CHAPTER 3: KERALA TOURISM

3.1 Kerala State an Overview

Kerala is the land of “Kera” coconut, also historically with significant milestones; the most popular legend says that the land crust that forms the state was raised from the ocean. Parasurama, the Brahmin avatar of lord Vishnu, had waged an epic series of revengeful wars on the Kshatriyas. In a mood of profound atonement, the sage heaved his mighty axes into the midst of the distant ocean. The waves foamed and frothed as a prawn-shaped land extending from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari surfaced from the depths of the sea to form the state and hence the sobriquet - "Gods own Country" (Government of Kerala, History, 2010). A land with several evidences of ancient civilization with a kind of megalithic monuments, which is similar to Western Europe and Asia, reflects its un-faded traditional background, remaining of the Raja Kingdom, ancient temples with unique traditional and temple architecture styles. 18th century forts, remains of the Edakkal caves go back to the early human settlement of 5000BCs. Together with the song and dances of the people, their ballads, rituals and their intellectual pursuits, Kerala has its own typical arts forms which reflects the life of its people as in the renowned Kathakali, considered as the best in the form of classified drama, rhythmic dance and music: Kerala’s traditional art form “Koodiyattom” is declared as one among the “Masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity by UNESCO (Performing Arts of Kerala, 2008). Geographically Kerala has sun blanched beaches in the western coast, unique backwaters with traditional house boats, vibrant distribution of unique flora and fauna in the mighty wildlife sanctuaries, national
parks and biosphere reserves, misty mountains of the Western Ghats, rivers, lakes, fragrance of spices with unique Kerala cuisines gives meaning to the title “God’s own country”.

In India, Kerala state is the leading state in terms of socio-economic condition with 33.387 million populations with 859 density per S/KM, Kerala’s literacy rate is comparable to the most advanced regions of the world with 93.91 percent (Kerala Government Economic Review Report, 2011). In terms of poverty, Kerala has the lowest poverty rate in India with 15 percent (Lakdawala methodology) or 19.7 (Tendulkar methodology) of population living below poverty line (BPL) which is remarkable compared with the all India figures of 50 percent of people living below poverty line and 77 percent of people living less than 20 rupees per day (<$0.50 per day). Kerala is ranking 2nd in the lowest infant mortality rate of 12 deaths in 1000 birth. In Human Development Index (HDI) Kerala is ranking the highest with 74.0 life expectancy rate. Kerala has the lowest maternal mortality rate of 4.9. (Planning Commission Report, 2010). All these make Kerala, one of the best states in India with high quality of life. Compared to all other states in India Kerala has a very low incidence of child labor. According to the economic review 2011 there are 26156 children as labor in the age group between 5-14 years (Kerala Government Economic Review Report, 2011). This is the lowest rate compared to the other states in India.

3.1.1 Drivers of Kerala Economy

The size of Kerala economy is around 181289.12 Crore in 2011. The compound annual growth rate of Kerala economy is 6 to 7 percentage. The growth of
Kerala economy is driven by the growth in the tertiary (services) sector. The share of the services sector in the overall economy has increased from 38% in 1980 to 81 percent in 2006-2007. While in the secondary sector, manufacturing has marginally declined. In the primary sector, agriculture has seen a significant decline in its share from 37 per cent in 1980 to 17 per cent in 2005 and 15.79 per cent in 2010. Trade, hotels and restaurant (primarily tourism sector) is the largest contributors and accounts for 22 percent of the State’s economy. Other key contributors include real estate and business service with approximately 9 per cent and banking and financial services contribute 6 percent. Constructions contribute approximately 14 percent of the GSDP.

![Sectors of Kerala Economy](image)

*Figure 3.1. Sectors of Kerala Economy.*

The current development pattern of different sectors of the economy shows that primary sector is in a continuing decline, secondary sector is stagnant and tertiary sector is growing. Tourism contributes significantly to the State GDP. In Kerala
tourism is the livelihood for 700,000 people which is approximately 6.2 per cent of the total employment and generates revenue of about Rupees 40,000 million.

3.1.2 International Tourism Trend

In Kerala, service sector including tourism contributes 63.8 per cent of state’s GDP and 17.2 per cent of state’s GDP is contributed by agriculture sector. Foreign tourist arrival in Kerala in the year 2011 is 732985 with a variation of 8.9 per cent increase compared to the year 2011. Domestic tourist arrival in 2011 was 9381445 with a variation of 11.18 percent increase compared to the year 2010.

![Graph showing foreign and domestic tourist arrival to Kerala from 2005 to 2011.]

**Figure 3.2.** Foreign and domestic tourist arrival to Kerala from 2005 to 2011.

In the year 2005 international tourist arrival was 346499 with a variation of 0.27 and domestic tourist arrival was 5946423 with a variation of -4.3 per cent, in 2007 foreign tourist arrival increased to 428534 with a variation of 23.7 per cent and domestic tourist arrival increased to 6271724 with a variation of 5.92 per cent, in 2007 foreign tourist arrival increased to 515808 with a variation of 20.37 per cent and domestic tourist arrival increased to 6642941 with a variation of 5.92 per cent, in
2008 foreign tourist arrival increased to 598,929 with a variation of 16.11 per cent and domestic tourist arrival increased to 759,125 with a variation of 14.28 per cent, in 2009 foreign tourist arrival decreased to 557,258 with a variation of -6.96 per cent the reason can be due to the global economic downturn. In the same year domestic tourist arrival increased to 791,353 with a variation of 4.25, in 2010 foreign tourist arrival increased to 659,265 with a variation of 18.31 percent and domestic tourist arrival increased to 859,507 with a variation of 8.61, in 2011 foreign tourist arrival increased to 732,985 with a variation of 11.18 percent and domestic tourist arrival increased to 938,145 with a variation of 9.15 percent increase compared to the year 2010.

