CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, it describes major findings and provides recommendations for policy makers, tourism practitioners, and authorities for attaining sustainable destination management.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AS A PRECURSOR TO DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE
A STUDY AT TOURISM DESTINATIONS OF KERALA
Chapter 6

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the main findings of the study and gives conclusions based on the findings with empirical evidences from previous studies. Further, it presents the summary of the findings and its managerial and theoretical implications. As a subject relevant to policy makers and sustainability experts of tourism development, this chapter suggests applications of this study on the endeavors of sustainable destination management.

This study has developed a sustainable destination management model for tourism destinations in the context of improving the Quality of Life of the destination community. The proposed model shows the impact of Responsible Tourism on the sustainability of destination and the Quality of Life (QOL) as perceived by the local residents. QOL in this context is described as satisfaction with life in general, derived from the satisfaction with a particular life domain; viz. material well-being, community well-being, emotional well-being, and health and safety well-being. It also hypothesized mediating effects of sustainability of destinations as perceived by local communities on their QOL.

The study found that Responsible Tourism has a significant role in achieving sustainability of destinations and thereby improving the QOL of destination community. Also, the perception of community towards Destination Sustainability influenced their satisfaction of particular life domains which subsequently affected
their overall QOL. It was also found that emotional well-being and environmental sustainability had no impact on the overall QOL of destination community.

Additionally, the study dwelt upon the development of a tool to measure the Responsible Business practices of hospitality business organizations at tourism destinations.

6.1. RESPONSIBLE TOURISM PRACTICES

6.1.1. Responsible Tourism – a Sustainable Destination Management Strategy

The study hypothesized that Responsible Tourism contributes to Destination Sustainability (economic, social, cultural and environmental), Quality of Life (material well-being, community well-being, emotional well-being, and health and safety well-being) and the overall life satisfaction of destination communities. The first parts of hypotheses were on the impact of Responsible Tourism on Destination Sustainability dimensions and QOL domains of local residents. All the hypotheses related to Responsible Tourism were accepted at <0.001 and with high β values which proved the theoretical underpinnings of Responsible Tourism.

The above findings reinstated that Responsible Tourism programmes are to be designed and implemented by maintaining an equitable balance among the economic, social, cultural, and environmental objectives (Kerala Tourism, 2007 and Cape Town Declaration, 2008). This study found that among Responsible Tourism indicators, community engagement, employment opportunities, skill development
programmes, and public awareness on tourism initiatives were perceived as the most significant contributors by the community.

Considering the path coefficient, this study found that the contribution of Responsible Tourism is more towards social sustainability (0.83) followed by economic sustainability (0.75). When the contribution of Responsible Tourism towards material well-being and community well-being were seen very strong, the impact of Responsible Tourism on health and safety well-being was found not as strong as material well-being.

As economic sustainability is the prime objective of Responsible Tourism and the direct effects of Responsible Tourism on material well-being established in this study, a test of moderating effect of “direct income from tourism activities” seemed relevant. The analysis concluded that the overall QOL of residents who received direct income was high as it acted as a moderator between Responsible Tourism and material well-being. Hence, the creation of sustainable livelihood substantially contributes to the QOL of the destination community. It emphasized the need for designing better livelihood opportunities for destination communities to maintain sustainability.
6.2. DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

Economic and Social Sustainability: The study assumed that perception on Destination Sustainability can be improved through Responsible Tourism practices. Also, perceptions on Responsible Tourism practices and Destination Sustainability will contribute to the Quality of Life and overall life satisfaction of residents at the destination. There were eight hypotheses proposing the relationships pertaining to Destination Sustainability as perceived by the local residents of tourism destinations. All the hypotheses except one proved to be significant - there was no significant relationship between environmental sustainability and overall QOL. Whereas the relationship between cultural sustainability and emotional well-being was significant at 0.04 level.

