CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
1.0. INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is an ideal and alternative choice to the devastating nature of mass tourism in the 21st century. This is an alternative form with the primary objective of providing wilderness experience to the nature lovers. It is a paradigm, philosophy and catalyst to promote responsible travel to study, enjoy and admire the natural beauty, wild animals, plants and indigenous culture. Promoting ecotourism through community participation can help conserve the ecology and environment and improve the well-being of local people. Conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity is implicitly and explicitly ingrained in the principals of ecotourism with much emphasis on sustainable use of natural resources and scope for income generation and employment opportunities. Establishing and maintaining harmonious relationships between environmental conservation, well-being of local people and visitor satisfaction have become a big challenge for the planners, the policymakers and tourism stakeholders. Even though ecotourism or ecological tourism is a western construct, it aims to provide the ways and means to many practical problems, hampering the conservation of biodiversity in the protected areas.

Ecotourism is a western concept that underpins on the key constructs such as conservation, protection, nature, wilderness, wildlife, plants, indigenous people, novelty, authenticity, education, learning, admiration, participation, empowerment, interpretation etc. Even though ecotourism is well appreciated and recognized as an important low-impact and non-consumptive form of tourism, the involvement of tourism service providers like resorts, hotels, tour operators, etc largely ignore the basic duties to be performed at the ecotourism sites due to their primary motives of profit maximization. In
most cases, ecotourism has become a marketing gimmick to entice the high-end visitors to spend more money for the sake of enjoying the nature through various fun activities. One of the principles of ecotourism is to encourage and motivate the visitors to buy organic and locally made products and to help save the nature and culture of the locality.

With the growing attention towards the emerging ecotourism destinations by the visitor’s and service providers, many well-preserved and prize-winning ecotourism sites appear to witness the increasing number of visitors’ footfalls. As a result, several issues are created at the ecotourism sites and these issues have posed permanent threats to the ecotourism sites. Many conferences and summits at the national and global level were organized to discuss and deliberate upon the dynamics of sustainable ecotourism by the way of certain declarations. For example, the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change and its Impacts, the Quebec Declarations and the Oslo Declarations on Sustainable Ecotourism have contributed significantly to the orderly management of ecotourism resources. The Kyoto Protocol acted as a catalyst to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC or FCCC), aimed at fighting global warming. The objective of the Quebec Declarations was focused on setting the preliminary agenda and a set of recommendations to bring in systematic operation of ecotourism activities. The Oslo Declarations of Ecotourism have furthered the efforts of private and public organizations at the international and national level to reinforce the commitments towards imbibing the principles and following sternly the practices of sustainable tourism at the ecotourism sites.

With the declaration of the year 2002 as International Year of Ecotourism, all the protected areas in India have adopted the principles of ecotourism so as to promote low-
impact ecotourism activities. For instance, the CAMPFIRE programme (Communal Area Management for Indigenous Resources) in Zimbabwe and the ACAP (Annapurna Conservation Project) at Nepal are some of the successful models of ecotourism projects which ensure conservation, enhancement of revenues and visitor satisfaction. The present study is an attempt to elucidate need for the Community Participation and Visitor Satisfaction for Sustainable Ecotourism in the Periyar Tiger Reserve, (PTR) Kerala.

1.1. MASS TOURISM AND ECOTOURISM

Mass tourism activities bring about noticeable changes in the economic well-being of people due to diverse categories of employment and self-employment opportunities. With the heavy and unprecedented inflow of tourists during the summer and winter months, sporadic developments take place in terms of construction of roads, rail lines, airports, hotels, parking, business centers, etc around the destinations to cater to the accentuating tourist demands. Furthermore, the requirements for infrastructural developments have increased manifold due to massive demands of tourism industry. Ironically, numerous destinations have been witnessing irreparable damages to the ecology and environment. Thus, the positive impacts have been overshadowed by the negative impacts so much so that policymakers and planners are concerned for mass tourism at the cost of ecology and environment.

Taking in to account the irreversible or permanent loss to the local environment caused by mass tourism activities, many countries have enforced the guidelines of sustainable tourism to help check unplanned tourism development. At the same time, ecotourism has become an emerging form of nature-based tourism to neutralize the loss
caused to the ecology and environment and to help the ecosystem function effectively. As such, ecotourism aims to attract the visitors who are expected to be conscious and cautious towards the ecology and environment. Thus, ecotourism has been identified as an ideal and alternative form to curb the menace of mass tourism and maximize the positive impacts. In this context, this chapter describes the concept and impacts of mass tourism and the promotion of ecotourism as an alternative approach to minimize the impacts through various sustainable tourism practices.

For example, Goa is a spellbound tourism destination offering a wide range of leisure, pleasure and fun activities. The tolerance levels of locals in the state are relatively high in accepting the fast-paced tourism development as it was an erstwhile Portuguese Colony with profound influence of European culture. Yet, tourism development is now vehemently opposed in Goa since it has led to harmful effects on the social and cultural tradition of Goa. A kind of touristic culture has almost rooted out the original culture of the tiny coastal tourist city. At the same time, the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary is an identified ecotourism site located in Idukki district of Kerala. The Department of Forest, Government of Kerala has opened the sanctuary for tourism activities in the buffer area; paradoxically, the sanctuary has become a mass tourism destination due to heavy inflow of tourists causing several negative impacts.

