cultures. It recognizes the centrality of the local host community and its right to act as a protagonist in developing a sustainable and responsible tourism. Responsible tourism actuates to foster a positive interaction between the tourist industry, the local communities and the travelers”, defined by AITR’s members in 2005.

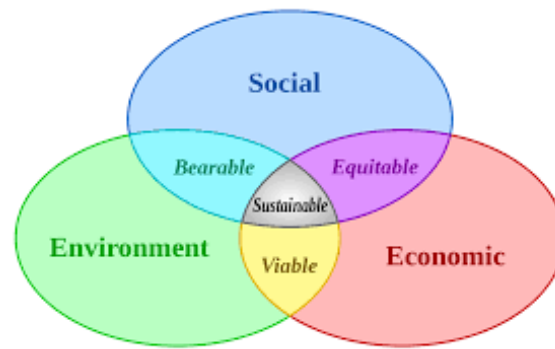
Descriptive research design was employed to examine the current status of the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats of the Kerala Responsible tourism

Responsible tourism has become a movement. It’s broad and diverse; there’s an advance guard; there are laggards and hangers on; there’s now a “fringe” event each year at WTM on the night before World Responsible Tourism Day. The movement remains relatively clear, and there is debate and a ratchet effect as potential rise – entries which won in 2004 wouldn’t make the short list in 2009. But for the movement to continue the change, we need to avoid disobedient tourists and uncontrollable locals, we need activists in destinations and tourism enterprises, and we need travelers and holidaymakers to hold the operators and accommodation providers to account. If a consumer is dissatisfied with the sustainable credentials of a property which relies on one of the eco-labels for its credibility, there’s little that they can do – they have no contract with the label provider and therefore no redress. The explicit RT claims made by the operator or a host who provides accommodation as part of the contract and redress can be sought.

Responsible Tourism (RT) is mainly conceived with three kinds of responsibilities which are termed as the ‘triple bottom-line’ economic responsibility, social responsibility and environmental responsibility. Though the concept of responsible tourism was there right from 1996, it was after the Cape Town Declaration of 2002 that a complete picture of responsible tourism - including its aims, and factors evolved. RT encompasses all forms of tourism and seek to minimize negative economic, environment and social impact. It generates greater economic benefits to local people and enhance the welfare of local communities. It also makes positive hand-outs to the maintenance of natural and cultural heritage, and continuance of the world’s diversity.

DIMENSIONS OF RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Figure 1.1



ENVIRONMENT: To reduce the environmental impact created by tourists.

SOCIAL : To give the local population a central role in the touristic development of their own territory. The involvement of the local community through a participatory democracy and in the decision-making process is essential for a sustainable touristic development. To respect the local culture by including its essence in the overall touristic development. Focusing on and creating an awareness of the local culture, its traditions, the lifestyle, the local gastronomy, the handcraft, etc.

ECONOMIC: To generate equally distributed economic benefits for the local population and its hosting territory.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

John P. Lea* (1993) depicted a preliminary overview of the growing “responsible tourism” and travel ethics literature and explores the significance of anti-tourism activity in the Indian State of Goa. The origins of ethical concern about tourism development in the Third World are traced in both the sociology of development and environmental ethics literature. The author viewed that, new secular and religious writings single out the traveler and the tourism industry as objects of ethical concern.. it stated like that a three-part grouping into Third World development ethics, tourism industry ethics, and personal travel ethics categories is suggested.

Jithendran Kokkranikal, Alison Morrison (2002) This paper provided a conceptual framework and descriptive case study within which to analyse an example of indigenous entrepreneurship as evidence in the operators of a houseboat tourism product in the State of Kerala, India. Conclusions are drawn relative to the sustainability of both the product and indigenous entrepreneurial activity. Within developing countries it has been identified that one means of achieving sustainable tourism is through the effective engagement of local communities. In particular, this involves the encouragement of indigenous entrepreneurship, often in the forms of self-employment and small-scale enterprises. The aim is to maximise potential economic and social benefits of tourism development within the host destinations.

G. Poyya Moli (2003) This paper analyzed the threats to peace and sustainability and indicates that the newly emerging Heritage Eco-cultural Tourism holds the key for the promotion of peace and sustainability. There is an urgent and growing need for local/ regional/ national/international peace and security. through this study they may be broadly ascribed to the increasing conflicts arising out of social, economic, religious and political factors. Peace and sustainability, considered as the indicators of development are threatened due to a myriad of conflicts and they are more visible than ever before in India. Tourism considered as a Global Peace Industry has greater potentials to reduce these conflicts.

Himani Kaul, Shivangi Gupta et.al (2009) The paper explored the economic importance of sustainable tourism by outlining the strengths and challenges of the Indian tourism industry. The paper has implications for the government and firms in terms of investment in hospitality education, infrastructure and better employment practices. The paper combines analysis of government documents as well as insights from practitioners. The paper discusses issues of sustainable tourism, strengths of the industry, challenges faced and policy implications for the government. The paper aims to provide a holistic perspective on various dimensions of sustainable tourism. The discussion with key practitioners authenticates the issues that have already been identified.

