ABSTRACT

The economic significance of tourism in terms of employment generation, income generation, foreign exchange earnings and regional development etc are the major driving force that enables national governments to place tourism appropriately in the development agenda. Among the different states in India, Kerala is a well-known destination for domestic as well as foreign tourists. The development of tourism industry has got great positive and negative impacts in terms of environmental, cultural, social and economic development, which can no longer be ignored. The increase in tourism activity at a destination creates pressures on the quality of life of the destination community. These were the result of unplanned developments in tourism industry and sustainable development was evolved as a measure to mitigate these negative impacts. The present study is intended to suggest a model for Kerala tourism which will ensure sustainable development. A model explains the specified set of dependent relationships that can be tested empirically and the purpose of the model is to Concisely provide a comprehensive representation of the relationships to be tested. Thus the model contains multiple relationships and this has to be empirically tested. The tourism industry includes mainly four stakeholders and it is not possible to test a model using data collected from four different samples. So it was decided to find out the most important stakeholder among the four, based on pilot study conducted and research reviews. There by the resident community was found to play a decisive role in the sustainable development of tourism at a destination. The initiative of Kerala government also supports this view. So the study was indented to develop a model in resident’s perspective and its relation to the stakeholders like the role of government, the impacts of the tourism industry etc. As tourist is the main actor of the industry, the study also tries to find out the satisfaction of tourist with the tourism industry in Kerala. The study covers the areas of tourist satisfaction, the resident community support, the role of government and the impacts of tourism industry in resident’s perspective and finally suggests a model for Kerala tourism which ensures sustainability.

The research design used for the study included exploratory research design which was conducted at the initial part of research and then conclusive research design (including both descriptive and causal research designs) was used. The study used both
primary and secondary data. The secondary data was collected from journals, thesis, reports, books, newspaper articles etc. The primary data was collected from two samples. The population for the first sample data consisted of resident community at the destinations. The population for the second sample consisted of all the tourists (both domestic and foreign) visiting the destinations in Kerala at the point of study. Multistage sampling method was adopted for drawing sample units. A total of 8 destinations were selected and the selected destinations were Thiruvananthapuram city, Kovalam, Alappuzha, Kumarakom, Munnar, Thekkady, Fort Kochi and Cochin city. The analysis was done using SPSS (ver21), AMOS and excel spreadsheet. The different analysis used in the study includes factor analysis, anova, t-test, post-hoc test, paired sample t-test and structural equation modeling.

The results found that the foreign tourists as well as domestic tourists visiting Kerala have got high level of expectations before making their trip, but some of their expectations were not fulfilled with the facilities in Kerala. The study found that there exists difference between the expectation and experiences of the foreign as well as domestic tourists with the different destination attributes of Kerala. The study also found that the demographic variables have got significance in determining the tourist’s satisfaction on different destination attributes. The study found that the 98% of the foreign and 97% of domestic tourists gave their opinion that they will recommend Kerala to their friends and relatives.

The four variables namely Perceived role of government, Perceived costs of tourism, Perceived benefits of tourism and Overall community satisfaction were identified which determine the Community Support of development of tourism. The model ultimately explains the important variables which determine the community support for tourism development in the state of Kerala and also explains the relationship between the variables. The main contribution of the study is the inclusion of the variable the Perceived role of government. The study suggests that for ensuring sustainable development, the Kerala government has to adopt community support tourism models. The study also suggest that the government’s role in building community support for tourism development is pivotal and the different impacts of tourism industry (both benefits and costs) and their overall satisfaction with the tourism industry are the mediating factors which influence the relationship between government and
community. The study suggests that the Perceived benefits of tourism and Perceived role of government strongly affect the community support. The study also explains the limitations and proposes scope for further research.

*Key words: Tourist satisfaction, Community support, Perceived impacts of tourism (benefits and costs), perceived role of government, overall community satisfaction.*