Therefore, whether it is mass tourism or ecotourism, when it is promoted without having any control or regulation; it will certainly become an unsustainable form of tourism. In most of the research works, one may come across the monstrous outcome of mass tourism, because it dominates the tourist visiting region with its demand for non-local products and cultural activities. The inflow of revenue through tourist expenditures
gets leaked to other regions of the country or foreign countries due to the procurement of products to cater to the tourist demand. There are star hotels and mega beach or hill resorts symbolizing the domination of mass tourism in the region. Those hotels do aggressive marketing and publicity to sell the rooms which in turn bring more visitors and increase the per capita consumption at the destinations. It becomes more chaotic during high-peak season for example, the Christmas or the New Year.

**All the following points are contrary to the mass tourism**

- It imparts sustainability of environmental ethos to mainstream tourism or mass tourism.
- It provides diversification of opportunities for mass tourism.
- It attracts to an increasingly green tourist market

![Ecotourism vs Mass Tourism](image)

- It provides sufficient market and revenue flows to position ecotourism as a major resource stakeholder with significant lobbying clout
- It introduces effective environmental management system

**Source:** Weaver, B. D. (2000). Encyclopedia of Ecotourism, p.79.

### 1.2. EVOLUTION OF ECOTOURISM

The origin of the term ‘ecotourism’ may be traced back to the four pillars or principles of responsible tourism expounded by Hetzer in 1965, who conducted the first eco-tours in the Yucatan during the early 1970s. His study found the intricate relationships between tourists and the environments and the cultures in which they interact. However, Hector Ceballos-Lascurain first coined the term ‘ecotourism’ in July
1983 when he was in the process of developing the PRONATURA, an NGO in Mexico. The PRONATURA worked for creating awareness for the conservation of American Flamingo in the wetlands in northern Yucatan for sustaining the breeding and feeding habitats. Other early references to ecotourism may be found in the work of Miller (1978) with reference to the national park planning for eco-development in Latin American countries. Documentation was prepared by the Environment Canada to make the broad-based eco-tours from the mid 1970s to the early 1980s. Each tour was conducted in the ecological zone in the corridor of Trans-Canada Highways with information to aid effective interpretation.

The need for conceiving ecotourism arose from the worldwide environment movement in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, the International Conference was held in Geneva on Human Environment in 1972, followed by the World Conservation Strategy by the IUCN in 1980 during which sustainable development or eco-development was debated and discussed on the growing concern for environmental pollution and loss of species coupled with the aversion towards mass tourism led to the creation of a new class of tourists interested and motivated towards seeking nature-based experiences. At the same time, the third-world countries devised the form of nature-based tourism as a means for earning revenue to sustain the livelihood of people as an additional occupation or as a substitute for agriculture, logging, fishing, hunting, etc. By the mid 1980s, many such less developed countries with huge potential for promoting nature-based tourism resorted to sustainable management as a means of protecting environment and ensuring development.
1.3. CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism is a well-defined approach explaining management of tourism impacts and conservation of nature in a way so as to maintain a fine balance between socio-economic development and conservation. The global importance of ecotourism was largely realized in 2002 when the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE) was celebrated on the theme “Ecotourism- A Key to Sustainable Development”. The term ecotourism was figured in the English Dictionary in the mid 1980s and it was also found mentioned with a hyphenated term (eco-tourism) in the article by Romeril in the year 1985.

Hector Ceballos Lascurain, the Mexican Ecologist used the Spanish word *ecotourismo* even earlier in the decade. Ceballos Lascurine (1991) defines ecotourism as “travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with a specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and wild plants and animals, as well as any cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas”. Ziffer (1989) pointed out that ecotourism is a form of tourism inspired primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures. The eco-tourist visits relatively undeveloped areas with the spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity. The ecotourism is a practice of a non-consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources and contributes to the visited area through labour or financial means, It aims at directly benefiting the conservation of the site and the economic well-being of the local people.

Some of the earliest studies on ecotourism attempted to classify eco-tourists on the basis of settings, experiences and group dynamics. Kusler (1991) classified eco-tourists as belonging to three main groups, including; Do-it-yourself Eco-tourist, Eco-
tourists on tours, and School groups or Scientific groups. The first category constitutes the largest percentage of all eco-tourists and their experiences are characterized by a high degree of flexibility of staying in different types of accommodations, having taste of different food, and indulging in a variety of activities. The second category namely eco-tourists on tours usually preferred organized tour to exotic or unusual places where conventional tourist cannot make the tour. The third type of eco-tourists is called school groups or scientific groups, who are seriously committed for carrying out scientific research for extensive periods of time and have strong will power and inclination to endure harsher site conditions. Nothing would deter them from completing the study.

Conversely, Lindberg (1991) identified four different types of eco-tourists such as hard-core nature tourists, dedicated nature tourists, mainstream nature tourists and casual nature tourists. Scientific researchers or members of tours specifically designed for education and removal of litter, or similar purposes are treated as the first type of eco-tourists. The second category includes people taking trips specifically to see protected areas to understand local, natural and cultural history. People visiting the Amazon, the Rwandan Gorilla Park, or other destinations are the mainstream nature tourists as they primarily take an unusual trip. The last types of eco-tourists are those who experience nature incidentally as part of a broader trip.

Boo(1990) explains that ecotourism is a form of nature tourism that contributes to conservation through generating funds for protected areas, creating employment opportunities for local communities and offering environmental education. The Ecotourism Society (1991) defines ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people”.