The findings of various destinations are in tune with the study done by Sarada (2010) at Kumarakom where she sees advancement in the number of micro enterprises through Responsible Tourism activities. Apart from the institutionalized mechanism for income generation for local communities, various other micro enterprises like units for fish processing, chapatti-making, chicken-processing, tender coconut-processing, gift-making, pappad-making, handicrafts- manufacture, paint-processing, souvenir set-ups, plantain leaves supply, fish-farming, lotus cultivation and different cultural groups were contributing their share in creating a sustainable livelihood for the village community. She reported that all this progress happened in a small village which had earlier never enjoyed a single micro enterprise.
Environmental Sustainability: According to Duffy and Chancellor, environmental sustainability is the best predictor of perceived QOL, and perceived social cost was found to be the next best predictor of perceived QOL. Similarly, a study in Hawaii (Assante) found a very strong relationship between residents’ overall life satisfaction and their perceptions toward the environmental impacts of tourism.

However, this study found a relationship between environmental sustainability and health and safety well-being, but no relationship has been established between environmental sustainability and overall QOL. As environmental sustainability is a key to sustainable development, this finding is of importance.

People may perceive that threats to health and safety are not from environmental degradation and waste accumulation, and the possibility of perceiving environmental issues as a social menace rather than a personal issue cannot be summarily rejected.

A study by Sindhya (2012) on the extent of environmental awareness among rural people in coastal areas of Kerala concluded that peoples' participation is a stronger alternative than mere Governmental poverty alleviation and environmental preservation programmes. It not only empowers the beneficiary groups but also makes people (groups) responsive to the cost of preservation of the environment and entitles them to avail of the benefits emerging there from.
It has always been an issue of much debate and complaint that Keralites are more concerned about personal hygiene than environmental hygiene. The media as well as environmental activists have frequently reported the lackadaisical approach of the Kerala community towards waste management. They cite the example of dumping waste carelessly, which in a way reveals that people do not perceive environmental impact as a predictor of Quality of Life.

### 6.2.1. Destination Sustainability Measures

Table 6.1 is the average score of the responses of destinations based on the triple-bottom line concepts. As sustainability element comprises of economic, environmental, and socio-cultural dimensions, the following scores may provide a view of the sustainability status of destinations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kumarakom</td>
<td>68.07 (1)</td>
<td>62.27 (1)</td>
<td>65.23 (2)</td>
<td>62.98 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kovalam</td>
<td>62.01 (3)</td>
<td>54.76 (3)</td>
<td>52.7 (3)</td>
<td>49.47 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thekkady</td>
<td>63.08 (2)</td>
<td>61.18 (2)</td>
<td>67.58 (1)</td>
<td>63.86 (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ranks are in brackets*

Destination Sustainability scores calculated from the data show that Thekkady leads in the overall score. Kumarkom scored highest in economic and social sustainability, and Thekkady scored high in environmental sustainability. Both the destinations were acknowledged by various international and national organizations/agencies like United Nations, considering their commendable efforts in sustainable/Responsible Tourism practices.
It was a sad state of affairs at Kovalam which was ranked lowest in all the three categories. This may be due to the fact that Kovalam is in the late stage of tourism life cycle and no active measures are taken regarding sustainability of the destination. Butler reported that tourists lose interest in the destination due to lack of novelty and creativity; and begin to leave the area, in the stagnation stage. He also observed that both local community and tourists will get exhausted in this stage. The same has been revealed while conversing with local community members, tourists and business entities. Hence, it is inevitable to move for rejuvenation stage or end up with decline stage.

In order to get a clear picture on Destination Sustainability, analyses on a few more indicators are also to be discussed. The perception of local residents about tourism in three destinations is given in table 6.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Tourism Development</th>
<th>Percentage (%) of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kovalam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Financially Beneficial</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Appropriate to the Local Conditions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Facilitates Social Development</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Create Employment Opportunities</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Develop Infrastructure and Basic Amenities</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Good Relation with Industry</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Creates Negative Environmental Impacts</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Causes Cultural Degradation</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1-Agree; 2-Neutral; and 3- Disagree
It was found that when 58% and 49% residents of Kumarakom and Thekkady respectively opined that tourism facilitated social development, in Kovalam, only 22% supported this statement and 43% of the respondents were neutral. Also, 52% perceived that tourism was not contributing to the development of the community infrastructure and basic amenities at Kovalam. Forty seven percent of the respondents in Kovalam felt that tourism was not appropriate to the local environment and 42% opined that tourism created negative effects. This calls for urgent attention and an immediate action plan at the destination-management endeavors at Kovalam.

