RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN KUMARAKOM - AN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Responsible tourism is a management strategy embracing planning, management, product development and marketing to bring about positive economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts. It provides more rewarding holiday experiences for guests, enables local communities to enjoy a better quality of life and conserve the natural environment. This paper analyses various responsible tourism initiatives in Kumarakom, the level of satisfaction among the respondents on various responsible tourism initiatives and the factors simulated the growth of responsible tourism in Kumarakom. Both secondary and primary data were used for the study. The secondary data is sourced from journals, books and websites. Primary data was collected from sixty samples with the help of interview schedules and by applying convenience sampling method. The analysis was made by applying simple percentage, one sample t-test and Friedman's test. The study concludes that alleviation of poverty and employment opportunities is the most dominant factor stimulated the growth of responsible tourism in Kumarakom followed by the need for capacity building and skill development and support to tourism business. Moreover the respondents are satisfied with the responsible tourism initiatives in Kumarakom.

Key words: Responsible tourism, responsible tourism initiatives, satisfaction, economic responsibility, social responsibility, environment responsibility.

Introduction

Responsible tourism is a management strategy embracing planning, management, product development and marketing to bring about positive economic, social, cultural and environmental

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impacts. It provides more rewarding holiday experiences for guests, enables local communities to enjoy a better quality of life and conserve the natural environment. Responsible tourism envisions a triple bottom line approach viz., economic responsibility, social responsibility and environmental responsibility. Though each area has its own relevance, utmost importance is for economic responsibility that seeks to make use of optimum local resources by encouraging local spending, employment generation and promotion of local procurement so that the local economy and the local people get the benefit of tourism development (Paul & Rupesh, 2014).

The responsible tourism initiative in Kerala was first implemented in four destinations viz., Kovalam, Kumarakom, Thekkady and Wayanad. Among these destinations Kumarakom was honored by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India for the best responsible tourism initiative in Kerala and it also bagged the national award for rural tourism. Other significant destinations now pursuing this initiative include Kumbalangi in Ernakulam, Vythiri and Ambalavayal in Wayanad and Bekal in Kasargod.

Responsible tourism generates direct benefits to local people by contributing to the development of local economies which in turn provides better living condition for the host communities. The industry-community rapport created through responsible tourism principles develops a win-win situation and it also makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural diversity.

The process of Responsible Tourism implementation in Kumarakom started with a stakeholder workshop held at Kumarakom on 16th May 2007. The objective of the workshop was to create a broad consensus on adoption of responsible tourism practices by all stakeholders and the workshop was attended by wide range of stakeholders including people's representatives, representatives from government, local-self-governments, tourism industry, civil society organizations, academicians and media. The workshop discussed on the economical, social and environmental aspects of Responsible Tourism and formulated action plans in each area.

Department of tourism decided to appointment a Kudumbashree consultant for Responsible Tourism on field. Panchayat and Kudumbashree consultant started the fieldwork for effective implementation of RT in Kumarakom destination. Consultant conducted a demand analysis survey in hotel industry and prepared an agriculture calendar for the supply of

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vegetables to the hotels and resorts without any break. Panchayat decided to implement economic responsibility as a tool to revive agriculture sector. Each Kudumbashree units formed an activity group containing five members each for each vegetable crop. In such a way 180 groups (900 women) started vegetable cultivation in Kumarakom. Panchayat arranged land for cultivation and supplied fertilizers & seeds to these groups. The supply of local products started moving to the hotels and resorts on 18th March 2008 on the basis of a cluster approach with 11 products. As part of the economic responsibility, Department of Tourism developed different micro enterprises, souvenir units, art and cultural groups in the destination. Among this, a local procurement supply unit named Samrudhi led by Kudumbashree was the key player (www.keralatourism.org).

Review of Literature

The idea of sustainable development has been discussed in tourism research for almost a quarter of a century. During that time, sustainability has become an important policy framework for tourism and regional developers guiding planning and development thinking. Sustainability has also emerged academically as an important field of research with an emphasis on defining the limits to growth and responsibilities in tourism (Saarinen, 2014). Social and environmental impacts, responses and indicators are reviewed for the mainstream tourism worldwide in five categories: population, peace, prosperity, pollution and protection (Ralf, 2012). Responsible tourism is an approach to the management of tourism aimed at maximising economic, social and environmental benefits and minimizing costs to destinations (Responsible tourism policy for the city of Cape Town, 2009). To ensure faster, sustainable and inclusive growth, participation of people from all walks of life is essential especially for the marginalized sector. The concepts of local self-governance and participatory approach pave way for democratic decentralized and sustainable development of villages. In par with these concepts, responsible tourism charts new trend in grass-root level empowerment by ensuring involvement of all the different sectors of society (Paul & Rupesh, 2014). The awareness and implementation of responsible tourism principles is critical for the tourism industry and it serves as an indicator as to whether this sector can contribute toward sustainability in reducing its carbon footprint (Hugh & Baldie)

Objectives of the study

1. To analyse various responsible tourism initiatives in Kumarakom.

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2. To measure the level of satisfaction among respondents on various responsible tourism initiatives in Kumarakom.