![Figure 3.3](image)

*Figure 3.3. Distribution of district wise foreign tourist arrival to Kerala during 2010 to 2011.*

The district wise foreign tourist arrival to different districts of Kerala in 2010 and 2011 are respectively in Alappuzha 4,197 and 46,019 with a variation of 9.63 per
cent, Ernakulam 277675 and 308674 with a variation of 11.16 per cent, Idukki 48295 and 55778 with a variation of 15.49 per cent, Kannur 5886 and 6038 with a variation of 2.58 per cent, Kasaragod 1679 and 2040 with a variation of 21.50 per cent, Kollam 8211 and 9317 with a variation of 13.47 per cent, Kottayam 32561 and 37573 with a variation of 15.39 per cent, Kozhikode 9037 and 9892 with a variation of 9.70 per cent, Malappuram 16915 and 18394 with a variation of 8.74 per cent, Palakkad 1270 and 1331 with a variation of 4.80 per cent, Pathanamthitta 829 and 964 with a variation of 16.28 per cent, Trivandrum 204049 and 224387 with a variation of 9.97 per cent, Thrissur 4326 and 5011 with a variation of 15.83 per cent and Wayanad 6575 and 7567 with a variation of 15.09 per cent. The overall tourist arrival in Kerala in the year 2010 and 2011 are 659265 and 732985 respectively with a variation of 11.18 per cent increase. The figure also shows that tourism in different districts of Kerala shows a positive increase in the past two years.
Geographical Distribution of Tourism (An in-depth analysis of tourist flow in districts)

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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</thead>
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<td>46019</td>
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<td>239364</td>
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<td>2040</td>
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<td>5011</td>
<td>4326</td>
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<td>Wayanad</td>
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<td>7567</td>
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<td>Kottayam</td>
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<td>27230</td>
<td>24623</td>
<td>37573</td>
<td>32561</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. Ranking of District wise tourist international tourist arrival in Kerala during 2006-2011
Figure 3.1. Ranking of district wise tourist arrival in Kerala (14 districts). Significant growth is noted in only Ernakulum and Thiruvananthapuram, this does not signify that the tourism resources are distributed only in these two district as Thiruvananthapuram is the capital of Kerala and Ernakulum is one of the developed cities and strategically located in the center part of Kerala and two international airports are located in these cities making them accessible to the neighboring destinations. A nominal growth of tourism can be seen in Alappuzha, Idukki and Kottayam, whereas in all other districts tourism is still in its infancy. Based on the statistics by Kerala tourism, the northern districts of Kerala namely Kasragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palakkad which accounts for 45 percentage of the geographical area of the state has only 6 per cent share of international tourist arrival and 20 per cent of share of classified rooms (Kerala Tourism Policy, 2011).

3.1.3 Tourism’s Contribution to Kerala GDP

At present Kerala tourism contributes to 3 percentage of GDP of the state and has a multiplier effect of 2.07 percent. The direct and indirect revenue generated come to 6.9 percent of the GDP. Direct and indirect employment opportunities in tourism industry in Kerala are estimated to be 700000 (Yumnan, 2011).
Figure 3.4. Foreign Exchange Earnings from Tourism in Kerala (2005-2011)

Figure 4.3. Foreign exchange earnings from tourism in Kerala. From 2005 to 2011, it shows that there is a progressive increase of foreign exchange earning from tourism. In 2005 (1552) crore with 22.54 percent increase compared to 2004, in 2006 (1988) crore with 28.09 per cent increase, in 2007 (2640) crore with 32.82 per cent increase, in 2008 (3066) crore with 16.11 per cent increase, in 2009 earning from tourism decreased to 2853 (crore) with a variation of -6.96 per cent. This is due to the global economic downturn. In 2010 earnings from tourism increased to (3797) crore with 33.09 per cent increase and in 2011 foreign exchange earnings increased to (4221) crore with 11.18 per cent increase compared to the previous year.
Figure 3.5. Average spending of International and Domestic Tourists in Kerala (2008-2011)

Figure 3.5. Average spending of international and domestic tourist arrival in Kerala. An international tourist stays an average length of sixteen days. In 2008 the average spending of international tourist per day was Rupees 3200 and the spending remained the same in the year 2009 and it has increased to Rupees 3600 in the year 2010. In domestic tourism in years 2008 and 2009, the average spending was Rupees 1500 and Rupees 1800 in 2010. It is also noted that the average length of stay of International tourists in 2008, 2009 and 2010 was 16 days without any variation. In domestic tourism the average length of stay in 2008, 2009 and 2010 was 6 days without any variations (Kerala Tourism Statistics 2010)

3.1.4 Kerala Tourism Industry

Kerala Tourism is comparatively new and gets a prominent attention in the global tourism market with a well-founded brand name compared to similar types of
tourist destinations in the world. The historical development of Kerala tourism has two stages.

