Chapter 6
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Tourism is a catalyst for stimulating economic, social and cultural activities and adds momentum to economic development. Tourism is an important catalyst in the socio-economic development in the modern times, contributing in multiple ways and strengthen the inter-connected processes. It is cited as a panacea for so many social evils such as underdevelopment, unemployment etc. in all the countries, especially in developing economies. India has also taken seriously this industry as a catalyst for growth. All the states in India have paved their attention to the tourism and allied industries recognising its social and economic potentialities.

Through the last two decades, Kerala has emerged as a popular travel destination for people from all parts of the world. Much of Kerala’s exotic appeal is centered in the highland areas of Western Ghats. The major portion of the revenue of hill areas is from tourism and also it offers a lot of employment opportunities for the host community throughout the year. Therefore, it is high time to unveil the full potential of hill tourism in Kerala, which caters through products and services to the travellers in particular, and contributes to the economic improvement of the host community and the Kerala State in general. It is in this context that the present study titled “Hill Tourism in Kerala” has been undertaken.

The study has been carried out with the following objectives:

1. To assess the accessibility and amenities in the hill tourism destinations in Kerala.

2. To assess the socio-cultural, economic and environmental impact of hill tourism in Kerala.

3. To study the role of promotional agencies in the development of hill tourism destinations in Kerala.
The study is empirical in nature. The data required for the study were collected by administering scientifically pre-tested and structured interview schedules. The entire 12 hill destinations in Kerala constitute the universe for the study. The host community of hill destinations, the tourists (both domestic and foreign) and the agencies for the development and promotion of hills as tourism destinations were the respondents.

For collecting the primary data, the State of Kerala was first divided into three regions – South, Central and North. In Kerala, the majority of the hill destinations are situated in the central region. Therefore three destinations have been selected from the central region and one each from the south and the north. During the second stage, the respondents were selected conveniently from the selected destinations by giving due weightage to all the categories. All the agencies, functioning in the selected hill destinations, which are directly involved in the identification, development and maintenance of tourism spots, were selected for the study. The travel agencies and hotels were excluded from the purview of this study as they are dealing only with travel and accommodation of the tourists. For the intensive study, 300 tourists (225 domestic and 75 foreign) and 250 respondents from the host community were selected conveniently. Thus, a total 550 from tourists and host community constitute the sample respondents for the study. The secondary data were collected from books, periodicals, committee reports, reports of the agencies, WTO publications, government publications and the Internet.

The data collected were classified and analysed with the help of SPSS keeping in view the objectives of the study. For the purpose of analysis, statistical tools, viz. average, percentages, CAGR, Chi-square test, ANOVA, and Binominal test were applied.

**6.1 Major Findings of the Study**

The major findings of the study on the basis of the analysis of the data are summarised below:
I Profile of Host Community

1. Male domination is prevalent among the host community and as regards age more than two thirds (66.8%) are in the age group of 25 – 45. Furthermore, 42.4 per cent holds an education qualification of plus two.

2. As regards the occupation of the host population, more than a half (60.8%) are salary earners and their average monthly income is below Rs. 10,000.

3. More than three fourth of the host community are born and brought up in the destination and more than two third of them are either directly or indirectly related to tourism.

II Personal Traits of Tourists

(a) Foreign Tourists

1. Most of the foreign tourists are from Europe (40%) and North America (25.3%) and more than a half (53.3%) of them are male.

2. Most of the foreign tourists are above 45 years of age (57.54%) and they are well educated as about 96 per cent are graduates and above.

3. Salaried class (41.3%) and professionals (24%) dominate among the foreign tourists and most of them (89.4%) have a monthly income above Rs. 150,000.

(b) Domestic Tourists

1. Most of the domestic tourists are from Kerala and other south Indian States (78.2%) and up to three fourth of them are male.

2. A lion’s share of domestic tourists are below 45 years of age (93.8%) and they are well educated as about 97 per cent are graduates and above.

