CHAPTER-7
FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

After making an in-depth study on various aspects of ecotourism in Idukki district in the previous chapters, this chapter is devoted to present the findings, recommendations and conclusion emerging from the study. The current chapter is designed to summarise the analysis and findings of the study. Firstly this chapter gives a summary about objectives, hypotheses and chapterisation of the thesis. This study is conducted on the basis of the following objectives:-

The major objective of the study is to make an evaluation of ecotourism destinations in Kerala with special reference to Idukki district. The sub objectives are:-

- To assess the role of ecotourism in the development of tourism in Idukki district.
- To examine the various ecotourism sites in Idukki district.
- To understand the problems, performance, growth and economic significance of ecotourism sector based on the study of various ecotourism projects in Idukki district.
- To analyse recent trends in the field of ecotourism in Idukki district.

The study is conducted on the basis of the following hypotheses:-

- There is a positive co-relation between ecotourism development and the overall economic development of local people in Idukki district.
- The age, occupation, income and education wise status of the tourists are co related with the level of satisfaction they derive from ecotourism.
- The tourists coming from urban areas have a higher preference for ecotourism than their rural counterparts.

The thesis is divided into six chapters:

The first chapter gives an introduction to the study. The first part of this chapter deals with ecotourism, its importance, characteristics, definitions, history, principles and various other dimensions. The second part of this chapter indicates the organisation of the thesis, i.e., statement of the problem, methodology, objectives, hypotheses and schematic arrangement.
The second chapter reviews the literature available on the subject to identify the research gap. It also depicts the theoretical framework associated with tourism.

The third chapter provides some idea about the importance of ecotourism in India, ecotourism destinations in India, ecotourism trends and policies, problems in ecotourism development and statistical analysis of tourist visits in India.

The fourth chapter indicates ecotourism development in Kerala. This chapter consists of various tourism products in Kerala, new initiatives, ecotourism strength, ecotourism resources, major ecotourism centers and so on.

The fifth chapter provides an overview of ecotourism projects in Idukki district. This chapter explains various ecotourism sites and its attractions in detail. The second part of this chapter shows tourist arrival statistics in the main ecotourism centers in Idukki and important problems confronting in the development of ecotourism.

The sixth chapter provides an analysis of statistical data regarding ecotourism in Idukki district.

The last chapter presents the findings, recommendations and conclusion of the study.

7.1 Major Findings

The major findings of the study in conformity with the objectives laid down are given below:

7.1.1 Socio-Economic Background of the Tourists and their Opinions Regarding Eco-Tourism in Idukki

The socio-economic status of the tourists has an impact on their satisfaction level.

The socio-economic profile of the tourists is as follows:

- In Idukki district, majority of the tourists belong to the age categories of 25-35. Eco-tourists are generally highly educated. There is fairly good representation of both men and women. Majority of the tourists have an annual income ranging between Rs.1 lakh and Rs.5 lakh. Out of the total respondents most of the tourists come from within Kerala.
- More than 30 percent of the total respondents covered in the study have visited Idukki twice or thrice. Regarding the budget for the trip
58.8% of tourists spend less than Rs.10,000. Most of the tourists come here with their family.

- Majority of the respondents selected Idukki as they wanted to learn more about nature. Most of the tourists were ready to spend more than a day here. More than 35% of the tourists were satisfied with this destination as it is nature based. Most of the tourists were of the opinion that facilities are insufficient and not properly organised.

- Majority of the respondents agreed that the location is convenient to all and more than 80% of the tourists preferred nature based tourist areas than artificial areas.

- Majority of the tourists were satisfied with the taxi driver’s approach in the tourist destination. Similar is the case with road maintenance. Most of the tourists preferred KTDC hotels for their accommodation.

- Hill station occupies the top position among the tourist attractions.

- Out of the total tourists who come under the survey, most of them opine that the local people behave in a good manner.

- Most of the tourists liked the water facilities and the climate in Idukki.