3. To identify dominant factors that stimulated the growth of responsible tourism in Kumarakom.

Hypotheses

1. The opinion of the respondents about various responsible tourism initiatives is equal to average.

2. The respondents possess moderate level of satisfaction about various responsible tourism initiatives in Kumarakom.

3. There is no significant difference between mean rank towards the factors that stimulate growth of responsible tourism in Kumarakom.

Methodology

The data and other information required for the study where collected from both secondary and primary data. Secondary data was collected from various journals, websites and other published work. Primary data was collected from sixty samples with the help of interview schedules and by applying convenience sampling method. The analysis was made by applying simple percentage, one sample t-test and Friedman's test. SPSS was run to get the statistical result.

Results and Discussions

The general profile of the respondents is presented in table 1 and it reveals that 58.3 per cent of the respondents are males. Most of the respondents are belonging to the age group of 20 to 40 years. 53.33 per cent of the members have secondary level education and 55 percent of the respondents are self-employed and majority of them earns Rs.5,000 to Rs.10,000 as monthly income.

Table 1 General profile of the respondents

General features	category	frequency	percentage
Gender	Male	35	58.3
	Female	25	41.7
	Less than 20 years	8	13.3

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Age	20-40 years	26	43.3
	40-60 years	17	28.3
	Above 60 years	9	15.0
Level of education	Illiterate	6	10
	Primary	12	20
	Secondary	32	53.33
	College level	10	16.67
Occupation	Self-employed	33	55
	Business	14	23.3
	Private employment	8	13.3
	Govt employment	5	8.4
Monthly income	5000-10000	24	40
	10000-15000	14	23.3
	15000-20000	9	15.0
	Above 20000	13	21.7

Source: field survey

In order to analyse various responsible tourism initiatives in Kumarakom, these initiatives are grouped under twelve different heads. They are (i) fallow land cultivation and enhanced production, (ii) fish farm and lotus cultivation, (iii) establishing linkages with hotel industry and demand for local resources, (iv) development of souvenir industry, (v) community based tourism products, (vi) promotion of art forms and culture, (vii) promotion of cultural tourism and ethnic cuisine, (viii) social awareness and tourism management, (ix) protection of environment, (x) energy saving measures, (xi) comprehensive resource mapping and (xii) destination labour directory. Each of these heads comprises around one to seven sub variables totaling thirty eight sub- variables. The respondents were asked to provide their responses about these thirty eight variables grouped under twelve main factors in a five point Likert's scale. The five different response options are very poor, poor, average, good and very good. These response options carry scores one to five respectively.

One sample t-test was carried out to see whether the opinion of the respondents is equal to average or not. The hypothesis formulated in this regard and the test result is given below:

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Ho: The opinion of the respondents about various responsible tourism initiatives is equal to average.

Ha: The opinion of the respondents about various responsible tourism initiatives is not equal to average.

Table 3 Responsible tourism initiatives – One sample t- test result

Initiatives	Mean value	Test value	t-value	p-value
Fallow land cultivation and enhanced production	14.86	15	.53	0.600
Fish farms and lotus cultivation	11.43	12	3.55	0.510
Establishing linkages with hotel industry and demand for local produce	23.98	21	7.78	≤.000**
Development of souvenir industry	11.75	12	3.46	.060
Community based tourism products	6.22	6	2.15	.036*
Promotion of art forms and culture	7.53	9	8.02	≤.000**
Promotion of cultural tourism and ethnic cuisine	4.82	6	9.19	≤.000**
Social awareness and tourism management	8.76	9	1.39	0.170
Protection of environment	11.76	12	8.85	.057
Energy savings measures	8.88	9	1.35	0.052
Comprehensive resource mapping	3.45	3	5.60	≤.000**
Destination labour directory	3.46	3	8.59	≤.000**

Source: field survey

*Note: ** denotes significant at 1 percent level of significance and * denotes significant at five per cent level of significance.*

The above table shows that the p value is less than **0.05** for six variables and these six variables are (i) establishing linkage with hotel industry and demand for local produce, (ii) community based tourism products, (iii) promotion of art forms and culture, (iv) promotion of cultural tourism and ethnic cuisine, (v) comprehensive resource mapping and (vi) destination labour directory. Hence the null hypothesis concerning these variables is rejected. Based on the

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mean score it can be concluded that the respondent's opinion about four variables is above average and two variables is below average. These four variables are (i) establishing linkages with hotel industry and demand for local produce, (ii) comprehensive resource mapping and (iii) destination labour directory and (iv) community based tourism products. But their opinion is below average as regards two variables. These two variables are (i) promotion of art forms and culture and (ii) promotion of cultural tourism and ethnic cuisine. As far as the rest of the six variables are concerned the opinion of the respondents are considered as equal to average. These six variables are (i) fallow land cultivation and enhanced production, (ii) fish farms and lotus cultivation, (iii) development of souvenir industry, (iv) social awareness and tourism management, (v) protection of environment and (vi) energy saving measure.