A destination-wise analysis found that there is an appreciable progress in destinations despite several apprehensions. It is apparent that generally people have a positive attitude towards the economic dimensions of tourism. Very evidently, Thekkady and Kumarakom have a clear edge over all components. The flagship eco-tourism project which successfully ensures participation of tribal population in Thekkady and the pioneering Responsible Tourism initiatives in Kumarakom have certainly contributed to the sustainability of the destinations.

6.3 EFFECTS ON QUALITY OF LIFE (QOL)

QOL consisted of four dimensions or domains; material well-being, community well-being, emotional well-being, and health and safety well-being. It is an individual’s feeling of satisfaction towards these domains. The model developed in this study established that satisfaction with life in general or overall life
satisfaction is derived from satisfaction with particular life domains - material well-being, community well-being, emotional well-being, and health and safety well-being. The model also illustrates that overall life satisfaction is derived from different destinations’ sustainability dimension; viz. economic, social, cultural and environmental.

The last proposition was about the relationship between the well-being of life domains and overall QOL. Emotional well-being construct consisted of leisure well-being and spiritual well-being. All the assumptions except relationship between emotional well-being and overall QOL were accepted in this Kerala context study, though Cummins (1997); Kim (2002), and Orman et al; (1997) in their studies in other countries found significant relationship between emotional well-being and overall QOL which strongly affected residents’ overall life satisfaction.

6.4. RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS PRACTICES

The industry is often being considered as a major stakeholder as well as a beneficiary of tourism initiatives. While business fetches revenue out of tourism activities, it also has the responsibility to maintain sustainability of the destinations by caring for the environment, the society, and the local economy. The prevailing issue of ‘development at the cost of local community’ should be solved by ensuring equitable distribution of income and resources. As part of competitiveness, a clean image and sustainability of the destination are crucial matters of concern for every stakeholder, but more responsibility weighs on the shoulders of industry partners.
Responsible Tourism provides special attention in reducing economic leakages and improving linkages by exploring new avenues for sustainable livelihood, thereby achieving an industry-community harmony. Also, the increased interest of policy makers on Public Private Participation (PPP), Participatory Planning Process, devolution of decision making; and community engagement in tourism can enhance the scope of industry resilience. It was in the wake of this scenario that the study on the role of business in destination-sustainability termed ‘Responsible Business’ came into the picture.

A key contribution towards this aspect was the development of a theoretical framework on the evolving concept of ‘Responsible Business’. The development of indicator framework on Responsible Business involved a comprehensive procedure consisting of extensive literature survey, interviews with experts and empirical method to determine validity and reliability of the content. Initially, the process identified 163 items. It was then subsumed to 56 going by expert opinions and pilot study. This study conceptualized multidimensional construct consisting of five dimensions: Governance and Management, Social Responsiveness, Product and Customer Focus, Environmental Performance, Economic Responsibility and fifteen sub-dimensions to measuring different facets of Responsible Business.

Some of the Responsible Business practices found among the sample unit under study are illustrated below. Responsible Business practices can be ensured to a great extent by adopting best practices from the following measures.
6.4.1. Local Purchase

The study found that 33% of the hotels have a policy of local purchase or purchase from sustainable sources (green purchase policy). The local supply group named “Samrudhi” under the banner of Kerala Poverty Eradication Mission (KSPEM), popularly known as “Kudumbasree” is vibrantly active in Kumarakom and Thekkady. In Kumarakom, around 45% of hotels purchase vegetables from the Samrudhi shop run by women’s groups. Additionally, the souvenir industry is flourishing with the support of the tourism industry. Though it is very heartening to see the presence of a decent percentage of local employees in hotels, managements generally have a sluggish response towards local recruitment as it invites local activism and trade union initiatives. Interviews with the managers of various hotels also brought out the same view.

6.4.2. Green Energy

When 45% of the hotels tap energy from renewable sources for the purpose of hot water, only one among the surveyed 54 hotels had a solar power unit for electricity generation.