- About 49.2% of respondents opined the services provided by tourist guides in Idukki are good. Similarly, 52% of the tourists hold the opinion that the officials were helpful to them. Most of the tourists are also satisfactory with the hotel accommodation they got. But most of the tourists were only satisfied with the entertainment and shopping facilities available in Idukki.

- Majority of the tourists were happy with the communication facilities and the price charged for the service.

- Most of the tourists had problems with infrastructure. Tourists were of the view that cost of visiting Idukki is equal to visiting similar other destinations.

- Majority of the tourists did not experience any pollution problem in Idukki.

- The survey showed that 83.2% of the tourists preferred ecotourism to general tourism and 92.8% of tourists encouraged friends and relatives to visit Idukki.
Most of the regular visitors experienced some changes in the area vis-à-vis their previous visit. The major change noted is the increase in ecotourism activities.

Majority of the tourists suggested measures for improvement in infrastructure, conservation of forest and wildlife, environmental preservation and security measures for ecotourism development.

One strange thing noticed is that there is no clear relationship existed between tourist’s income and type of accommodation preferred.

### 7.1.2 Findings Based on the Statistical Analysis of the Viewpoints of Local People

- Majority of local people (82%) opined that they always get benefit from ecotourism.
- Local people mentioned that there is no pollution as a result of tourism.
- Everyone unanimously opined that tourism actually improved the life standard of the local people.
- It is observed that 98% of local people got employment opportunities from tourism. Out of this, 40% got permanent job, 32% got temporary job and only 28% of local people are self-employed.
- More than half of the local people (68%) pointed out that they were not experiencing any negative impact on their living as a result of ecotourism.
- Nature of benefits from ecotourism to local people is of different kinds such as improvement in living conditions, acquisition of assets, improved housing and so on.
- Local people provide accommodation, food, shopping facilities, guidance, etc. to the tourists.
- There is considerable increase in the income of local people after the ecotourism development in Idukki district. Similarly, the man-days of employment increased after the development of ecotourism projects in Idukki district.
- The mean income of local people before ecotourism development was Rs.8820. After the development of ecotourism, the income has gone up to Rs.17500.
The mean value of man-days of employment of local people before ecotourism development was 4.55. The same has gone up to 6.55 man-days after the development of ecotourism.

7.1.3 Findings Related to Eco-Tourism in India

- The study shows that Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has taken many ecotourism promotional measures like eco-friendly guidelines, action plan for national ecotourism policy and so on.
- In India, there is an increase of 8.1% of foreign tourist arrivals in 2010 over the previous year. In the case of domestic tourist arrivals also, there has been an increase of 10.7% over the previous year in 2010. With respect to foreign exchange earnings there has been an increase of 18.1% in 2010 over the previous years.
- The 11th five-year plan outlines some strategic objectives for Indian tourism sector such as developing infrastructure, marketing plans, human resources and capacity building of services. For the infrastructure development during 11th plan, emphasis was mainly on development of individual tourist destinations and circuits. Though the approach followed in the 11th plan was successful to an extent, the emphasis during the 12th plan would be on the development of tourism infrastructure in an integrated manner by identifying the gaps in infrastructure amenities in the identified circuits.

7.1.4 Findings Related to Eco-Tourism in Kerala

- In 2010 Kerala witnessed 6,59,265 foreign tourist and 85,95,075 domestic tourist arrivals. This shows an increasing trend over the previous years. In the case of foreign exchange earnings from 2001 to 2010, there is a steady increase except during 2009.
- It is found that Kerala has immense potential for ecotourism growth. The Western Ghats region of Kerala houses two national parks and 12 wildlife sanctuaries spanning a protected area of 2,324 sq. km.

7.1.5 Findings Related to Eco-Tourism in Idukki District

- In Idukki district important ecotourism centers are Munnar, Thekkady, Vagamon, Periyar Tiger Reserves, Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary, Idukki Wildlife Sanctuary and Eravikulam National Park.
In Kerala, Idukki district has the highest ecotourism potential and Wayanad occupies the second position.

