ABSTRACT

Destination performance evaluation has become an increasingly important task for effective destination management. However, it is a complex task due to the inclusion of diverse subsectors, business components and performance elements. Even though destination performance evaluation is a tedious task, it is essential for enhancing destination image, positioning and ultimately achieving market leadership and contributes significantly to communities and nation by analyzing the performance of index core components of destination performance. The outcome of the performance evaluation can be used as a tool for internal and external destination benchmarking. This research focuses on developing a new internal destination performance evaluation model using performance indicators and tests it in the state of Kerala. There are four core components identified in this model such as (a) Tourist Satisfaction Index (TSI), (b) Community Impact Assessment (CIA), (c) Stakeholders’ perception and (d) Managerial action. Tourist Satisfaction Index (TSI) is tested by using cognitive satisfaction scales such as Cognitive Emotional Satisfaction Scale (ESS), Cognitive Product Satisfaction Scale (PSS), Cognitive Service Satisfaction Scale (CSS) and Cognitive Dissonance Scale (CDS). Both expectation and perceived performance are tested by adopting expectancy disconfirmation theory. Community Impact Assessment (CIA) is tested by using the constructs such as Social Benefit, Social Costs, Economic Benefit, Economic Costs, Cultural Benefit and Cultural Cost. Social Exchange theory is adopted to test the CIA model. Tour operators’ initiatives and perception on tourism development in Kerala is tested by open ended interviews in the areas of social, economic and development aspects of Kerala tourism. Tourism
policy initiatives and implementation effectiveness are used to measure managerial effectiveness of tourism development in Kerala using open ended interviews with tour operators and published secondary resources. Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) and content analysis techniques are used to analyze quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The alignment of the result of four destination core components reveals that Cognitive Emotional Satisfaction Scale (CES) and Cognitive Dissonance Scale (CDS) of Tourist Satisfaction Index perform in a satisfactory level. However, the performance of Cognitive Product Satisfaction Scale (CPS) and Cognitive Service Satisfaction Scale (CSS) are not up to the expectation of the international tourists. In the case of Community Impact Assessment (CIA), it is evident that except Economic Condition (EC) all other core constructs such as Conservation Effort (CE), Social Service (SS), and Social Issues (SI) performance level were below expectations. There are many new initiatives in the tourism policies that are evident, however, issues are also visible due to the lack of enforcement of tourism policy effectively. It is also suggested that the new model can be used to test the destination performance in similar destinations like Kerala. The outcome of the study offers a practical means for internal destination benchmarking that could be helpful to improve the performance of core components for destination positioning and therefore differentiate the destination in a meaningful way in the potential tourist generating market and ensuring tourism development which has significant multiplier effect in the socio economic development of Kerala.

**Keywords**

Performance Evaluation, Benchmarking, Core components, Impact,