3. Salaried class (91.6%) dominates among the domestic tourists and most of them (81.7%) have monthly income in the range of Rs.50,000 - 150,000.
III Tour Particulars

1. As regards regularity of visit nearly 60 per cent of the domestic tourists are regular visitors and more than 90 per cent of the foreign tourists are visiting the destination for the first time. Among the regular visitors more than 60 per cent of domestic and 43 per cent of foreign tourists visited the destination for more than three times.

2. Summative analysis and destination-wise analysis reveal that visual media play a very important role in imparting information to the tourists.

3. Pleasure/relaxation is the prime motive behind the travel among both foreign and domestic tourists.

4. More than a half of the foreign tourists depend on either private or tour operators’ vehicles to arrive at the destination whereas only less than a half of the domestic tourists depend on private or tour operators’ vehicles.

5. A lion’s share of the foreign tourists and majority of the domestic tourists travel with their family.

6. A major chunk of domestic tourists and almost all foreign tourists have stayed at the destination and most of them prefer hotels as their place of accommodation.

IV Accessibility and Amenities Available at Hill Tourism Destinations in Kerala

(a) Tangible Facilities

1. Regarding the transportation facilities at the destination most of the tourists as well as the host community opined that there exists good system of transportation.

2. Regarding the adequacy of road network to the tourism spots, most of the tourists rated it as average whereas more than two third of the host community rated it as good.
3. Most of the tourists and the host community rated the available accommodation facility as good.

4. As regards quality of food and beverages available at restaurants, most of the tourists as well as host community opined it as good.

5. As regards the quality of available drinking water at the destination more than a half of the host community commented it as good whereas only 40.7 per cent of the tourist held such opinion.

6. Majority of both the tourists and the host community opined that the sanitation facility and the communication facility available at the destination are good.

7. Majority of the tourist opined that the public lighting system at the destination is poor, whereas only 45.7 per cent of the host community evaluate it as poor.

8. As regards banking facilities, 60 per cent of the host community commented it as good whereas only 37.7 per cent tourists expressed the same opinion.

9. With regard to the quality of shopping facility at the destination, more than a half of the tourists evaluate it as good, whereas only less than a half of the host community has the same opinion.

10. A majority of both tourists and the host community are of the view that availability of quality hospitals and recreation facilities at the destination is poor.

(b) Intangible Facilities

1. More than 70 per cent of the tourists rated the publicity of tourism products and the working of Tourism Information Centres as good.
2. Majority of the tourists are of the opinion that the sightseeing packages, facilities for adventure activities and safety and security facilities available at the destination are good.

3. Only less than a half (44%) of the tourists is of the opinion that good quality rejuvenation facilities are available at the destination.

4. A lion’s share of the tourists is of the opinion that the law and order facility at the destination is good.

5. The entire tourists rated the quality tourist guide services, overall environment at the destination and the attitude and approach of the host community as good.

V Cost of Facilities at the Destination
1. More than three fourth of the tourists are of the opinion that the cost of transportation facilities at the destination is moderate.

2. Nearly 60 per cent of the tourists viewed cost of the accommodation facility at the destination as high.

3. Majority of the tourists are of the opinion that the cost of food and beverages available at the destination are moderate.

4. More than three fourth of the tourists viewed the cost of basic amenities at the destination as moderate.

5. More than a half of the tourists opined that the cost of recreational facility available at the destination is high.

6. A large majority of tourists evaluates the cost of communication facility at the destination as moderate.

7. More than a half of tourists commented upon the cost of shopping as either moderate or low.
8. More than 60 percent of the tourists opined that the cost of medical treatment facility available at the destination is moderate.

9. Up to three fourth of the tourists are of the opinion that cost of rejuvenation facilities available at the destination is high.

VI Problems Faced by Tourists at the Destination
1. Among the problem faced by tourists at the destination, accommodation booking ranked first. Crime and cheating is the least affected problem to the tourists at the destination.