The Periyar Tiger Reserve is endowed with unique natural features that can be showcased as a destination with special emphasis on ecotourism and nature travel.

In Munnar, between 2005 and 2010 the number of vehicle inflow increased by more than two lakh. This has some impact on increasing air pollution.

In Thekkady, after the boat tragedy, government took many measures like providing lifejackets and appointing life guards to ensure the security of tourists.

There are many ecotourism destinations in Idukki district like Vagamon, Thommankkooth, which are still in developing stage.

Vagamon has ample scope for ecotourism development.

The number of tourist arrivals in Idukki is high in the months of January and May while in June and July the arrivals are low.

In case of domestic tourist visits, Munnar occupies the top position and in case of foreign tourists, Thekkady occupies the top position in Idukki district. Munnar is the destination with the highest total visitation in Idukki district.

The Periyar Tiger Reserve provided a source of primary occupation to about 5,540 households

The important problems identified in Idukki district are infrastructural bottleneck, lack of adequate safety and security measures, lack of waste disposal arrangements and lack of communication facilities.

Global recession and Mullaperiyar issues played their role in dropping both domestic as well as foreign tourists in 2009. The foreign tourist arrivals dropped by 2%.

The success of ecotourism projects in Idukki district reflects a balance between environment and local people.

Another finding of the study is that, the smooth functioning of ecotourism requires co-ordination of various government departments. But in Idukki district this kind of co-operation is lacking.

There are approximately 80 homestay operators in Idukki district.
As per the information provided by hoteliers and tour operators on the tourist arrivals, majority of them are domestic tourists.

On the basis of information collected from hoteliers, most of the tourists are ready to spend a major part of their holidays in Idukki.

Around 80% of tourist officials are of the view that ecotourism is more relevant than general tourism in Idukki.

In Idukki, there are so many new ecotourism sites like Ilaveezhaponchira, Nadukani, Panchalimedu, Murinjapuzha Waterfalls, Parunthupara etc.

The number of domestic tourist visits in Idukki district is 209639. This is increased to 464,123 in 2010. The number of foreign tourist visit in 2000 is 24842 and is raised to 48295 in 2010.

In 2000, the number of domestic tourist arrivals was 187722, while the foreign tourist was 10987. During 2010, total number of domestic tourist visits in Munnar is increased to 225748 and foreign tourist visit to 19690.

The foreign tourist visiting to Thekkady in 2010 is 27537 and domestic tourist visiting is 170857. In 2000, foreign tourist visit was 21543 and domestic tourists were 166970.

In Vagamon, the number of foreign tourists is 1101 in 2010. Total number of domestic tourists’ visited is 18366 in 2010.

It is revealed that 184643 domestic tourists and 77623 outbound tourists visit Periyar Tiger Reserve in 2010.

The District Tourism Promotion Council is drawing up a master plan to develop Idukki, Nedumkandam and Vagamon clubbing the lesser known tourism spots along with Munnar and Thekkady, the main tourist destination in Idukki district.

7.1.6 Findings Related to Empirical and Theoretical Aspects of Eco-Tourism

There are very few studies associated with ecotourism projects at the micro level. There is no in-depth destination-wise study associated with ecotourism in Idukki district. So the present study has much relevance.

This study attempted to bring in a linkage between macro and micro level strategies relating to the issues on ecotourism. Thus an attempt is
made to bring out policy implications at the national level inculcating grass root level experience on ecotourism in Idukki district.

- There are some theories associated with tourism. Some among them are contingent valuation, conspicuous consumption or demand and carrying capacity based tourist planning process.

### 7.1.7 Findings Related to Hypotheses

A well done research study is expected to test the formulated hypotheses. The test results were different indifferent contexts. The major findings of the study based on the hypotheses are summarised under the following headings:

- It is observed that most of the tourists coming from urban areas prefer ecotourism to general tourism.
- Respondent’s preference of ecotourism activities are almost the same, irrespective of their age-groups. But gender-wise, there is some difference. Similarly, the level of education has some influence on preference. Highly educated tourists have higher preference for ecotourism.
- Eco-tourists have a common interest to learn more about nature. The eco-tourist group consists of well-educated people who are aware of environmental protection.
- Several studies have shown that ecotourism have positive impact on the local population in terms of income and employment.