Valentine (1992) defines ecotourism “as a form of nature-based tourism that is ecologically sustainable and is based on relatively undisturbed natural areas, which is not damaging and non-degrading and it contributes to the continued protection and management of protected areas, and is subjected to an adequate and appropriate management regime.” Richardson et al, (1993) describes ecotourism as “ecologically sustainable tourism in natural areas that interprets local environment and cultures, furthers the tourist understanding of them, fosters conservation, and adds to the well-being of the local people.” Forestry Tasmania (1994) focuses on provision of learning opportunities while providing local and regional benefits and demonstrating environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability. Tickell (1994) explains ecotourism as travelling to enjoy the worlds’ amazing diversity of natural life and human culture without causing damage to either.

Goodwin (1995) called ecotourism as “purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the environment, taking care of not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people.” Lindberg and Mc Kercher (1997) define ecotourism as a blend of tourism and recreation and both are based on natures and sustainability. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in (2002) defined ecotourism as “tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying nature and its wild plants and animals as well as existing cultural aspects (both of the past and present) found in these areas.”
1.3.1. Ecotourism- An Alternative Option

The logic behind alternative tourism is to counter the onslaught of mass tourism. As Krippendorf (1982) postulated for alternative tourism that it is a shift of the priority of government from mere economic gains to preservation of unspoiled environment and consideration of the needs of local people. He suggested that alternative tourism aims to discourage the outside influence in the development and lays emphasis on proactive participation of local people. Thus, alternative tourism is a generic term that may represent appropriate tourism, ecotourism, soft tourism, responsible tourism, people to people tourism, controlled tourism, small-scale tourism, low-impact tourism, cottage tourism and green tourism in order to minimize the impacts of mass tourism activities.

More specifically, Weaver (1993) presented the potential benefits of an alternative tourism that is largely designed from the perspective of accommodations, attractions, market, economic impact and regulation. This more sensitive approach to tourism development strives to satisfy the needs of local people, tourists and the resource base in a complementary rather than a competitive manner.

1.3.2. Types of Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a form of alternative tourism which mostly attracts nature and wildlife lovers from the urban, industrial and cosmopolitan centers. Mostly, the industrialized and developed countries have earmarked on special budgetary financial packages for ecotourism projects. People of those industrialized countries are more motivated to visit the ecotourism places as the lives in big cities become restless and
stressful. There can be several types such as soft or hard, consumptive or non-
consumptive, natural and unnatural and exploitive, passive & active (Weaver 1999).

1.3.3. Trends in Ecotourism

Since the new global environment movement in the year 1970 and the general
dissatisfaction towards mass tourism as a development tool, a new form of tourism
emerged generally termed as Ecotourism. Especially in 1990s, ecotourism was identified
as the fastest-growing sector with 20 per cent to 34 per cent growth in a year. The
International Year of Ecotourism has brought about several fundamental changes of
perceptions and approaches of ecotourism. As a result, ecotourism and nature-based
tourism are growing three times faster than mass tourism. Regardless of the natural scenic
places, developed, developing and underdeveloped countries have embraced the
promotion of ecotourism in their countries for achieving the objectives of conservation
and economic well-being. Leading countries with huge ecotourism potentials like Costa
Rica, Galapagos Island, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nepal, Australia, and
United States of America have established a dynamic system that takes care of non-
consumptive aspects of ecotourism. These countries are immensely benefited from the
ecotourism projects.

Ziffer (1989) pointed out that the overall number of nature-based tourists grew at
about 20 per cent annually that could also result in the increase of operators offering
nature tours. The (WTO) in the early 1990s predicted an annual growth rate of 10-15 per
cent in the demand for ecotourism.
Starmer and Smith (1991) found that the number of tourists taking ecotourism holidays grew three times faster than those who chose mainstream holidays. Ecotourism will represent 5 per cent of the global holiday market by 2024. The global estimate revealed that, 32 per cent of visitors search for the scenery, wild plants and wildlife as a part of their trip in Australia and New Zealand. In Africa, 80 per cent of tourists who visited the countries in this continent named wildlife as a primary motivational attribute. In North America, 69-88 per cent of the European and Japanese travelers considered wildlife and bird watching to be the most important motivations. In Latin America, 50-79 per cent of the visitors advocated for nature-based tourism which represented an important factor in choosing such destinations. In America, it was claimed that over 100 million people participated in the wildlife activities, of which 76.5 million were related to viewing wildlife, and 24.7 evinced interested in bird watching.

Filion et al. (1993) uncovered that ecotourism generated more than US$ 20 billion by the way of economic activities with an estimated growth of 30 per cent per year. Cater (1993) found that annual tourist arrivals during 1980s in certain ecotourism destinations were reported to be more than double while in the case of Belize, tourist receipts were reported to witness ten-fold increase. It was estimated that tourism in the natural and wildlife settings accounted for a total of 20-40 per cent of the international tourism receipts, while it will increase by 20-50 per cent per year (Filion et al. 1994). Animon et al. (1997) found that most of the protected areas, which would have been converted into ecotourism destinations, are unnoticed and ignored by the domestic and international tourists due to lack of basic facilities. They emphasized that ecotourism
plays a major role in planning and policymaking and brings employment opportunities to the local community living in and around the parks.

Rodgers et al. (2000) suggested that the Protected Area Network of India can be enhanced to 160 National Parks and 698 Wildlife Sanctuaries accounting for about 5.69 percent of the total geographical area. For instance, Kerala forms an important part of Western Ghats with 324 km protected areas covering six per cent of the total geographical area of the state. About 26.6 per cent of the total geographic areas of the state is under forest cover as compared to 19.4 per cent for India. Tourists with interest in visiting ecotourism places largely pay their visit to the PTR and more than 2,38,047 tourists visited the Tiger Reserve in 1991-92 that accounted for 8.4 per cent of the total tourist arrivals. Furthermore, it was reported that 216,621 visitors in 1995 and 476,824 visitors in 2009 visited the sanctuary respectively. It is reported to be 45.49 per cent growth between 1995 and 2009. As wildlife is one of the primary motives of eco-tourists and one of the activities of ecotourism, Page and Dowling (2002) came out with a more recent estimate of wildlife-related tourism that represented up to 40 per cent of international travel.