Stage 1 Exploration: It was during the development of Kovalam and Thekkadi during 1970’s and the formation of Kerala Tourism Development Corporation. A network of accommodation units were opened in Cheruthuruthi, Malampuzha, Varkala, Ponmudi and Munnar. This stage was characterised by tourism initiative by government. The private sector had virtually no role at all. Major achievement of KTDC and department of tourism in this stage was the purchase of land in areas of tourist prospects and building of guest houses (Thomas, 2001).

Stage 2 Involvement: Recorded period of 1985-1995, the period was considered as the formative period in the history of Kerala tourism. Destination Kerala got exposed to the international market and the government of Kerala declared tourism as an industry. This was the reflection of overall development of tourism in India. Major issues faced in this stage were lack of infrastructure and entertainment facilities. Major achievement in this stage was the development of Yatrinivas in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Trichur and Kannur and forest lodges built at Neyyar dam. Beach resorts were made in Kappad and Varkala. Facilities for boating opened at major water based tourist attractions. The significant achievement in this period was the extension of beaches in Varkala, Kappad and Paravoor. (Thomas, 2001).

Today, Kerala Tourism has become one of the most popular brands in the World and the state is one of the most popular tourist destinations in India. Kerala’s profile and tourist attraction is significantly different from the other twenty seven
states of India. Kerala tourism is well known for its unique characteristics such as Ayurveda, abundant natural beauty, living culture, heritage, cuisines and backwaters. Even though there are abundant resources and excellent opportunities, the total growth of tourism in Kerala is based on the tourist arrival and still the spending is comparatively low. There are issues from within the industry and outside. These issues have direct impact on the growth and destination image of Kerala tourism. As an international brand, it is important to identify the core components of the tourist destination and isolate the issues that confine the growth of tourism and appropriate measures need to be taken for the resolution of the issues. Crouch and Richie (1999) suggested that, it is possible to analyze the tourist destination efficiency by assessing inputs (the territory’s physical and human resources) and outputs (arrivals, bed nights, employment, customer satisfaction (Botti.L, N, & Robinot E, 2009).

3.1.5 Kerala Tourism an International Brand

For a small strip of land, Kerala’s achievements in the tourism industry are plenty. The National Geographic Traveller ranked it as one of the 10 paradises in the world. In a recent survey of 700 brands in India, Kerala emerged as the only major tourism brand. India’s first planned ecotourism destination developed in south Kerala at Thenmala. Recognized as one of the three best destinations in the world at the tourism for Tomorrow Awards, 2006 by the WTTC Kerala also picked up the PATA grand award and 2 gold wards. At ITB Berlin, 2006 the Kerala Tourism commercial highway bagged the Das Golden Stadttor award considered as the Travel Industry’s Oscar. Kerala also won the best State award for the 3rd consecutive year at the national tourism awards. Kerala was selected the “best tourism performing state”.
The state also clinched awards for the best monument, best resort, best heritage hotel and the best environment-friendly hotel. It also won the PC world web award in 2008 for the best website (125,000 visits at average 7 minutes).

3.1.6 Position of Kerala Tourism Industry

3.1.6.1 The industry outlook

Kerala is known for its natural diversity, Ayurveda (Kerala is the only place in the world where Ayurveda, the ancient form of science and holistic system of medicine based on nature is practiced to perfection (Department of Tourism, 2008 p.13). Festivals of Kerala excel the level of mere entertainment. These cultural heritages emanate the essence of the tradition of the state. Performing arts of Kerala is unique and reflect the living culture of Kerala. “From the renowned Kathakali, considered to be the complete art form as it synthesizes all that is best in the field of drama, music and dance to the folk dances which are reflections of the rhythmic instigations of a sensitive people” (Department of Tourism, 2008 p.13). Kerala has an impressive assortment of historic and cultural monuments, all these resemble the traditional past of the state. These valuable heritages are the reflection of traditional Kerala architecture showing a curious mix of typical Kerala, European, Chinese, Jewish and Arabic styles. Kerala is also an ideal place to shop, traditional crafts which are renowned for its fineness of design. Gradually Kerala has become an icon for its Gastronomy, foods are distinctive as its cultural life with distinctive aroma of spices. Backwaters unified with traditional boat house as unique accommodation is exclusive to Kerala. Boat trips across the serene stretches in the large kettuvallams
(house boats) are an experience unique to Kerala. Approximately 600 Km coastline with sandy beaches, rocky promontories and coconut palms, are proofs that most of India’s finest beaches are in Kerala. Situated at the windward side of Western Ghats, Kerala has a long chain of lush, mist-clad hill stations that are home to an exotic wildlife that offers magical experience of nature. Wildlife sanctuaries are the blessings of Kerala’s nature situated at strategic locations at the Western Ghats. There are fourteen wildlife sanctuaries consisting of some of the most delightful trekking trails in India.

3.1.6.2 The six “S” framework

Kerala tourism has developed a 6S framework as part of the policy and planning initiatives of tourism development in Kerala. Following are the description of these initiatives.