VII Socio Cultural Impacts of Hill Tourism in Kerala
1. A major chunk of the host community is of the opinion that tourism promotes social interaction, cultural exchange, cultural education and cultural advancement.

2. A large majority of the local community opined that tourism leads to the preservation of cultural identity, revival of traditional arts and that it also ensures restoration of historical sites.

3. A major portion of the host population viewed that tourism Commodifies culture and the traditional way of life, making changes in the art, craft and festivals.

4. A large number of people from the host hold the view that tourism leads to an increased demonstration effect among the community and it also increases the number of crimes and creates more vandalism in the society.

5. It is revealed that a lion’s share of the hosts feel that tourism exploits them and that it leads to high drug use and alcoholism.

6. Majority of the local population viewed that tourism leads to sexual abuse, prostitution and it also intensifies spreading of diseases.

7. A large chunk of the host community viewed that tourism leads to the degradation of local languages and that it also creates some friction
between the host community and the tourists. They also hold the view that it adversely affects the community’s way of life.

8. A large portion of the local people also holds the view that tourism leads to the displacement of community.

**VIII Economic Impacts of Hill Tourism in Kerala**

1. Most of the local community opined that tourism creates job opportunities, motivates new business, expands the existing units and also increases the income of the local community.

2. The lion’s share of the people in the destination feels that tourism improves educational facilities in the locality, improves standard of living of the people and the infrastructure of the locality.

3. Majority of the hosts viewed that tourism promotes gender equality, more shopping opportunities and leads to the development of rural areas thereby increasing the foreign exchange earnings in the region.

4. A large portion of the local people opined that tourism leads to shortage of consumables and it increases tax burden and the cost of living.

5. More than a half of the local people hold the view that tourism prevents setting up of other industries.

**IX Environmental Impacts of Hill Tourism in Kerala**

1. As regards the impacts of tourism on environment a lion’s share of the local people opined that tourism increases environmental consciousness, improves the quality of public services and also improves waste management.

2. More than three fourth of the local people also expressed that tourism generates sufficient funds for the preservation of nature.
3. A large portion of local population viewed that tourism leads to increased pollution, scarcity of water and electricity and also creates certain sanitation problems in the local environment.

4. A lion’s share of people in the local area expresses the view that tourism leads to climate change, degradation of natural resources, damages to biodiversity and leads to deforestation.

X Role of Promotional Agencies at Hill Destinations in Kerala

1. KTDC provides the basic facilities in four destinations whereas the presence of DTPC can be seen at all destinations.

2. The Forest Department contributes a lot for the development of tourism by providing prime facilities to the tourists at all the destinations in addition to their basic objective of preservation of nature.

3. NGOs in the local areas viz. VSS, TGS and BLDC also contribute much for the development and preservation of destinations.

4. The role of private agencies viz TATA at Munnar and POABS at Nelliampathy are worth mentioning as they contribute a lot for the endless growth of tourism at these destinations.

5. Even though there are several state owned agencies providing various tourism related services, the most promising hill destinations namely Ponmudi and Nelliampathy lacks in so many basic and essential tourism facilities.

6.2 Conclusion

In the globalised era, a country which wants to be a leader cannot ignore its service sector. Next to oil, tourism is the largest foreign exchange earning sector in the world. Countries with picturesque natural beauty and rich cultural traditions can prosper a lot through the sustainable use of these natural gifts. Beaches and hill destination are the prominent endowments which attract globetrotters. Among these, hill destinations with attractive natural features,
enchanting atmosphere and eye catching sites allure a large number of people from around the world.

Kerala is a pioneer State in India which markets its natural beauty. Its natural boons like the sandy beaches, picturesque hills, ancient monuments, famous traditional festivals and above all, the enchanting climate attracts a number of travellers around the world. Among these natural endowments, hills in Kerala constitute a significant contributor in the foreign exchange earnings of the State. The present study has been conducted to examine the various factors which need attention for the sustainable development of hill destinations, a major tourism product of the Kerala.