To evaluate the level of satisfaction among the respondents about various responsible tourism initiatives in Kumarakom, one sample t-test is applied. The hypothesis framed in this regard and test result is as follows.

Ho: The respondents do possess moderate level of satisfaction about various responsible tourism initiatives of the government.

Ha: The respondents do not possess moderate level of satisfaction about various responsible tourism initiatives of the government.

Table 4 level of satisfaction – one sample t-test result

Initiatives	*Mean*	*Standard deviation*	*t-value*	*p-value*
Fallow land cultivation and enhanced production	3.80	.40	15.362	≤.000**
Fish farms and lotus cultivation	3.65	.66	7.636	≤.000**
Establishing linkages with hotel industry and demand for local produce	4.15	.63	14.070	≤.000**
Development of souvenir industry	3.82	.60	10.607	≤.000**
Community based tourism products	4.37	.61	17.362	≤.000**
Promotion of art forms and culture	3.58	.81	5.440	≤.000**

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Promotion of cultural tourism and ethnic cuisine	3.52	.73	5.523	≤.000**
Social awareness and tourism management	3.55	.57	7.537	≤.000**
Protection of environment	3.63	.58	8.440	≤.000**
Energy savings measures	3.70	.53	10.222	≤.000**
Comprehensive resource mapping	3.65	.63	7.952	≤.000**
Destination labour directory	3.75	.54	10.744	≤.000**

Source: field survey

Note: ** denotes significant at one percent level of significance

The p value concerning all the variables in the above table is less than **0.01**. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected at one percent level of significance. The interpretation is that the level of satisfaction of the respondents about various responsible tourism initiatives in Kumarakom is not moderate (or average). Based on the mean score (all mean scores are above three) it can be concluded that they are satisfied with the responsible tourism initiatives or their level of satisfaction is above average.

To identify the dominant factors stimulating the growth of responsible tourism in Kumarakom, Freidman's test is applied. The hypothesis framed in this regard and test result is as follows.

Ho: There is no significant difference between mean rank towards the factors that stimulate growth of responsible tourism.

Ha: There is significant difference between mean rank towards the factors that stimulate growth of responsible tourism.

Table 5 Factors stimulating responsible tourism

Stimulating factors	*Mean rank*	*Chi square*	*p-value*
Capacity building and skill development	3.49		

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Alleviation of poverty and employment opportunities	2.41		
Marketing of local resources and cost reduction benefits	6.88		
Access to disadvantaged societies	6.49		
Improvements in health and education	6.53		
Reducing tourism carbon foot print and climatic changes	5.98	164.314	≤.000**
Support to tourism business	3.73		
Reduction of all forms of pollution and waste management	5.62		
Involvement of local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances	7.13		
Conservation of social diversity, cultural diversity and natural resources	6.73		

Source: field survey

Note: ** denotes significant at 1 percent level of significance

The p value of the above table is less than **0.01** and hence the null hypothesis is rejected at one percent level of significance. Based on the mean rank, *alleviation of poverty and employment opportunities (2.41)* is the most dominant factor stimulated the growth of responsible tourism in Kumarakom followed by *capacity building and skill development (3.49)* and *support to tourism business (3.73)*.

Conclusion

Six years of experience of implementing Responsible Tourism in Kerala proves the capability of Local Self Government to build industry-community trust and the leadership to coordinate activities in triple bottom line areas. The opinion of the respondents regarding three initiatives viz., (i) establishing linkage with the hotel industry and demand for local resources, (ii) comprehensive resource mapping and (iii) destination labour directory is above average or good and their opinion about other six initiatives is equal to average. But the opinion of the

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respondents about the rest of the three variables is less than average. It means that the efficiency of the responsible tourism initiatives is equal to average or above average. The level of satisfaction of the respondents as regards the responsible tourism initiatives is above average. The conclusion is that the responsible tourism initiatives in Kumarakom has produced significant outputs in terms of enhanced cultivation and community participation. The same is to be replicated in other tourism destinations too to achieve sustainability in tourism.

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