6.4.3. Responsible Policy

The study also found that only 17% of the hotels have any kind of CSR policy initiatives. When 27% hotels in Thekkady promote community development projects, only 15% in Kumarakom and below 10% in Kovalam have such projects. At the same time 50-60% of the hotels in Kumarakom and Thekkady give emphasis
on cultural promotion and souvenir development. It is vital to note that Responsible Tourism initiatives in Kumarakom were honored as best CSR initiatives in tourism (UN, 2014). Hotels are actively participating in Responsible Tourism by facilitating local procurement and recruitment and by promoting Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The Village Life Experience (VLE) package of Responsible Tourism is a model worth emulating where local tours are guided and managed by the village community. VLE takes guests to the hinterlands of villages and shows them the exquisite traditions and lifestyle of Kerala. All the members participating in this activity are benefited by the revenue-sharing mechanism.

6.4.4. Art and Culture

A few instances of how Responsible Business can contribute to the well-being of destination community can be demonstrated here. Mr. Muraleedharan, a poor carpenter in Kainakiry village of Kumarakom was burdened with debt and on the verge of committing suicide. The Responsible Tourism initiative identified his expertise in developing craft/souvenirs and provided professionalized expertise in this area. Further, they linked him to business partners. Currently, he earns an average of Rs. 30,000/month by making beautiful models of village souvenirs and selling them to hotels.

Mr. Sebastian, a farm owner makes an average of Rs. 250/day as a partner of Village Life Experience (VLE) tours. Around 45 families in the destination get an average of Rs. 150/day through VLE. Mr. Bhagath, a local tour guide has an average daily income of Rs. 500 and Mrs. Suma, who is basically into farming, and who also
happens to be an expert oarswoman, gets an average of Rs. 200/day by taking tourists deep into the village in her own country boat.

The Suvarna Cultural group – the first RT professional cultural group of women and children in Kerala, trained by the RT cell, charges Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 7,000 for showcasing a recital of Shinkarimelam and Chendamelam (a kind of drumming), and different other local art forms. It is inspiring to note that the biggest contributors to these enterprises are RT partnering hotels at destinations.

6.4.5. Responsible Management

Business organizations perform fairly well in governance and management-dimension of Responsible Business. While 40% of hotels in Kumarakom are covered under the Responsible Tourism certification programme of Kerala Tourism, 32% of the hotels in Thekkady have adopted either the Central Government’s or their own policy for responsible management practices. Regarding the question of the policy against discrimination, exploitation and child labour; though many of the hotels have responded positively, only very few hotels have a written policy on ‘values and principles’.

6.4.6. Training and Development

Training and Development is another area of importance to be discussed. Among the surveyed hotels, only below 20% offer any kind of training or development programmes for employees. Though they conduct induction programmes, there was no continuous monitoring and assessment of training related-activities. A
manger in a reputed hotel at Thekkady commented that as the employee turnover is very high in the hospitality industry, providing professional training to employees is not economically feasible. Also, one senior manager at a hotel in Kovalam opined that business being seasonal; the possibility of training was impossible and would be economically unviable.

UNEP reported that one of the main reasons why the tourism sector failed to deliver quality employment is the significant seasonal nature of demand in many destinations. Supporting these arguments, reports of Hewitt (2008) on human resource skill in hospitality industry and a study on the skill shortage in hospitality industry by the National Skill Development Authority (NSDA, 2010) called for a rigorous training regimen in tourism hospitality industry.

6.4.7. Waste Management

Waste management is a critical concern of Responsible Business. It envisages a concept of ‘polluter pay principle’ and ‘the extender-producer responsibility’ in environmental management. The study found that all the major classified hotels have STP (Sewage Treatment Plant) and water recycling mechanism, as it’s a mandatory provision; but only 35% have their own mechanism for treating solid waste. More than 50% of the hotels agreed that they outsourced the responsibility of waste management to certain approved or unauthorized agencies, and aren’t aware of the mechanism they adopted for the disposal of waste. At the same time, local residents and tourists are vexed and troubled by the increased environmental
pollution and often complain of the laidback attitude of the Government and the industry.

Kumarakom sports the worst-case scenario in this regard. Residents are up against the uncontrolled rejection of waste matter into the water resources by houseboats, which in turn hastens pollution and exposes them to various health hazards. Some others believe that the unregulated use of pesticides in paddy lands and fields is the villain behind this disaster. A senior expert in the fisheries department of Kerala has also shed some light on the issue. He pointed out that fish catch was too low and several indigenous varieties of fish had disappeared from the water resources due to human interference. Though there were multiple reasons for the contamination of water, he reiterated that the prevalence of e-coli, coliform, microorganisms and the presence of certain hazardous chemicals in the backwaters would never free the industry from the hazards of pollution.