Accessibility to the destination and availability of various facilities are the pre-requisites for the development of any destination. While spotting out the availability of quality facilities at the destinations, it is observed that there exist good system of transport, good accommodation facilities, supply of quality food and beverages, quality drinking water and good sanitation, banking and shopping facilities. But it is remarkable to note that good motorable road networks, hospital and recreation facilities and above all proper public lightening system, which will be considered as symbols of civilised society, are lacking.

Mere existence of facilities/amenities does not guarantee proper development of a destination. Certain intangible factors such as publicity, law and order, service of tourist guide, etc., will also attract the tourists to a destination. On examining the availability of intangible factors, it is found that publicity of tourism products, working of Tourist Information Counters, sightseeing packages, facilities for adventure activities, safety and security, maintenance of law and order and the overall environment at the destination are satisfactory. But it is worth mentioning that the facility of good rejuvenation is lacking at the destination.
Cost is a prime criterion which determines the itinerary of budget class travellers. It is often criticised that the cost of various facilities are high in India in comparison with the neighbouring countries. On examining the cost of facilities at the destinations, it is observed that costs of accommodation and recreation facilities are high in the hill destinations. In order to attract more tourists to the destinations the existing high cost facilities should moderately priced.

The tourist is an outsider; he may face so many problems while travelling. On examining the various problems faced, accommodation booking ranked first followed by the lack of proper sign board, conveyance, etc. These problems should properly be addressed in order to ensure sustainable progress in tourism.

Tourism is a smoke less industry. It generates employment, increased foreign reserve, and provides national integration and international understanding. Yet, there are some environmental and cultural issues levelled against tourism. On examining the socio-cultural impact, it is revealed that tourism promotes social interaction, preserves cultural diversity and revives traditional arts. It is but criticised that tourism leads to create demonstration effect, high use of drug, sexual abuse and degradation of local language. On examining the economic impact, it is disclosed that tourism creates job opportunities, improves educational facilities and promotes shopping opportunities. It is also spotted that tourism leads to shortage of consumables and prevents setting up of new industries in other sectors. On searching the environmental impacts it is divulged that, tourism improves the quality of public service, increases environmental conscience and generates fund for the preservation of nature. But it is also unveiled that tourism leads to increased pollution, scarcity of water and above all degradation of natural resources.

No destination can have proper development without any assistance from an external agency. For the development of tourism at hill destinations
many governmental agencies like KTDC, DTPC, Forest department, NGOs like VSS, TGS, BLDC as well as private agencies provide many services. On searching the role of various promotional agencies it is found out that the DTPC and the forest department serve at all destinations. The roles of NGOs are remarkable in promoting tourism in a sustainable manner. It is worth mentioning that private agencies viz. TATA at Munnar and POABS at Nelliampathy made significant contributions for the growth of tourism at the destinations.

It can be concluded that hill destinations in Kerala is realised as one of the most important tourism products in the State, in terms of revenue and provision of employment. Since the eastern side of the Kerala is covered with Western Ghats, the state has high potential for the development of hill tourism. The saleability of hill tourism as a tourism product depends upon the accessibility and facilities (both tangible and intangible) available at the destination. In addition the price of the facilities should be moderately fixed to match to the pocket of budget travellers. In less developed hill destinations like Ponmudi and Nelliampathy, these facilities are lacking which ultimately hinder the overall progress of this segment of the Tourism Industry. Hill tourism has made positive impact on the economic dimension in the life of local communities. However, social evils, cultural degradation and environmental degradation resulting from the increased interaction with tourists, purposive construction etc. destruct the forest and commercialise the culture, emerged as a danger in the development of hill tourism in Kerala. By considering the above facts the authorities should ensure proper utilisation of this precious natural resources.