1.4. VISITOR SATISFACTION

Tourists visit a particular destination in order to fulfill their desires and satisfy the specific needs. Swarbooke (1995); Eagly and Chaiken (1993) have attempted to measure visitor satisfaction in consonance with the capacity of a tourist destination to meet the recreational and leisure need of the visitors. It is often found that the experience of visitors and the level of satisfaction from the visit to a national park are largely affected
by their past experiences from visiting other national parks or protected areas, the prior knowledge and the capacity to learn and understand about the space with which all these experiences are linked. (Hughes 1991; Mossberg 1995; Yu and Weiler (2000); Mossberg (1995) added that the past experience of visitors and their socio-economic profiles are some of the important parameters determining the way in which they themselves evaluate the performance and efficiency of the accompanying guides. Various studies conducted by Gyte and Phelps (1989); Yuksel (2001); Tian Cole et al. (2002) revealed that visitors, who have visited the same natural park repeatedly, are more likely to be satisfied from their visit as compared to those who have visited the same park once.

Hull and Stewart (1995) attributed a more functional approach to the term landscapes by combining three very basic elements such as viewing ability, the objects in the landscape and perception on the subjective element. Two other very important factors that influence visitor satisfaction include movement and noise in the marine parks. Kozhak (2001) outlined the importance of fulfillment of expectation, importance of fulfillment and denial of fulfillment as the factors influencing visitor satisfactions. Scott et al. (1995) developed tourist satisfaction model based on the cumulative nature of visitor experiences that include overall satisfaction of visitors and the intension to revisit and recommend others to visit. Therefore, these three basic criterion may be used for defining visitor satisfaction with regard to tourist spots in national parks and protected areas.

Bowen and Clarke (2002) formulated a general framework for the study of Visitor Satisfaction related to certain unique and particular characteristics related to tourism such as integrity, heterogeneity and degradation of tourist product quality with time. Fick and
Ritchie (1999) found that every tourist destination is endowed with various attributes such as transport, hospitality, entertainment and community related services for alluring visitors with adequate option for cost effective pricing. It is also observed that Visitor Satisfaction from the perspectives of the expectations of visitors at various destinations also depends on the quality of products and services provided along with the friendly attitude of the locals (Crompton and Love (1995); Lounsbury and Hopes; (1985); Qu and Li (1997); Ryan (1999); Stevens (1992).

1.5. WILDLIFE TOURISM- A CHIEF ATTRACTION OF ECOTOURISM

Human fascination with animals has been around for quite long since they have co-existed on planet Earth. Relationships between humans and animals can take many different forms, including being a source of food, clothing or shelter, use for scientific and medical research, as sport or entertainment, or as a form of companionship and/or point of connection with the natural world. Understanding this relationship with animals is important because it shapes the feelings and actions of human beings. This has a direct bearing on the view of animals in and for tourism. According to Malcom Hunter, the term wildlife is less than a century old and was not included in the major dictionaries before 1961 in the United States and before 1986 in the United Kingdom (Cited Hunter, 1990).

A few definitions of wildlife lay stress on the game animals, while others include all non-domesticated vertebrates and in some cases, invertebrates and plants. Wildlife tourism is primarily based on encounters with non-domesticated (non-human) animals. These encounters can occur in either the animals’ natural environment or in captivity. It includes activities historically classified as ‘non-consumptive’, such as viewing,
photography and feeding as well as those that involve killing or capturing animals, particularly hunting (in the terrestrial environment) and recreational fishing (in the aquatic environment).

Wildlife tourism attractions can be enjoyed at the fixed sites during the organized tours. The definition is restricted to ‘wildlife’ or fauna (animals) and it coincides with general use of the term by the tourism industry and public. The term ‘animal’ is defined in the biological sense to mean any member of the Kingdom Animalia (except humans). It thus includes not only land dwelling vertebrates such as mammals, birds and lizards, but also aquatic vertebrates that usually live in the sea or inland waters such as platypus, fish and turtles. It also includes invertebrates such as glow-worms, butterflies, corals and starfish. Wildlife is not restricted to animals that are native to the country such as kangaroos and emus in Australia, but it also includes exotic animals, whether held in captivity, or introduced into the natural environment either deliberately or accidentally such as feral pigs and camels in Australia.