### 7.1.8 Other Findings

- Climate change has direct as well as indirect impact on ecotourism. These impacts are due to changes in temperature, extreme weather events and other climatic factors, transformation of the natural environment, etc.
- Ecotourism promotional activities by the government were inadequate in attracting tourists.
- The average annual growth rates of ecotourism are projected to be steady at 10% to 25% over the past few years.
- An organised development of tourism in a rural area will create many jobs. In the case of Munnar a few of them are listed here. They are information assistants, drivers, guides, escorts, security staffs, food production staffs, food service staffs, entertainment performers,
developers and many other businesses. All these provide a continuous source of income to the rural community.

From this study, it can be concluded that Idukki district has immense tourism potentials for unique development of its ecotourism sector in future. This study reveals that the major factor which attracts tourists to Idukki district is the condition of environment. But development of this sector is required to be done in a phased manner so that it is in tune with the carrying capacity of this territory and it is not detrimental to its eco-system. Ecotourism plays a vital role in the development of tourism in Idukki district. In Idukki district more than 50% families are depending upon tourism industry for their livelihood. Here local people get more than 90% of benefits from ecotourism both directly and indirectly. In case of the number of ecotourism destinations, Idukki district occupies one of the top positions in India. Recently government took so many measures to improve ecotourism development in Idukki district. Tourists are satisfied with the facilities provided to them at the destination. But in some cases especially entertainment, security and shopping facilities, tourists are not satisfied. The analysis revealed that age, education and gender of tourists occupies an important place in determining the satisfaction level of tourists. The educational level and age of tourists are the major factors in choosing tourist sites. It should be mentioned here that some domestic and foreign tourists visited Idukki more than three times. Both tourists and local people mentioned that they do not face any pollution problem in Idukki district. The respondents felt that tourism has a positive impact on preservation and spreads awareness about natural environment. Regarding the respondents attitudes towards ecotourism development, the result shows that they have consistently positive attitudes towards ecotourism. Ecotourism leads to the community development and improves the life standard of local people. It is evident from the present study that the ecotourism development in Idukki district plays an important role in the economic development of this district mainly through an improvement in the income and employment of the local people. The number of tourist arrivals (both domestic and foreign tourists) in the ecotourism destinations in Idukki district is increasing day by day. These increasing tourist arrivals raise optimism among tour operators, agents and others involved in tourism industry. The most important problem in the Idukki district revealed from this study is infrastructural problem. Unless systematic and sustainable efforts are made, Idukki may slip out from the favoured destination of the eco-tourists in the course of time. It
is clear from this study that Idukki is one of the important places in the world with wide scope for ecotourism.

7.2 Suggestions and Recommendations

Unless systematic and sustainable efforts are made, Idukki may slip out from the favoured destination of the eco-tourists in the course of time. In the light of the findings of the study, observations made during the period of the survey and discussions made with experts in the field of study, the following recommendations have been put forward:-

7.2.1 Infrastructural Development

It is revealed from the survey that in Idukki, domestic tourist is coming more than foreign tourist. This is mainly due to lack of adequate infrastructural facilities. The government should plan to build world-class infrastructural facilities to attract foreign visitors and to increase the wealth of India. More infrastructural facilities should be started in Vagamon to attract more tourists. The state can welcome investment in infrastructure sector from NRI’s, NRK’s and International Funding Agencies. Banks and other financial institutions should extent financial assistance for infrastructure development associated with ecotourism. Improve the telecommunication system, information technology system and the banking services in the tourist destinations like Thekkady, Munnar and Vagamon for the development of tourism facilities. Laying of trails, transport arrangement, interpretation skills for guides and basic facilities development are important steps for ecotourism development.