Certain community members sounded a note of caution on the repercussions of pouring out used oil into the water by houseboat operators. However, representatives of houseboat owners partially rejected these arguments and said they have well-maintained and managed STP units and have proper mechanisms to dispose of used oil and other waste. Responding to these apprehensions, a senior official of Kerala Tourism said that considering the carrying capacity of the backwaters, the Government had stopped giving license to new houseboats and utmost care is being taken to check the activities of houseboats.
6.5. RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS – A CASE STUDY

The case of CGH Earth Groups is worth emulating. ‘The ‘Coconut Lagoon’, a tourism resort of CGH at Kumarakom, has given eight out of 33 of its acres to rice cultivation, particularly the medicinal variety of rice, ‘njwara’. It’s a symbol of industry-community harmony. Apart from the community-led handbag making unit, Coconut Lagoon rears and raises Vechoor cows, the world’s smallest species and an indigenous variety, in a conscious bid at conserving the species. Weekly village cleaning programmes, solar boats, and bio mass digesters make the venture a unique one.

Spice Village, another property of CGH at Thekkady provides good lessons in sustainability. Almost all the energy needs of the resort are met by a 100KW solar plant. It has a vast area for organic farming where all waste materials are reused. The entire roof of the resort is made of elephant grass.

“*The Spice Village understands the need for the coexistence of ecology which has come directly from the tribal people of the Cardamom Hills.*

“The tribals’ lives too, are tied to ours. For them, Spice Village is not a hotel, but a source of employment, and a place where they can get better rates for their pepper harvest. They are also the mainstay of our organic garden, putting spanking-fresh produce on the table each day”;

says the management.
6.6. DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY AND RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS - A COMPARISON

Finally, a subtle task of comparing Destination Sustainability and Responsible Business has been made to test whether any relation exists or not. An obvious relationship between the overall scores of Destination Sustainability and Responsible Business was found. However, no such trend was noticed in dimension wise scores. Table 6.3 gives a comparison of the scores of Destination Sustainability and Responsible Business. A trend can be inferred that Destination Sustainability scores improve when Responsible Business scores increase.

Table 6.3 Destination and Business Sustainability Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Destination and Business Sustainability Scores</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kumarakom (1)</td>
<td>68.07 (1)*</td>
<td>62.27 (1)</td>
<td>65.23 (2)</td>
<td>62.98 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53.392(2)#</td>
<td>59.17 (3)</td>
<td>63.928 (2)</td>
<td>61.93 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kovalam (3)</td>
<td>62.01 (3)</td>
<td>54.76 (3)</td>
<td>52.7 (3)</td>
<td>49.47 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45.357 (3)</td>
<td>61.2 (2)</td>
<td>61.13 (3)</td>
<td>58.9367 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thekkady (2)</td>
<td>63.08 (2)</td>
<td>61.18 (2)</td>
<td>67.58 (1)</td>
<td>63.86 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54.642 (1)</td>
<td>68.541 (1)</td>
<td>71.785 (1)</td>
<td>67.5962 (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Destination Sustainability score; # Responsible Business scores of destinations, (figures in bracket indicate ranks)

Responsible Business scores have been measured based on the average scores of surveyed hotels at destinations. It can be inferred that Responsible Business communities can bring positive changes to the destination.

6.7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Quality of Life (QOL) of the destination community is an index of competitiveness and clean image of a destination. A welcoming host community
always enthralls visitors which in turn tempt guests to re-visit the destination. The logic of sustainable destination management lies in this principle. This is the reason why tourism planners, social scientists, policy makers, and industry partners are considering these aspects while designing plans and proposals. Tourism in destinations should be developed with a long-term perspective of sustainability and the lives of local people. Based on the findings and discussion of the study, the following recommendations are made under the heads: Economic, Environmental, Social, Cultural, and Commercial (Business).