The term ‘non-domesticated’ is otherwise known as ‘wild’, because it is unclear whether the latter term is related to the species or its setting (a tiger in a zoo is a non-domesticated species, but some might argue it is no longer wild). Thus, wildlife tourism can be applied at a number of hierarchical scales. Its application is complicated by the fact that wildlife tourism at one level offers unique experiences as part of nature-based tourism or special interest tourism product for the park authorities and tourism intermediaries to earn revenue for the management of park as well as for the community in particular and for the country in general.
Wildlife is featured as a component of a travel package which offers rewarding experiences to visitors. A whale watching tour and an eco-tour as one of the activities, that includes wildlife, are both considered wildlife tourism products. Thus, a zoo and a farm-stay business that promotes viewing of wild animals (among other experiences) are both included as wildlife tourism business. At the highest level, some places such as the Galapagos Islands and Kenya are the two notable examples of as wildlife tourism destinations in the world. Table 1.1 illustrates the various dimensions of wildlife tourist spectrum.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Human Influence</th>
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<tr>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>Aviaries</td>
<td>Gondwanaland, Queens Land, Australia</td>
<td>Completely Human Constructed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Zoo</td>
<td>San Diego Zoo, California, USA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Oceanariums</td>
<td>Sea World, Florida, USA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aquariums</td>
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<td>Semi Captive</td>
<td>Wildlife Parks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rehabilitation Centers</td>
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<td>Partially Human Constructed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sea Pens</td>
<td>Dolphin Plus, Florida USA</td>
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<td>Feeding Wild Life</td>
<td>Dolphins</td>
<td>Dolphins, Monkey Mia, Shark Bay, Western Australia</td>
<td>Natural Environment</td>
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<td>Reef Sharks, Bahamas</td>
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<td>Kea (Parrots)</td>
<td>Kea (Parrots), South Island, New Zealand</td>
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<td>Wild</td>
<td>National Parks</td>
<td>Kruger National Park, South Africa</td>
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<td>Migratory Routes</td>
<td>Cape Cod Massachusetts, USA (whales)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Breeding Sites</td>
<td>Mon Repos, Australia (sea turtles)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feeding/ Drinking Sites</td>
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1.6. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The idyllic Idukki district of Kerala is one of the most green cover areas of the State girded by three main rivers such as the Periyar, the Thalayar and the Thodupuzhayar. As a tourist destination, Idukki offers a wide range of attractions such as wildlife, soft adventure, salubrious climate, boating, spice garden, primitive lifestyle and other non-consumptive ecotourism activities. Moreover, the district draws a large number of tourists to view the wildlife attractions from motorized boats. The PTR is also known for attracting Ornithologists to study the abundance of avifauna. It is found that majority of tourists visiting Kerala flock to the PTR for the purpose of wildlife sightseeing. The park has already witnessed manifold increase of the day visitor and tourist arrivals due to the high probability of spotting the wild animals. This has resulted in a sporadic rise of tourist traffic into the park and tourist vehicles, thus leading to noise pollution, emissions, parking problems, etc. Further, the main and fundamental problem is identified as the uncontrolled tourist arrivals and the entry of tourist vehicles.

A reasonably good number of studies have so far been conducted from the perspectives of Ecology, Environment, Eco-Development Committees,(EDC) Community Funding, Anthropology and Ethnology. However, in-depth studies with regard to Tourism Impacts, Ecotourism, Wildlife Tourism and other forms of nature-based tourism have not been carried out so far for which this piece of research work is expected to be unique and relevant in the context of tourism development and its direct bearings on the local community.
On the other hand, the need of the study arises as the tourists do not seem to be satisfied with the existing facilities and amenities being provided by the park authorities. Besides the availability of facilities and amenities is not adequate to cater to the tourists resulting which the day-visitors and tourists get dissatisfied. It is also observed that the (EDC) does not seem to be much effective for addressing the socio-economic problems of the community. Further, it is supposed to work for community empowerment. The park has also been facing problems with stakeholders as there is a lack of coordination in dealing with the prevailing issues. With the increase in the number of day visitors, the PTR, as an ecotourism destination will gradually be transformed into a mass tourism destination. The present study will try to fill the gap as regards the problem of visitor satisfaction and community empowerment in the context of the sustainable ecotourism in the park.

In this backdrop, the two major constructs “Visitor Satisfaction” and “Community Empowerment” have been studied logically by employing scientific research methods with regard to sustainable development of ecotourism in the PTR.

1.7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Ecotourism in the PTR is obviously significant for providing learning experience of its unique natural scenic beauty and wildlife along with the local culture. Ecotourism is partly proven to be an effective model for keeping away the local people from poaching and other illegal activities in the PTR. This particular form of tourism has brought about economic development indirectly around the periphery area. As a result, it has been instrumental in providing a unique interface between the visitors and nature,
leading to a greater understanding and consciousness towards the preservation of nature of resources. This study is significant for providing practical solutions to the planners, policymakers and service providers. Further, an argument about the modalities of relationship between community empowerment and visitor satisfaction as the means for sustainable ecotourism has been put forth for the clarity of research problems as the means for sustainable ecotourism.

An attempt has also been made to study visitor satisfaction and community empowerment from the perspectives of tourists and the community members at the PTR. The study has recommended some workable solutions for improving the level of satisfaction as well as the degree of empowering community members. The core objective of study is to find sustainable ways for managing varied ecotourism activities in the park. The most significant part of the studies has expanded the scope for the planners, policymakers, park authorities like Periyar Foundation, Periyar Tiger Reserve Administration, EDC, Kerala Tourism Development Corporation,(KTDC), District Tourism Promotion Council(DTPC) and Forest and Wildlife Department to take references from the findings and suggestions.

1.8. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The review of literature revealed that significant amount of studies have been undertaken from different perspectives of visitors, but limited literature has touched upon visitor satisfaction. In the same manner, many studies have highlighted on the various dimensions of community participation in tourism, but community empowerment has not been highlighted so significantly. However, there is no study conducted by combining the
visitor satisfaction and the community empowerment as the two key elements for sustainable ecotourism in the protected areas. On the contrary, most of the studies have been undertaken by taking the issues, problems and challenges in the western countries. Moreover, studies conducted so far on the PTR have focused more on Ecological, Environmental and Biological aspects of the EDC and community participation. Therefore, the present study is a sincere attempt to integrate visitor satisfaction and community empowerment to uncover the theoretical gap and search for relationships between the two constructs.