6.3 Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, observations and propositions made by the respondents, the following suggestions are advanced.
1. **Construct High Quality Motorable Road Network**

   Good road network helps the tourists to access the length and breadth of the destination with ease, but the study has found out that the road networks in the hill destinations of Kerala is poor. Hence it is suggested that the government or promotional agencies should construct good motorable roads to connect different tourism spots to the main centre of the hill destinations in Kerala.

2. **Install Public Lighting System**

   Proper lighting system is a must for every tourism destination since the night view of a destination is an important tourism product and it is also a factor which is a must for the safety and security of all those who are related to tourism. The hill destinations like Ponmudi, Nelliampathy and Wayanad lack proper public lighting system. So it is suggested that proper lighting system should be installed considering the nature of spots at all hill destinations in Kerala.

3. **Set-up Banking Facility**

   Banking facility viz., ATMs, Foreign Exchange Centres is a must for every tourism destination in order to boost the business of all industry which depends on tourism industry directly or indirectly. Some of the hill destinations viz., Ponmudi, Nelliampathy and Wayanad lack in that facility and this can discourage the tourists from visiting and thus adversely affects the destinations. So it is suggested that the government must take initiatives to set up ATMs and Foreign Exchange centres with the help of major banks functioning in the state.

4. **Set-up Hospitals with Modern Facilities**

   Quality medical facility in a region is one common yardstick of that area’s prosperity and quality of life. It also influences those who come to that region. The hill destinations of Kerala lacks proper hospital facilities, so it is highly recommended to take suitable measures from the part of government to
set up hospitals with all modern facilities on their own or with the help of other agencies.

5. Set-up Recreational Facilities

Recreational facilities viz., amusement parks, theatres, play grounds, natural gardens/leisure areas, are one of the major attractions of a site which draw the tourists. Quality recreational facilities can scarcely be found in some of major hill destinations in Kerala. Hence it is suggested that proper recreational facility must be set up at all hill destination after considering the peculiar nature of the site.

6. Establish Accommodation Facility

The availability of quality, value-for-money accommodation is a key component which influences the destination choice of a traveller. The hill destinations in Kerala lack in providing proper accommodation facility which caters to the needs of back packers and low budget tourists. Hence it is suggested that more budget hotels are to be established at all hill destinations in Kerala.

7. Give Due Consideration to the Local Community

It is found that the host community is dissatisfied with the way investments are being made in tourism. A large number of host community lost their land in the name of tourism development and also a majority of them do not get any direct benefit from tourism. So it is suggested that proper rehabilitation packages should be given to those who suffer due to tourism development. It is also put on record that the grievances of the local community should be taken in consideration while developing a site into tourism spot in future.

8. Set-up Other Industries at Tourism Destinations

One of the major complaints aroused by the host community is that the income from tourism is seasonal and it prevents the setting up of a new industry in other sectors. To improve the general standard of a destination, it is
suggested that government must take necessary steps to set up those other industries which do not harm tourism development but help the local community to earn a regular income.

9. Protect the Natural Beauty of Destinations

The eco-system of hills in Kerala is very sensitive and it has a globally acknowledged, rich biosphere. It is our duty to preserve this for the sake of our future generation and for the whole world. It is found that the development of tourism in some of the hills in Kerala adversely affect the bio-diversity of that region. So it is recommended that proper care should be given to protect the nature in the hills of Kerala. While investing for the development of tourism in future, priority should be given to nature-based-tourism. i.e. minimising the construction of physical man-made structures in the biologically sensitive region.

10. Take Augmented Efforts by Promotional Agencies

It is found out that the governmental and other agencies, viz., KTDC, DTPC and VSS, engaged in tourism development are concentrated only in those hills which are already established and have an image globally acknowledged. The functions of these agencies in less developed destinations like Ponmudi and Neliampathy is meagre. So it is suggested that the government and other destination development agencies must take proper steps to tap the full potential of these tourism destinations by investing more funds for setting up proper prime tourism facilities to draw more tourists to these destinations.