Paul S. Gonsalves (2014)⁷ This article provided a brief summary of how a concern for the impact of tourism in developing nations have mushroomed into a global network dedicated to making tourism's impact less devastating on host cultures and less superficial for tourists.

R. George and N. Frey (2010) The paper suggested that despite general positive attitudes towards RTM, tourism businesses are not investing time and money into changing management practices. This is a common emerging market phenomenon where resource constraints negatively impact the relationship between what businesses would like to do and what actually gets done. Factors such as the perceived cost of RTM, a highly competitive environment and a perceived lack of government support are further negatively influencing this relationship. They recommended that how social marketing can be used to encourage businesses to adopt RTM practices by reducing the perceived and actual costs of implementing RTM. That means what channels should be implemented to facilitate change.

Makarand Mody et.al (2014) They contributed through their study as one responsibility-specific push and one pull factor to the literature about travel motivation. They also suggested that operators and destination marketers must develop their products and marketing communications to address the heterogeneity of motivations underlying responsible tourism. They also addressed the scarcity

of research concerning the demand side of responsible tourism, the present study examines the motivations of domestic and international travelers in India. They collected data by using an Internet survey distributed via e-mail and Facebook to the clients of five responsible tourism operators in India. Using Dann's push-pull typology, factor analysis uncovered nine underlying motivations for responsible tourism, with significant differences between domestic and international travelers for these factors. Cluster analysis revealed three distinct segments of travelers – Responsible, Novelty Seekers, and Socializers – that differ in their core underlying motivations for responsible tourism and in their socio-demographic characteristics.

Paul V.Mathew and SreejeshS.(2016) examined the impact of perceived responsible tourism on perceived quality of life of communities in tourist destinations and to analyze the mediating role of perceived destination sustainability. A questionnaire-based survey conducted to collect responses from a sample of 432 residents from 3 different tourism destinations in India. From the data analysis, it was found that as the residents of the local community, perceived responsible tourism plays a pivotal role in the formulation of perceived destination sustainability, which in turn impacts their perceived quality of life. Thus, the study offered the implications for the successful management of tourism businesses as well as the community sustainability and their well-being.

3 RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN KERALA AN ANALYSIS

Kerala, located in the southern part of Peninsular India, is widely known for its good climate, backwaters, Ayurvedic, marvellous beaches as well as its rich history and heritage. The plentiful natural and cultural wealth, along with its educated and hospitable people, forms the basis of the State's vibrant tourism industry. Realizing the tremendous potential of tourism, the growth paradigms and the need for promoting it along sustainable lines, an action programme for practicing Responsible Tourism (RT) was developed in 2007 involving elected representatives, NGOs, policymakers, industry practitioners, community leaders, social activists, environmentalists, media persons, academicians and other tourism stakeholders. It was decided to practice RT by giving appropriate weightage to social, economic and environmental aspects, with the cooperation and support of all the beneficiaries in the tourism business.

In 2008, the Responsible Tourism initiative was implemented on a pilot basis in four destinations across the Kerala, covering diverse geographical regions namely; Kovalam (beach), Kumarakom (Backwaters), Thekkady (Wildlife) and Wayanad (Hill station). The action plan for practicing RT was developed in a participatory framework and implemented through a consultative process, keeping in consideration the basic tenets of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council criterion. The introductory stage of the first phase involved scientific assessment of the daily requirements of hotels, resorts, accommodation establishments and other service providers in tourism. Concurrently, a tourism resource mapping of the locality was done to recognize areas where the community can get suitably involved in the tourism activity. This was followed by a sensitization programme for the local community and industry to accept and practice RT in the larger interest of the society, tourists and tourism business. By initiating a participatory approach in tourism, RT was able to generate a better places for people to live in and visit

Responsible Tourism (RT) in Kerala is primarily conceived with three kinds of responsibilities which are termed as the ‘triple bottom-line’, they are economic responsibility, social responsibility and environmental responsibility. The RT programmes encourage agricultural activities and proved that it can be gainful even in a tourism-driven economy. The Responsible Tourism experiments brought many peoples who had left farming in the wake of tourism, back to the farming sector. The various manufacture units under the RT programme have not only provided a livelihood to the villagers, but have also instilled self-confidence in them and confidence in self-sufficiency. The NREGA programmes are being sync with the RT activities. One such activity nowadays (obvious to any tourist to the village) is that of people remove weeds from the waste ponds. Enabling these ponds for fish farming, convert the fallow land into cultivable land and many other environment-related activities add to the ecological enrichment of Kumarakom. So the proposed study will be more relevant as it tries to assess the role of responsible tourism activities in the sustainable development of Kerala.

The Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala conducted a state-level consultation on responsible tourism in association with the International Centre for Responsible Tourism - India (ICRT India) and EQUATIONS (Equitable Tourism Options) at Thiruvananthapuram on the 2nd and 3rd of February, 2007. The workshop was attended by a number of stakeholders, including government representatives, local-self-governments, tourism industry partners, civil society organizations, academicians, media and also MLA's of Kerala Legislative Assembly. At the end of the workshop, a state-level committee was constituted, namely, State Level Responsible Tourism Committee (SLRTC) with representatives from various sectors to take forward the discussions that emerged during the workshop and to move towards a responsible tourism destination.

Kerala is one of the prime tourism destinations on the national and international map and it is consider as the tourism trendsetter in the country. The availability of plenty of natural resources, skilled manpower, helpful entrepreneurial community, strong local-self-governments, civil society organizations, multitude of micro enterprises, streams of professionals and academicians, responsible media and responsive tourism industry, provide the state an ideal setting to implement and practice 'Responsible Tourism'. The initiative was first implemented at four destinations, including [Kumarakom](#), [Kovalam](#), [Wayanad](#) and [Thekkady](#). Among these destinations Kumarakom was honored by Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India for the best Responsible Tourism initiative in Kerala and it also bagged the national award for rural tourism. Other significant destinations now in this initiative include Kumbalangi in Ernakulam, Vythiri and Ambalavayal in Wayanad and Bekal in Kasaragod.

As the best way to take full advantage of the positive impacts of tourism and minimize the negative ones, Responsible Tourism (RT) is getting wide acceptance across the world today. Pioneering the concept of RT in India is Kerala. Kumarakom, in the State, has the pride of being the first place on the country to have successfully introduced RT. This form of tourism is helping travelers, the host population and the trade also get the greatest possible benefits from tourism, without causing any ecological or social damage. What is perhaps more remarkable is the fact that RT is providing better living conditions for the rural community. Following the success of

Kumarakom, RT is today being implemented in other tourist destinations across the State and which helps the overall development of tourist destinations of Kerala. Hence the proposed study tries to analyse the role of responsible tourism practices in the sustainable development of Kerala

ACTIVITIES RELATED TO RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN KERALA

Some of the activities which help to promote responsible tourism are:

Fallow land cultivation and enhanced agricultural production: The RT Cell, mobilized Kudumbashree volunteers to take up paddy cultivation, vegetable cultivation etc., in the fallow land. A number of homestead farmers were motivated to take up vegetable cultivation to enhance vegetable supplies to local hotels. **Fish Farms and Lotus Cultivation:** The mission took up the cleaning of rural ponds and promoted fish cultivation with the assistance of local community. The tourism industry is the ready market for the produce of the fish farms and lotuses. **Development of Souvenir Industry:** A local craftsman who was struggling to survive in conditions of extreme poverty was assisted in making models of boats and houseboats, which are typical tourist attractions.

Promotion of Cultural Tourism and Ethnic Cuisine: Tourists interested in experiencing local culture are also usually interested in enjoying local ethnic cuisine. This Wayanad. RT Cell started two ethnic food corners in the premises of the Pookot Lake and near to Edakkal Caves. The shop in Pookot Lake Edakkal Caves

Environmental Responsibility: Like other responsibility areas, Environmental responsibility activities have been strengthened by RT Cell in Wayanad. Control plastic pollution in Pookot Lake, Clean Sootchipara program, Street Light Survey, Environment Survey, and study on sacred groves are some of the key interventions by the Cell.

Labor Directory: To boost local employment in tourism sector, RT cell collected details of labors in various sectors at Kovalam. It anticipated ensuring the availability of experts and professionals in various fields as per the needs.

In addition to this, Establishing linkages with hotel industry and enhancing demand for local produces, Destination Resource Directory, Energy Saving Measures, Environmental Survey Streetlight Survey, Village Life Experience Packages, Zero Tolerance Campaign, Study on Sacred Groves, Kerala Cafe at Trekking, Traditional flower garland making, Weaving of Panampu / Muram, Fishnet stitching, Bamboo curtain making, Weaving of Kanadi Paya, Traditional Kovil (temple) visit, Traditional tribal food making, Bamboo handicraft unit visit, Garden visit, Bee-keeping unit visit, Tribal Anganvadi / nursery school visit, Demonstration and playing of Paliyakoothu musical Instruments, Paliyakudi Mariyamman Kovil visit. The traditional Paliyakoothu is also included in the package as an optional activity, etc. are the some other activities included in the promotion of Responsible tourism in Kerala

4.CONCLUSION

Responsible Tourism - the most important initiative in India produced significant outputs at destinations in terms of improved cultivation and community participation. The contributions of Responsible Tourism especially notable in the present scenario, were leading tourism destinations are finding to maintain the in balance their growth in tourism activities and retain their traditional livelihoods, culture and heritage; most of which are indubitably the hallmarks of individual destinations. This has been providing possible by the long-term vision and timely involvement by the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala, which formulated the project in line with the latest international trend in the tourism sector.

The success of Responsible Tourism in destinations and the lead position that Kerala enjoys in the global tourism market, this initiative could be replicated in all leading tourism destinations to ensure sustainability of tourism development efforts adopted by Kerala.

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