Thus, the study “Visitor Satisfaction and Community Empowerment for Sustainable Ecotourism: An Evaluative Study on Periyar Tiger Reserve” has been relevant in answering the research questions leading to fill the theoretical gap.

1.9. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is quite confined to the PTR East Division, more particularly to the Tourism Zone. The primary data have been collected from both tourists and community members in the tourism zone in the surrounding villages with a radius of two kilometers. The tourism zone includes Vanashree Dormitory, Interpretation Center, Tiger Trail Office, Parking, Boat Landing, Tribal Trekkers’ Office, Snack Bar and Bamboo Rafting Point. The periphery villages adjacent to the Reserve includes Mannakudi and Paliyankudi as two important tribal hamlets and its neighbourhood places like Ceylon Colony, Chottupara, GandhiNagar, Kollampattada, Kurishumala, Periyar Colony, Ex Vayana, PETS EDC, Tribal Trekkers, Tribal Heritage, Vidiyal, Ex Thelli, Graziers and Fisher Group. The scope of study is limited to six important theoretical
concepts such as Ecotourism, Sustainable Development, Protected Areas, Visitor Satisfaction, Community Participation and Community Empowerment.

1.10. MAJOR OBJECTIVES

The broad objective is to study the understanding of tourists and local community members on the various elements of visitor satisfaction and community members on different indicators of community empowerment. The objectives have been framed by taking the interest and benefits of the planners, policymakers and other agencies connected with ecotourism in the PTR.

The Study has made an attempt

- To study the level of visitor satisfaction on the tangible and intangible attributes;
- To find out the level of community participation and empowerment through the ecotourism activities; and
- To evolve sustainable methods for the management of resources and stakeholders

1.11. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The objective of social science research is to provide relevant, accurate, reliable, valid, logical and latest information to deal with research problems with the help of systematic data collection and analysis. Taking this objective into considerations, the methodology comprises the sources of data, selection of sample size and method, pilot study, questionnaire construction, scale development and hypothesis.
1.11.1. Sources of Data

Both the primary and secondary sources of data were used to gather the data with regard to visitor satisfaction, community empowerment, ecotourism and sustainable development in the PTR.

Primary data include the method of gathering data with the help of questionnaires. Tourist and community respondents were administered the questionnaires at the study site. However, the researcher himself used the scheduled method for community members to answer the questions correctly as the community respondents found much difficulty in understanding the questions.

The secondary data pertaining to tourist arrivals, number of hotels, room & beds, animal census, ecotourism activities, tourist arrivals and revenue earnings in the PTR in particular and Kerala in general from the Department of Tourism, Department of Forest and Wildlife, Government of Kerala. Periyar Foundation, DTPC and KTDC provided relevant data for the substantial understanding of the research problems. In addition, many reputed Institutions, Libraries, Universities and NGOs were also visited to collect hard and soft copies of literature for getting an in-depth knowledge and clear understanding on the research problems. Several research journals, books, periodicals, web references, and databases were also referred to understand the concepts, current trends, challenges, problems and development of ecotourism and its relationship with other key elements.

The relevant literature was reviewed to develop a strong argument as to how visitor satisfaction and community empowerment can play a major role in the
development and management of sustainable ecotourism in the tiger reserve. To get firsthand experience and more practical knowledge on ecotourism and park activities, an in-depth interview was conducted with Ecologists, Nature Education Officer, Forest Officials, EDC Chairpersons and local people. Finally, several research questions were emerged during intensive field work and pilot survey. All those questions were incorporated in two sets of questionnaires: one for the tourists and other for the local community members.

1.11.2. Selection of Sampling Method and Sample Size

A convenient sampling method was adopted for the collection of data. The primary data have been collected with the help of two sets of well-structured questionnaires. A total of 540 tourist respondents were interviewed at Vanashree Dormitory, Rajiv Gandhi Interpretation Center, Tiger Trail Office, Parking, Boat Landing, Nature Walk, Bamboo Rafting Starting Point, Green Walk and Border Hiking Starting Point. Similarly, a total of 320 community respondents were approached with the structured questionnaires for collecting primary data. The sites at which the community members were requested to answer the questionnaires include villages adjacent to the PTR starting from the tribal hamlets.

Finally, the filled-in questionnaires were collected from 505 domestic as well as foreign tourist respondents and 303 from local community members. For the coding and final analysis purposes, 500 (93%) and 300 (94%) filled-in questionnaires with complete answers from the tourist and community respondents respectively were included for
coding and analysis. The SPSS-17 spreadsheet was used for feeding the primary data directly from the filled-in questions.

1.11.2.1. Sample Size

The selection of sample size needs a systematic scientific approach for which many related published literatures from the reputed international journals were referred to substantiate the sample size selected for the study. For example, Stoeckel et al. (2006) made an empirical study on “community impact of different types of visitors: An empirical investigation of tourism in North West Queens Land” and used 510 sample of foreign tourists. Similarly, Behand and Bruyere (2007) studied on “segmentation by visitor motivation in three Kenyan National Reserves” by using 465 sample of foreign tourists. Obua and Harding (1996) undertook a study on “visitor characteristics and attitudes towards Kibale National Park in Uganda” and used 213 sample of foreign tourists. Arabatzis and Grigoroudis (2010) studied on visitor satisfaction, perceptions and gap Analysis: the cases of Dadia –Lefkimi-Souflion National Park in Greece and used 230 sample of foreign tourists. Ballantyne et al. (2011) studied on “visitor memories of wildlife tourism: implications for the design of a powerful interpretive experience” used 240 sample of foreign tourists. Akama and Kieti (2003) studied on “measuring tourist satisfaction with Kenya’s wildlife safari: A case study of Tsavo West National Park” and used 200 sample of foreign tourists”.