7.2.2 Accommodation

Tourism can be promoted in a big way by establishing tourist resorts at strategic locations. Unfortunately, neither the government nor the department of tourism has done anything worth mentioning in this respect. Resorts can be built under the public-private participation. Proper accommodation centers with modern amenities suitable for stay of the international tourists must be constructed. Construction of day shelter is another step for ecotourism development.

7.2.3 Marketing

There should be some improvement in marketing facilities for ecotourism promotion. Steps should be taken to market tourism potentials of Idukki district in India and abroad. Ecotourism marketing is different from traditional marketing as it
involves the marketing of products and services with positive ecological outcomes to environmentally concerned consumers. Effective marketing is necessary for ecotourism development.

7.2.4 Safety and Security Measures

Security measures taken by government are not sufficient in Idukki district. There should be provision for proper security to tourists. Implementation of security measures during boating should be a must. Special care should be given to women tourists and children. The Thekkady boat tragedy has come as a shock not only to Kerala, but also to the tourism Industry all over the country. Following are some of the measures for safe boating:

- Every boat used for sightseeing should be equipped with modern communication gadgets.
- Fitness certificates for boats must be renewed every six months.
- Life jacket should be compulsory.
- One lifeguard should be posted on the boat for every 25 passengers.

Government must bestow careful attention to solve this problem.

7.2.5 Publicity and Information Measures

Tourism product, whether natural or man-made, should be publicised for encouraging the flow of tourists. Distribute ecotourism publicity materials at airports. The tourist information centers are necessary. In order to provide proper information and education for the visitors, tourist information centers are necessary. In order to earn foreign exchange, proper-publicity should be made to attract foreign tourists towards ecotourism. Ecotourism exhibition is an important tool for the ecotourism promotion. Brochures and guidebooks can also be used as a promotional method. Advertising and mass communication media can be used for the promotion of ecotourism. Picture CDs can be used for promoting ecotourism. It is recommended that the internet be better used for information exchange. Qualified websites with useful information is necessary. Ecotourism industry should also be made as an IT enabled tourism industry. Mobile based and IT-based services for ecotourism promotion should be taken up. Internet and social networking sites for marketing Kerala Tourism will be helpful.

7.2.6 Waste Management

Waste management is an important aspect for promoting ecotourism. The tourist spots should be ‘plastic free’. Adequate waste boxes should be kept in all
tourist areas to keep the surroundings clean. These wastes should be collected and disposed in a scientific manner. Burning of waste should be done in safe places under controlled conditions. Hi-tech pollution control equipments are in continuous operation to ensure and improve our efforts in preventing pollution. Continuous R&D efforts should be carried out. Focusing research efforts for developing comprehensive technology support system, which will help to achieve maximum resource end-use efficiency, minimising wastage of resources and pollution emission and enhance total productivity in all sectors of the economy.

7.2.7 Evolving Eco-Tourism Plan

Separate policies are required for ecotourism, distinguishing it from mainstream tourism operations. We need long term planning. The Government and other agencies should examine ways to provide assistance to ecotourism operations research. A holistic and integrated development of the ecotourism sector would require significant funds in creation of supporting infrastructure and in capacity building amongst the local community to manage and operate the sector. In order to develop the ecotourism destinations in the state, there should be a different plan for each tourist destinations. Specific plans and actions can increase benefits from tourism and decrease the gravity of a negative impact. Active implementation and management of plans and prompt attention to emerging tourism issues will maximise positive and minimise negative effects. Good monitoring efforts can identify trouble areas. Develop ecotourism as a management tool for natural resource protection and bio-diversity conservation.

7.2.8 Environmental Impact Analysis

This is concerned with assessing the predicted effects of development upon the environment and thereby providing decision makers with information on the likely consequences of their decision to proceed with development.