Table 3.3

6S Framework of Kerala Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6S of Tourism Development</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SWAGAT</td>
<td>HOPSITALITY</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Facilitation on Arrival Creating a Memorable experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOOCHNA</td>
<td>INFORMATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing and Promotion Information Dissemination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUVIDHA</td>
<td>FACILITATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accommodation and Stay Amenities and Conveniences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SURAKSHA</td>
<td>SECURITY/ PROTECTION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tourist Safety Environmental Management

SHYYOG  COOPERATION
Coordination Quality Control and Assistance

SANRACHNA  INFRASTRUCTURE
Tourism Product Development
Core linkage and Infrastructure

*Note. Six Hospitality Framework of Kerala: Adapted from Kerala Tourism*

3.1.6.3 *Analysis of resource distribution*

A tourist destination is widely known through the effort of marketing undertaken by the public and private sectors. Tourists are mostly shops their places of interest through produced marketing and promotional materials. These are the road maps for the travellers to find the best place for their trip. Kerala is divided into fourteen districts and enjoys unique geographical features that have made it one of the most beautiful tourist destinations in Asia. The geography of Asia itself has added value to the destination with a pleasant climate, a long coast line of 580 Kilometers (Kerala Companion, 2010). Kerala tourism resources are unique and has continuous demand in the international tourism market
3.1.6.4 The niche products

Kerala is considered as India’s only super brand and the fastest growing tourist destination in India and tourism is a key driver of Kerala’s economy. Kerala’s beaches are truly an amazing sight stretched across 580 Kilometers. Rural hill stations produce world class spices and charmingly exists with unspoilt local culture and traditions. Kathakali and Koodiyattam are some of the examples of rare and authentic complete arts form in the world which replicate the tradition of Kerala. Kerala’s martial arts are some of the rarest and unique which currently draws numerous curious international tourists. Ayurveda today, it is a unique, indispensable branch of medicine- a complete natural healing system. Nearly one – fourth of Kerala is forest land and there are fifteen wildlife sanctuaries, four national parks and 2 biosphere reserves and one tiger reserve invitingly offer an amazing experience in the wilderness to enjoy ecotourism. One of the most popular attractions in Kerala is the backwaters which stretches about 900 kilometers with the splendor of traditional house boats and mouthwatering gastronomic delicacies. Kerala is the land of God’s mighty creation, a perfect blend of nature, culture, tradition and sunny life, all these add up to make Kerala a perfect choice for millions of international and domestic tourists.
Table 3.4

**District wise Tourist Resource Distributions in Kerala (Based on the source from marketing and promotion)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Waterfalls</th>
<th>Ayurveda</th>
<th>Festivals</th>
<th>Backwaters</th>
<th>Pilgrimage</th>
<th>Palace/forts</th>
<th>Hill stations</th>
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</table>

*Note. District wise tourism resource distribution in Kerala*
Table 4.3. Tourism resource distribution in the fourteen districts of Kerala. The categorization is based on the most popular tourism resources in the potential market. These attractions are already developed. There are 9 waterfalls, 70 approved Ayurveda centers, 3 major festivals popular for attracting tourists, 6 backwaters, 9 pilgrimage centers, 12 palaces and forts, 15 hill stations and 26 beaches in Kerala. This record describes the stable distribution of popular tourism resources in Kerala. Based on the marketing and promotional materials used in Kerala tourism, the major tourism resource promotions are highlighted in Ernakulum and Thiruvananthapuram. This is due to the fact that the development of tourism and tourists’ arrival concentrated mostly in these two districts. As seen in the graph, Ayurvedic tourism is significantly marketed and there is an international market demands for this traditional medical science of Kerala. Ayurvedic Tourism (health and wellness) is one of the Unique Selling Point (USP) of Kerala Tourism.

### 3.1.7 Impacts of Tourism in Kerala

#### 3.1.7.1 Community based tourism in Kerala

As Kerala is Emphasizing on local, community-based tourism, pilot projects in four districts, namely Kasaragode (Bekal, Valiyaparamba region), Kannur (Meenkunnu Beach, Thalassery region), Kottayam (Kumarakom, Aimanam region) and Pathanamthitta (Aranmula, Konni region) have already been launched (Business Standard, 2011). Responsible Tourism (RT) - an innovative and far-reaching concept of Kerala Tourism completed its phase one program with noticeable milestones. As a pilot phase, this initiative was implemented at four destinations they are Kovalam, Kumarakom, Thekkady and Wayanad (Kerala Tourism, 2010). Kerala tourism formed state level committees to take up the implementation of responsible tourism in
different tourist attractions such as Kumarakom, Wayanad, Kovalam, and Thekkady which were identified for the implementation of responsible tourism initiative in the first phase (Kerala Tourism, 2010).