As far as the determination of sample size for community members is concerned, Tosun (2004) used 248 samples for conducting a study on “expected nature of community participation in tourism development”, Okazaki (2008) used 420 samples
from the local community members to undertake a study on “community-based tourism model: its conception and use” and Kibicho (2008) used 176 samples for carrying out a study on “community-based tourism: a factor cluster segmentation approach”.

Thus, a sample of 540 foreign and domestic tourist respondents were used for carrying out the study on visitor satisfactions. The selection of sample size is highly substantiated with the sample size used for the similar studies in Australia and Africa. However, these research studies used less sample size to diagnose the research problems as compared to the sample used for the present study. Further, a sample of 320 local community members was included in the primary data collection to elicit opinions on various aspects of community empowerment, ecotourism and sustainable tourism. The selection of sample size is substantially validated with the sample size used for the similar type of studies.

Further, the convenient sample method was preferred for three important reasons. First, most of the research questions were clarified during the pilot study that largely helped in retaining the variables for the final questionnaire. Second, any probability methods would have been inappropriate to be used for the data collection as tourists were generally fussy, non-cooperative and causal in responding the questions. Third, questionnaires were administered to those tourists who were cooperative and unbiased in answering the questions and tourist respondents were requested to spend maximum time to understand and answer the questions correctly. All these criteria were used to collect the data so as to reduce the response and sample error.
1.11.3. Pilot Survey

The basic purpose of this study was to eliminate ambiguous and non-discriminating items and to eliminate any impact discrepancies. Further, as an alternative solution, the Kaiser–Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy tests was also used for additional verifications of the sample size. The researcher used area sampling method in which convenience sampling method was chosen for increasing the representativeness of the sample. There were two key considerations to form the number of tourist destinations as a unit of study and to reduce the number of variables responsible for explaining sustainable ecotourism at this stage of the research. The independent characteristics of 39 indicators for tourists and 37 indicators for community members related to sustainable ecotourism development were examined during the pilot study. Finally, 35 indicators for tourist respondents on visitor satisfaction and 33 indictors for community respondents on community empowerment were set in the form of seven and five point Likert scale respectively.

1.11.4. Questionnaire Construction

Designing a flawless questionnaire needs ample time to understand the variables. Questionnaire is an instrument to capture the data in such a manner that respondents should easily understand the questions. It must be simple without having any ambiguity. In order to obtain a robust questionnaire, the methods of explorative study, field visit and pilot study were used to comprehend clearly the implicit and explicit meaning of variables determining the study.
Two questionnaires were prepared: one for the Tourists and the other for the Local Community members. The questionnaire designed for the tourists consists of three parts. The first part deals with the demographic data consisting of Age, Gender, Nationality, Income and Education. The first part was further divided by the sub headings called visitor awareness where different questions were asked regarding frequency of visits, mode of transport, point of entry, duration of stay, main motivations behind the visit, ecotourism activities, problems faced by tourists and interest in ecotourism. These questions were framed in a nominal scale. The second part deals with visitor satisfaction indicators based on statements prepared on a seven point Likert scale ranging from (7) Very Strongly Agree to (1) Very Strongly Disagree. A seven point scale was used to capture the levels of visitor satisfaction.

The questionnaire designed for the local community members consists of three parts. The first part includes Age, Gender, Marital Status, Occupation, Residence, Qualification, Monthly Income, and Family members, Monthly Expenditures, Nationality, Income and Educational Qualification as the key demographic backgrounds. Further, questions related to community participation have been included in the first part. The second part deals with statement type questions framed in a five point scale ranging (5) Strongly Agree (4) Agree (3) Undecided (2) Disagree (1) Strongly Disagree. All the questions are directly and indirectly related to four key factors like social impacts, economic impacts, cultural impacts and ecological impact. The third part deals with the functioning of EDC on five point scale followed by open-ended questions.
1.11.5. Scale Development

Scale development is itself a huge exercise and it is a research itself. Developing an independent scale needs long time and patience and it was almost impossible to evolve a scale of its own during the course of the study due to paucity of time. Taking this limitation into consideration, the study has largely referred two different scales used by Akama and Kieti (2003) for conducting an empirical research work on “measuring tourist satisfaction with Kenya’s wildlife safari: A case study of Tsavo West National Park and Beh and and Bruyere (2007) on segmentation by visitor motivation in three Kenyan National Reserves. Both the studies have used a seven point scale ranging from (1) Strongly Unimportant to (7) Strongly Important. Thus, these two scales were used with marginal moderations. **Figure 1.1** depicts the step-by-step research design for carrying out the scientific study with regard to sustainable ecotourism in the PTR.
Figure 1.1

Step-by-Step Research Design
1.11.6. Statistical Tools Used for Data Analysis

The univariate and bivariate analysis were conducted by using cross tabulations to analyze and interpret the relationships between variables applied on the nominal questions. The Chi-square test has been used to test the association between two variables for nominal scale questions. Mean and standard deviation were also used to work out the average of the responses. The Cramer test has been used to find the effects of independent variable on the dependent variable.