7.2.9 Environmental Auditing

One of the environmental management techniques that are relevant to tourism business is environmental auditing. Environmental auditing provides the basis for such business practice (improving the current environmental performance of tourism firms) and is consistent with the view of management as a controlled cyclic process based on continuous monitoring of impacts and change, the development of knowledge and the feeding back of these into decision making by formalised process.
7.2.10 Environmental Codes of Conduct for Tourism

Voluntary codes of conduct to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism and improve environmental quality have been developed by government, private sector, and non-governmental organisation. These codes of conduct cover a wide range of the stakeholders in tourism including the private sector, government, local communities and tourists. These codes must be strictly followed. Promote and develop educational programmes to enhance awareness about nature conservation.

7.2.11 Other Recommendations

In the light of the results found in this study, the following are some of the other recommendations, which may be given for the improvement of ecotourism:-

- Motivate the local community to increase their involvement in sustainable tourism activities. Provide training programmes to local people and communities. More education and guidance must be provided for the stakeholders involved in ecotourism in order to secure better participation of local communities in ecotourism. Improve livelihood options of local communities through ecotourism activities. Make community participation in ecotourism activities through Kudumbasree units. Participation of women self-help groups in the conservation programmes will help in ecotourism development. Local handicraft, cuisine, folksongs/music to be encouraged and local economic earning activities should be promoted. Creation of local committees is required for this.

- The central and state governments should allocate necessary funds from time to time for the purpose to improve roadways, transportation, ensure clean and hygienic environment and provision of safety and security conditions at tourist spots. Every year, give separate budget for ecotourism development programs.

- Protection and conservation of total biodiversity and implement animal welfare programmes for wildlife protection. A separate protected area tourism plan is required. In Periyar Tiger Reserve, implement projects to ensure the protection of tigers for all time. Public participation is essential in protecting the fauna and flora from wildfires, maintain rare and uniqueness in coral reefs, mangrove, forests etc.
• Carrying capacity of tourists must be assessed for tourism promotion in Idukki. To maintain sustainability of the place, the physical, economic and socio-cultural dimensions of the carrying capacity should be kept in consideration. Strictly reducing the number of visitors admitted to certain sites on the basis of carrying capacity of the place.

• Appoint more efficient staff at the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary and Eravikulam National Park. Human resources play a crucial role in the success of a service industry like tourism. The quality and quantity of human resources is equally important. Proper facilities for training and development of staff should be provided by tourism industry.

• Construct more ecotourism facilities by using eco-friendly techniques like solar energy, capture and utilisation of rain water, recycling of garbage, natural cross-ventilation instead of air-conditions, a high level self-sufficiency in food generation through orchards, ecological farms, aquaculture.

• Conduct scientific studies on the impact of ecotourism on income and employment. State must enact tourism friendly legislations. Tourism is a service industry and multiplicity of taxes exists in this sector. The quantum of taxes also varies from place to place. This makes tourism product expensive. Rationalisation of taxes, abolition of luxury taxes and liberalisation of tourist trade Registration bill etc. are necessary step.

• Tourism contributes a lot the Indian economy. To attract more skilled persons into this sector, tourism based knowledge is necessary. So it is recommended to include more tourism and ecotourism based courses in curriculum. Tourism clubs should be organised in colleges to create awareness about ecotourism among the youth. Environmental Education Centre and an Interpretation Centre should be set up in Idukki. Steering interest amongst youth towards ecotourism through school activities. Promote and develop educational programmes to enhance awareness about nature conservation.

• There is wide scope for hill tourism in Idukki district especially in Nedumkandam, Pampadumpara, Udumbanchola, Karunapuram grama panchayats. So the government should take necessary steps for this. Plantation tourism is given necessary support as it can compliment the effort in the ecotourism activities being taken up in the National Parks and Sanctuaries.
• There is also need to involve private sector in tourism development. Public-private partnership can do a lot in this area.

Besides the above, proper utilisation of existing resources available at Idukki district facilitates effective functioning of ecotourism projects.