3.1.7.2 Kerala’s major socio-cultural and economic issues

In the other hand, agriculture sector, known as the backbone of Kerala economy is continuously in decline over the past 6 years (2005-2011). The share of agriculture and allied sectors in (Gross State Domestic Product) GSDP have come down from 17.48 to 11.54 in the above six years period. The main reason for the decline is the collapse in demand for agricultural commodities and decreased prices in agriculture commodities together with adverse weather conditions and increased production costs and shortage of labor supply. Instability in farm production directly hit the Kerala economy and community income level suffered a severe collapse in the rural socio economic setup over the past six years. Surprisingly, as per the government record, Kerala, the state with a high Human Development Index has got a very high ranking in the crime rate. Kerala’s total crime rates is 166374, 3.7 percentage, which is ranked as the 7th highest in the whole of 27 states of India. Ernakulum is ranked 5th in rate of total cognizable crime in Indian cities during 2009 with 33759, 3.8 percentage of the total among the states of India (National Crime Record Bureau, 2010). Kerala has the highest number of suicides compared to other states of India, which is three times India’s average. In a day approximately 26 people take their lives with a ratio of male and female 18:8 which is approximately 9490 people per year. (National Crime Record Bureau, 2010). As the most literate state in India Kerala has approximately 4.3 million educated unemployed people and this figure include medical graduates and engineers. The number of unemployed people would also grow to around 5
million unless the government charts out a growth plan that would ensure the creation of jobs that people aspire for (Vision 2025 for Kerala State).

### 3.1.7.3 The evil effect of harthal

As per records, there were recorded 301 Harthals observed in the state in the past five years (2006-2010), and in 2011 there were 25 state wise harthals recorded in 2012 until July 31st. A sample of economic loss due to harthal is for an example the average loss per day for Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) which is approximately Rupees 3.5 Crores (35.5 million). These statistics are exclusive of different other strikes in Kerala. Harthal is one of the major political evils directly affecting tourism development.

![Harthal statistics in Kerala (2009-2012)](image)

Table 4.4 Month wise harthals in Kerala for the year 2009 to till date. In 2009, there were 54 state wise harthals that took place in Kerala with the highest in the month of October. In 2010, it was 32 Harthals with the highest in the month of April and May. In 2011 the total state wise Harthals in Kerala were 23 with the highest rate in the month of July. In 2012 until July a total of 18 Harthals took place in Kerala.
3.1.7.4 The evil effect of Harthal – A typical example of extremism in democracy

Thousands of tourists get stranded on harthal day, it is a dreadful for task the tour operators to reschedule the tour program and those who visit Kerala on harthal day will go back disappointed, it is impossible to manage Harthal and tourism together (Association of Tourism Trade Organizations, India (ATTOI). Based on the Kerala tourism statistics approximately 73000 tourists are on road every day, the consequences of harthal and taxi strikes cannot be measured in terms of financial loss alone but the loss of goodwill to the state should also be factored in. It is also evident that there are many tour operators who are unwilling to promote Kerala tourism due to the frequent strikes and harthals. Evidences show that many tour operators end up by compensating the service providers and tourists due to these problems.

3.1.7.5 Occupational diseases

Risk of occupational diseases is another critical issue for the service providers as the drivers as most of the servicecapes are not designed to the comfort the drivers accompanying tourists making their day-today life tough and they end up in sleeping tourist coaches and cars, in unhealthy working environment impacting loss of confidence among these important service providers.

3.1.7.6 Road conditions

Road condition is another issue, most of the international tourists are coming from the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Australia and Scandinavian countries and they always set the standard based on the minimum need required for their safety. Kerala’s road transport system is in extremely poor condition. Improper signage, traffic system, and poor drainage cause accidents and making the trip uncomfortable which adversely affects the destination image (ATTOI,2010).
Hotels, Ayurvedic resorts, homestays, serviced villas and houseboats are running without government licenses, lacking qualified and experienced staff, unprofessional tour guides all add up to negatively impact the growth of tourism industry in Kerala (ATTOI, 2010).

Responsible tourism framework Developed by Department of Tourism (DOT) has highlighted the identification of current issues of tourism development in Kerala, the observation of these initiatives were categorized into three; they are (a) local self-government and civil society organizations, (b) tourism industry (c) state government department and organizations. The major issues identified by the groups in economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects are described in the following table.
Table 3.5

Responsible Tourism Initiatives – Expressing the current issues

Local Government & Civil society organization  →  Tourism Industry  →  Government

### Economic Issues
- Inequalities in special zone
- Importance given only to foreigners
- Publics are not fully aware about the need of the industry
- Lack of initiative of panchayat
- No benchmark data on social, economic & environmental sustainability
- Over dependence on tourism in certain areas

### Environmental
- No destination management plan
- Plastic wastes in backwaters
- Poor waste management system
- Poor environmental practices

### Economic Issues
- Lacking multiplier effect
- Erroneous statistics
- Staff salaries is lower than other destinations
- Shortage of skilled manpower
- Lack of quality products
- Lack of consistency of supply of local products

### Social & Cultural issues
- No recognition of local labor and less opportunities
- Traditional jobs are lost
- Lack of proper capacity development in rural areas
- Commodification of art forms
- The danger of sex tourism

### Economic
- Poor quality of local crafts
- Local productions are not supported
- No standardization of products
- No inventory of locally sourced products

### Social
- Lack of awareness on tourism
- No standardization of education in tourism
- Need for syllabus and curriculum standardization

### Environmental
- Present development pattern is harmful to the environment
- Solid waste is a major issue
- No waste management plans
- Illegal constructions
- No visitor management plan for eco tourism

### Social & Cultural issues
- Mindset of the people
- Industry community gap
- Lack of awareness of tourism
- Mindset of the people
- Industry community gap
- Lack of awareness of tourism

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*Note: From Kerala Responsible Tourism Initiative- A Work in Progress, Department of Tourism, Kerala.*
Looking on the above discussion points, there is a similarity in the view point of ATTOI, which if initiated or implemented, Kerala tourism will witness significant difference in terms of sustainable practice of tourism that benefit local people and culture, economic viability and less negative impact to the environment, the current research is definitely going to prove the management action needed to achieve sustainable tourism in Kerala.