The KMO test of sampling adequacy for testing the partial correlations between variables was conducted and the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was conducted to identify the correlation matrix. Further, The factor analysis has been used on the ordinal scale questions to reduce the number of indictors under the broad factor. The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) has been used to extract the uncorrelated measure of sampling adequacy tests to find out the partial correlations among variables. Maximum variance was identified in the variables with higher loadings of the first factor, while small variances were recorded to be in the successive factors. Varimax rotation was applied to minimize the number of variables through higher loadings for the easy interpretations of results. The Pearson’s correlation tool was used to check the pattern of relationships between the factors. Moreover, the one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) has been used to identify the differences between the variables. Levene’s “t” test has been conducted to find out the equity of variance in different samples. The Friedman’s Rank test has been conducted to rank the variables as per the mean values.
1.12. MAJOR HYPOTHESES

H0: The means of both foreign and domestic tourist respondents are not significantly different on the five factors signifying the visitor satisfaction with reference to Ecotourism/Wildlife Tourism in PTR.

H0: The means of both foreign and domestic tourist respondents are not significantly different on the seven different statements explaining the appreciation and respect towards the culture and heritage of primitive people in Thekkady.

H0: The means of both foreign and domestic tourist respondents are not significantly different on the eight different statements explaining the visitor satisfactions while visiting and sojourning in PTR and Thekkady.

H0: On the criterion of frequency of visit, visitors are not significantly different on the five broad factors determining the visitors satisfaction.

H0: On the criterion of duration of stay, there are no significant differences of experiences of the tourists on the key factors of visitor satisfaction.

H0: All five factors reflecting the level of visitor satisfaction are not significantly correlated.

H0: Mean ranks are not different significantly on securing maximum enjoyment from ecotourism activities, provision for add-on facilities and amenities while finding the differences of experiences of 500 sample tourist respondents.

H0: The means of community members with less than 20 years and more than 21 years of residing at the PTR are not significantly different on the 10 indicators signifying the tourism impacts on community empowerment.

H0: There is no significant association between the categories of age and interest in management of ecotourism activities and the years of residing and interest in management of ecotourism sites.
**H0:** There is no association between occupational patterns of community members and their involvements in the decision-making process with regard to the management of ecotourism activities and revenue earned from the ecotourism for the LAD.

**H0:** There is no association between gender and interest in displaying cultural activities to the tourists, negatively affected by the regular conflicts with tourists, ecotourism as an alternative source of income and addressing problems for sustainable development.

### 1.13. CONTOURS OF THE STUDY

The study has been presented in five chapters and each chapter is unique in its own way in widening scope for more lucidity and clarity of discussions. More importantly, each chapter is closely connected to other in illustrating the facts and figures pertaining to the visitor satisfaction and community empowerment for sustainable ecotourism in the PTR, Thekkady.

**Chapter I** deals with introduction to the study about recent trends in tourism, current trends in ecotourism and statement of the problem. This chapter is also devoted to review various studies on the evolution, meaning, concept, importance and various dimensions of sustainable ecotourism. This chapter has also included major objectives, hypotheses, significance and scope of study in an argumentative manner. The hallmark of the chapter is the research design that consists of sources data collection method, sampling method, sample size, questionnaire design, pilot study and use of statistical tools.
Chapter II has covered the review of previous studies based on the conceptual and empirical works in different countries and States in India in general and in the PTR in particular. The detailed Review of Literature on various aspects of Wildlife Tourism, Ecotourism, Visitor Satisfaction, Community Participation, Sustainable Development and Carrying Capacity has been presented in a very argumentative manner. The interesting part of the chapter is the construction of theoretical background that has been emerged from the synthesis of review of literature.

Chapter III provides an overview of microscopic development of ecotourism/wildlife tourism in the PTR along with background of the Reserve, Geographical, Ecological, Environmental, Social, Economical and Administrative background, Tourist arrivals, Revenue earnings from tourism, Accommodations, Ecotourism Activities and Animal Census, Roles of Periyar Foundations, etc.

Chapter IV presents the analysis of primary data collected from tourists and local community members with the help of the SPSS package. It presents the output of primary data in different tables relevant to the study. This chapter presents interpretations in two different parts: one consists of data analysis of tourist respondents and other part consists of local community respondents.

Chapter V is the final chapter which presents various findings of the study in a logical manner and suggests the strategic interventions and actions for ensuring visitor satisfaction and community empowerment in the PTR. The chapter also provides policy suggestions to the Government of Kerala for sustainable ecotourism development in the Reserve with the help of a workable model. The chapter also highlights the need for
future research in order to carry on the efforts for making the PTR a pristine and awe-inspiring wildlife-cum-ecotourism destination.

1.14. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite taking many best possible efforts, the researcher faced a few limitations during this study. These limitations were indeed unavoidable, but could not prevent the researcher from completing the research work in a time bound manner.

- The researcher collected primary information mostly through field visits. Thus, it was not possible to give sufficient time for each study site due to the time and cost constraints.

- The size of sample is another limitation since the main source of data has been derived from primary sources. The size of the sample would have been more if the time was sufficient for administering the questionnaires. Hence, generalization of the study may be a problem due to the convenient sample method.

- Many respondents were hesitant in giving some demographic information like Income, Age, Educational Qualifications, Place of stay, Use of mode of transport, Use of water and energy, Designations, etc correctly as they were taking it very personal.

As tourism is a young discipline, the contemporary research works do not seem to be substantial to develop theoretical background, but all possible attempts were made to make use of the available literature optimally for which a synthesis of review could become possible leading to the creation of theoretical framework. Despite these
limitations, the present study shall definitely be useful for the researchers, planners, policymakers and administrators in the tourism sector.