7.3 Scope for Further Research and Policy Implications

Nature-based tourism is undoubtedly one of the most significant areas of research in tourism studies today. Ecotourism is viewed in many parts of the world as the next wave of community and regional development. In order to maintain ecotourism site as a popular destination, it requires a detailed study of individual preference pattern; motivating forces etc. should be carried out. Ecotourism acts as a tool for sustainability. A detailed examination of ecotourism activities would require more information. Because of personal limitations and also the limitations of time, resources and data, this study is limited to one district. Comparative study of other ecotourism destinations in Kerala would be an interesting area and we can understand the regional variations. Researcher can make inter-destination comparisons by applying more advanced statistical tools. There is ample scope for further research in this area and will be helpful for the growth of domestic ecotourism market and making awareness on environmental protection and preservation of nature for future generation. More studies can be conducted about the ecological aspect of tourism. There is also extensive research possibility for more theoretical studies associated with ecotourism. Ecotourism will require careful planning in the future to avoid further negative impacts on biodiversity.

More research is needed to help to formulate policy. This study would help policy makers, planners, educationists and environmentalist to formulate new policies associated with ecotourism. The result of this study will help the administrators to change the approach towards ecotourism. The outcome of the studies can be used for further improvements in this area, since Idukki has a large potential for developing ecotourism market. If the government takes proper measures to rectify the important problems revealed from this study, Idukki will become an important ecotourism destination in India.

7.4 Contribution of the Researcher

The detailed study about the impact of ecotourism opens new areas of research. This study explores the challenges and opportunities presented in
ecotourism destinations. A serious attempt has been made to make an in depth analysis of the satisfaction level of beneficiaries and evaluate literature on ecotourism. The researcher has also tried to analyse the working of ecotourism projects in Idukki district. The policy implications as well as the areas that need to be further improved in order to strengthen its effects on economy was analysed by the researcher. This study would be helpful to the Government in making certain decisions associated with ecotourism. A detailed evaluation about ecotourism in Idukki will help to understand the importance of local people in ecotourism projects and the scope of ecotourism in the economic development of Kerala.

7.5 Conclusion

Ecotourism has expanded fast and in a revolutionary way. It is an offshoot wave of environmental awareness. Due to tourism’s strong role in the nations and economies of the world, the need for tourism research is imperative. The movement towards ecotourism in India is at once a threat and an opportunity to create more sustainable tourism. By diverting tourist traffic to ensure that the carrying capacity of any destination is not exceeded, by planning for regeneration of natural resources, and by generating awareness in the host community whereby they are prepared to deal with the negative impact of mass tourism are the ways of attaining sustainability.

There is a considerable scope for research on the evaluation of ecotourism projects in Kerala. International tourists would want to travel in environmental friendly ways to environmentally sound destinations. As ecotourism grows in popularity there are a number of challenges that need to be faced. For eliminating weaknesses mentioned in this thesis, a planned approach is needed and thereby Kerala can attract more and more eco-tourists and create an image of one of the world’s best ecotourism destination. Kerala has a vast opportunity in this area. Ecotourism has the capacity to deliver a lot of economic benefits to traditional cultures. However, whether those benefits are realised depends on how well the ecotourism is managed. There is an urgent need for improved analysis of ecotourism issues as part of the ecotourism planning and development process. The growth of tourism without proper control and supervision will endanger the environment.

Tourism in ecologically sensitive area needs close monitoring. In Short, tourism in nature-based areas should be ecologically sustainable. There should also be provision for learning process for a visitor. Ecotourism could be a tool for
environmental conservation, local empowerment, poverty alleviation and so on. So it requires well planning on the basis of regulations. This study reveals that tourism has a positive impact on the social aspects as it provides more and high quality services. The economic benefit of such an activity should accrue to the local population to ensure sustainability. Ecotourism enjoys a significant superiority over general tourism with regard to tourist arrivals and economic, social and environmental benefits. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that ecotourism development and protection of environment can be made possible with the careful planning and execution by the government departments, tourist officials along with the co-operation of the public. In future, ecotourism will continue to grow in several parts of the world as a profitable way of life.