3.1.7.7 Kerala tourism- environmental sensitivity

Majority of Kerala tourism resources are nature based and climate is an element that complement the experience of the visitors in Kerala. Kerala is called as the favorite child of nature. Kerala’s vegetation consists of 11309.4754 Square Kilometers; this is approximately 29 percent of the total geographical area of the state (Keralaforest.org, 2010). Most of them can be explored and potential tourist destinations. Kerala has approximately 1477.393 square kilometers of land used for plantations mostly dependent on the climatic seasons. Out of these figures 13256.8355 hectors of land in 10 districts of Kerala is declared as Ecologically Fragile Land (EFL). There are 56 eco-tourism locations already opened for tourism in 10 districts of Kerala. Climate change is a challenge these days partially responsible for the decline of agriculture economy in Kerala (Kerala forest statistics, 2009). Uncontrolled mining and unhealthy tourism blended with environmental disruption by the common people and the so called ‘development’ is slowly making this place an arid dry plateau (Environmental Report, 2011).

Ecotourism must add value to the environmental conservation and resource protection. There are many worldwide examples which address how well the destinations can be used with a good synergy between environmental conservation and tourism development. Eco-tourism issues are not only by tourism but the effect of badly planned tourism. The beautiful matrix of agro-
ecosystem will be badly affected due to the environmental challenge which will have further consequence on Kerala’s local economic development. As such, tourism development in Kerala needs to consider the significant importance of the environment.

3.1.8 Managerial Action

Tourism development in Kerala is boosted by three major initiatives (a) The innovative aspects of tourism policy guidelines, (b) Role of tourism to meet the objectives of Vision 2025 for Kerala, and (3) The Kerala model development also called as the “Kerala Phenomenon”. The three innovative and creative approaches directly influence the development of tourism in Kerala. This is briefly discussed in this session;

3.1.8.1 Kerala tourism policy

The economic significance in terms of employment, income, foreign exchange earnings and regional infrastructure developments are the major driving force for the government to place tourism in the state’s development agenda (Department of Tourism, 2011). As a developing economy, Kerala can seize a sizable multiplier effect through tourism development, these include addressing the issues of unemployment, and poverty reduction. In order to achieve this effect Kerala tourism highlighted its nature and cultural heritage as its main resource capital. Unique products such as backwater tourism and Ayurveda emerged as the innovations in Kerala tourism resources, which have received international recognition in the past few years. Kerala launched responsible tourism initiatives in 2007 in order to ensure the effective participation of community and leverage the benefits of rural development through tourism. Kerala tourism is looking for a perfect synergy between Public, Private Partnership (PPP) and effective private sector community engagement.
Kerala tourism organizes Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) for Public Private Participation (PPP) and international road shows to infiltrate Kerala tourism in the potential international market. A perfect synergy has been established in the vision and mission statements of Kerala tourism policy, as such the vision emphasizes the sustainable and responsible development of tourism in the state and the mission highlights the multidisciplinary effects of tourism development with world class standard and global visibility, and much expected economic multiplier effects for development.

3.1.8.2 Thrust areas of Kerala tourism policy

1. Quality visitor experience: Deliver world class experience to visitors, provision of basic amenities at the destination, regular improvement in service, maintenance and upkeep of local attractions and destination.

2. Basic infrastructure at the destination: Synergy between local bodies and tourism department. The key areas include water supply, accessibilities, street lights and waste management. A new campaign on “Kerala Waste Free Destination (KWFD) is going to be launched with the effective collaboration of NGOs

3. Managing Tourism Resource: Synergizing for the use of natural resources to pool for tourism development that are currently in the custodianship of wildlife, KSEB, Irrigation, culture and agriculture departments. Infrastructure including the construction of jetties, parking and loading bays for backwater tourism development.

4. Development of local leisure destinations and enhancing local level experiences: Showcasing the diverse natural and cultural heritage and development of thematic museums. Also developing the basic facilities at the lesser known and potential tourist destinations.
5. Assessing the quality of tourist destination: Frequent survey of visitor experience

6. Kerala Clean Toilet campaign (KCT): A zero complaint project that ensure the toilets are in an acceptable standard

7. Environmental friendly practices: With the collaboration of Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) to make sure that the houseboats will have scientific solid and liquid waste management system.

8. “Ban the use of disposable plastics at major destinations such as Kovalam, Ponmudi, Veli, varkala, Alappuzha backwaters, Fort Kochi, Eravikulam, Thekkadi, Pookot lake, Soochipara, Kuruva and Bekal” (Kerala Tourism Policy, 2011).

9. Promotion of local souvenir: Production and marketing of exclusive local Kerala souvenir by making Kerala souvenir shops compulsory in all the classified and approved tourism units and government will support this initiative by providing spaces for exclusive locals wherever possible.

10. Provision of tourist information centers: In every tourist centers, cities and major transport nodes with IT enabled information kiosks.

11. Signage at destination en-route: In highways, road and destinations using color code as an indicator.

12. Grading of wayside establishments

13. Hope-on, hope-off services at Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuza, Fort Kochi, Kochi backwaters and Munnar.

14. Development of accessible facilities for people with disabilities, particularly in museums and zoos, currently in Thiruvananthapuram and Fort Kochi.
15. Lifesaving initiatives: Kerala tourism is heavily reliant on water based recreation, appointing trained lifeguards, providing modern lifesaving safety equipment. In order to help local community “lifesaving volunteer” scheme at high risk water bodies.

16. Tourist warden at tourist destination to avoid tourist harassment and ensure that better host guest harmony exists.


18. Exception of tourism from harthal: Discussion with political parties and trade unions to exempt tourism sector from harthal.

19. Community and Tourism: Local employment, local involvement, local produces and use of local skills for tourism development that benefit destination community. Provide entrepreneurship development program to train Local Level Entrepreneurs (LLE).


21. Taskforce against trafficking and abuse: Collaboration with Social welfare, Education, Law, home, health and tourism department to develop mechanism and action plan to implement and monitor zero tolerance on trafficking, substance and child abuse in tourism.

22. Responsible Tourism (RT) Initiative: Classification based on Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, classified and approved areas will be converted into RT classified units. The establishment is with the collaboration of Tourism department, local government, Tourism industry, self-help groups, NGO’s, department of animal husbandry and fisheries.
23. Investment opportunities: Priority for small and medium scale investments, fast track clearance of tourism investment up to 10 crores. Subsidy to promote responsible tourism with 15 percentage of the investment and subsidy for locally purchased goods, electricity and water charges.

24. Tax Holiday: Luxury tax holiday for accommodation units located in the rural areas in districts such as Kasargod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palakkad and marketing assistance for the infrastructure establishments in these districts. Residential tariff for electricity and water for those operating home stays.

25. Equal importance for domestic and international markets.

26. To tap the emerging international and domestic markets: USA, Scandinavia, Russia, China and Malaysia and domestic markets such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. This is achieved by using internet enabled marketing strategy.

27. Strengthen market research

28. Increase average length of stay: Currently the average length of stay is 16 days, through this effort increase the average length of stay to 21 days.

29. All season Destination: Capitalizing all tourism resources by developing Market Seasonality Matrix (MSM)

30. New destination campaign: Focusing on emerging destinations such as Bekal and Wayanad.

31. Taskforce for marketing: Formulate innovative marketing strategy.


Source: Extracted from Kerala Tourism Policy, 2011
3.1.8.3 Role of tourism to meet the objectives of Vision 2025

The Confederation of Indian Industry’s (CII’s) is an initiative to energize the stakeholders on the developmental potential of Kerala state (Vision Kerala 2025 Report, 2011). Tourism industries in Kerala can directly support to meet the, vision, mission and objectives of Kerala Vision 2025. There are approximately 13 areas where tourism can be included in these optimistic initiatives, they are (a) To make tourism Kerala’s core competency sector, one of the major objectives of vision 2025 is job related aspirations and appropriate skill development of the workforce and creation of suitable employment opportunities are some of the key challenges the state is going to face in the future while tourism industry can be a driver to alleviate severe employment problem in the state. (b) To generate employment and enhance productivity: With the accelerated investment in tourism sector, there are expected to be direct employment opportunities for over 100,000 persons every year. (c) Making Kerala as a premier tourist destination: Through marketing and promotion of tourism national and international levels to get extra mileage for tourist arrivals to Kerala. (d) Endorse the role of the Government as a catalyst and facilitator for tourism growth: Tourism is generally considered as a private sector activity, continuous involvement of government sector to coordinate and regulate the industry for safe, successful and sustainable development. (e) Rationalize tourism related legislation and policies: Both of these are inevitable as tourism is a multi-sectoral activity and is affected by many sectors of the economy, particularly rent control act, Labour Acts, Building Tax Act, Excise Law etc. (f) Create awareness and consciousness among people: The importance of the industry and its sustainability is less known to the general public so to create a successful synergy, conduct awareness programs to taxi drivers, policemen, bus conductors, porters, customs and emigration officers to remove the prejudices and misconceptions and to make Kerala society a tourism
friendly society. (g) Develop and improve infrastructure: road condition, drinking water supply, electricity, sewage and sanitation, signage, road, rail, sea, inland water and air transports. (h) Promote sustainable eco-friendly tourism: Development of tourism based on carrying capacity in the tourist destination for the conservation and preservation of pristine environment. (i) Conservation of art, culture and heritage of the state: Kerala is rich in its unique and authentic art forms, culture and heritage and some of them date back to over thousands of years. (j) Develop and promote new innovative products: Particularly focusing on lesser known potential tourist attractions, art forms, gastronomy, monuments and handicrafts. (k) To identify, conserve and preserve special tourism zones: special guidelines and strategies for selected tourism destinations for long term sustainable tourism growth. (l) Human resource development through regulating the syllabi and training facilities for tourism education (j) To involve Panchayathi Raj Institutions (PRI) and NGOs in the development of tourism infrastructure and tourism awareness (Kerala vision 2025, Ministry of Tourism, 2011)

3.1.9 The Kerala Phenomenon and Tourism

Kerala leads many other Indian states in terms of per-capita GDP of 74620 INR. Kerala’s Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.920 which is higher than that of most of the developed countries. Kerala’s social development is unique in India and the world. This model reflects the paradox of high indication of social development in a comparative low economic growth. The model significantly focuses on the material condition of living (Oommen & Adiseshiah, 2008). The major pillars of Kerala model is due to the impressive health care, political awareness, education and reduced gender gap in learning and land reforms with equity as goal. However, there are certain arguments on the sustainability of the Kerala model due to public action, aging population, superficial social development, lack of productive base in the economy and very high
rate of education. Due to the recent decline of agriculture productivity and industrial stagnation in the state, economic development has significantly been affected. Yet, growth in the tertiary and service sectors of Kerala has seen with hope and optimism in the Kerala’s economic development.

“Kerala model is defined as the Kerala’s high standard of living (comparable to US or, Europe) at very low per capita income which is only 1/80th of US citizens’ per capita income. This model refers to a set of economic practices developed in the state of Kerala, resulted in attaining high level of standards in human development, despite having very low industrial development. This anomaly of high social development despite economic backwardness is variously known as the Kerala Model” (Kerala Economy, 2011, p.4). Modern economic theory says that this combination of underdevelopment and high standard of living is impossible. The main reason for this phenomenon is (a) ‘states’ natural and human resource distribution: The population density among the highest in the world and the proximity of people has made it easier to provide quality health care and education. It has also prevented an urban-rural economic gap. (b) The state has traditionally sufficient rainfall and as such there is no severe water scarcity (c) Kerala is dependent on its coconut groves, rice field and garden produce for food (d) Kerala history has a place with strong activist leaders and organization and public agitations and equality, the state has never experienced communist or socialist revolution, but has instead worked through a strong democratic system regardless of who is in the office, present worker movements have organized and won many radical reforms” (Kerala economy, 2011, p.5). Since service sector is continually growing, tourism industry development in Kerala has a significant contribution to boost the Kerala economy.

3.1.10 Socio – Cultural Issues of Kerala Tourism
Even though, the beneficial side of tourism development is quite promising, there are many social issues that are also evident in Kerala due to tourism development. Under coastal Women’s forum hundreds protested against the World Tourism Day celebration on 27th September in Thiruvananthapuram. The coastal Women’s forum protested against the theme “Tourism Open Doors for Women” in 2007. As the community strongly experienced the negative impact of tourism development particularly of marginalized communities.

“The draft Coastal Zone Management Plan prepared by Ministry of Environment and Forests, India government excludes tourism projects from Coastal Zone Regulations, is a clear testimony of the biased and anti-people policy framework from the policy makers. The zone demarcations being proposed under the draft document will further cut off fisher people’s traditional access and right to the sea and the coast. As further stretches of beach are bought by hotel and tourism lobbies, privatized coasts will mean no place for drying fish, mending nets, or carrying out all the ancillary activities that provide fisherwomen a means of survival”. (Kerala Tourism Watch, 2007)

The above issue is highlights a typical unorganized and biased development of tourism without protecting the interest of destination community.

A judicial probe into the 2009 Thekkady lake boat tragedy, which claimed 45 lives, has found that the vessel's design was faulty and indicted the Kerala Tourism Corporation for failing to ensure that the boat was structurally fit. There were serious lapses on the part of KTDC and state Tourism Department in ensuring that the boat was structurally fit for safe cruising, it said. "The main reason for the tragedy was that the boat did not have stability. It was overloaded. The driver was inexperienced and the boat capsized upside down and it could not recover its balance after it tilted to a side. The capacity of the double-decker boat was 75 but it had 92 cruisers aboard it when it capsized on September 30, 2009 (Moideen Kunju, Outlook India, 2011).
Environmental issues caused social injustice is noted in Aleppey, house boats are one of the super products in Kerala tourism but the progress is through the unsustainable development. “Houseboats generate human rights violation, backwaters make it extremely unhealthy for human consumption, and this has detrimental effect upon the local livelihood” (George & Varghese, 2007, p.46).

“In Kainakary near Alappuzha, a region famous for its backwater tourism, the increasing number of tourist houseboats has led to significant water pollution. Local people, who depend on the lake, river and canal water for their daily water requirements, complain that the water has become polluted and has got a kerosene taste from the houseboat engines. "Even the fish tastes of kerosene" (UNEP’s Global Civil Society Forum, 2005). This effect is due to a typical unsustainable model of development, many destinations such as Hope-on, hope-off tours in Amsterdam and Gondola Cruise, Venice are good examples for promoting water based recreation in the most sustainable and enjoyable way.

Even though Kerala tourism is unique and progressing the tourist arrivals in this state compared with many other states are comparatively less. Benchmarking will describe the reason and the managerial action that can be taken for market leadership.

Based on the matters discussed above it is important to evaluate the performance of Kerala tourism due to the following reasons.

1. Even though international tourism in Kerala is increasing year by year, the total arrivals and receipts are considerably less compared to many international tourist destinations.

2. Kerala tourism provides 800000 employment opportunities for the local community, stable and sustainable development is significantly important for social sustainability.
3. Being in a developing state, Kerala tourism highly focuses on extradisciplinary benefits of tourism. Benchmarking will assure the status of tourism development that is synergized with local developments.

4. Kerala tourism is ecologically fragile, socially sensitive; benchmarking will help to understand the sustainable development with minimal impact to the community and environment.