6.7.1. Economic Policy Initiatives

It is noticed that economic interventions have a decisive role in the development of local communities at tourism destinations. Possibility of increasing the chances of community getting directs or indirect economic benefit from tourism has to be discussed collectively. Self-employment opportunities, micro enterprises and local hiring are of great significant in this environment. Same is evident from the finding that material well-being is the key predictor of overall QOL ($\beta=0.35$). Based on the indicators proposed in the study, contributors like skill development programmness and promotion of local produce are to be taken into the fore of the agenda of tourism. Considering the strong mediating role ($\beta =0.18$) of ‘direct income from tourism’ between RT and QOL, tourism projects should aim at ensuring direct benefit to the local populace. Taking this background into consideration, a few recommendations are made here.
6.7.1.1. Creating Employment Opportunities

Based on the findings of the study, priority shall be on designing sustainable livelihood opportunities for destination communities. Efforts to utilize available local skills can bring a positive change among community members. Utmost care is to be given on income generating projects rather than offering mere jobs. It is equally important to promote entrepreneurial ventures as a sustainable solution.

It is understood that creation of jobs alone will not meet the community expectations, but job opportunities which can ensure reasonable and consistent earning must be considered. Government shall create a skill/employment resource directory of destinations to foster the income generating opportunities of residents. The skill directory can be used by industry partners, tourists etc. thereby optimum utilization of resources and income of local community can be assured.

6.7.1.2. Local Enterprises

Being a state blessed with Self Help Groups (SHG) and micro enterprises, initiatives possibilities of Community Based Tourism (CBT) products and its potential to creating self-employment opportunities is of worth discussing. CBT products and enterprises at RT destinations are an emulating model to be adopted at other tourism destinations as well. Kumarakom is leading in this area which also produces substantial revenue to the local community. A brief status on the micro enterprises under the Responsible Tourism initiative of Kumarakom is shown in table 6.4.
Table 6.4 Community Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Details of Participating units (direct beneficiaries)</th>
<th>No. of Units</th>
<th>Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Women Groups</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Homestead</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Farmers’ Unit</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Local Production Units</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Village Life Experience Package</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Voluntary Life Guards</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: RT Cell Kumarakom)

Being a sector cross linked to multiple sections of the economy and society, tourism opens an immense potential for similar ventures. Government shall incorporate provisions of providing seed money for start-ups, value addition of products/services, and marketing support for prospective small scale products/services.

6.7.1.3. Skill Development Endeavors

As quality of job is important, utmost priority has to be given to skill enhancement and talent promotion of individuals. Identification of suitable job roles, understanding industry demands, appraising of local skills etc. may throw light on the effective utilization of local human resources. Stress on setting up of technical and vocational schools in tourism destinations to improve standards and outreach of skill development programmes is essential. It is possible to develop tourism destinations as training hub of various service sectors. This shall be initiated after a comprehensive need/demand assessment of work force and job opportunities in and around tourism destinations.

6.7.1.4. Industry Participation

As the major beneficiary of tourism, the industry has a distinctive role to play in the development of destination community. It is essential to develop a conducive
environment for industry-community interaction. Promoting local procurement and developing an institutionalized mechanism for local sourcing must be developed at destinations. The case study of Samrudhi groups in Responsible Tourism destinations of Kerala is a meaningful example. It would be heartening, if a fair proportion of total travel expenditure was received locally. The same can be achieved by encouraging visitors to avail products and services from destinations as much as possible. Policy makers are urged to consider this aspect while framing policies and programmes.

6.7.1.5. Community-Based Tourism Products (CBT)

CBT is a form of tourism activity that lays emphasizes on local community involvement and a development approach in a way that a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community. Designing and developing creative tourism products and promoting innovation in this sector can produce a significant impact within the community.

The Village Life Experience tour package is an ideal mix of CBT. A resource mapping done by the Department of Tourism has identified myriad possibilities in destinations. For instance, in Kumarakom, CBT products like toddy tapping, vellaveesal (traditional fishing), coconut palm tree climbing, screw pine weaving, carpet weaving, country boat rides, toddy and tender coconuts, blackspot (fish) and tapioca dishes, and visits to heritage houses create diverse opportunities for local residents to cash in on. This resource mapping has identified 13 delicious
local cuisine and eleven sacred groves which provide diverse experiences to tourists.

Also, in Thekkady, the tribal hamlets of Mannan, Paliyan, and Uraly have immense tourism potential and resources. The tribal are adept at performing traditional art forms, preparing delicious dishes, providing indigenous treatment etc. The study conducted by the Responsible Tourism cell of Kerala Tourism identified 14 unique CBT products in Thekkady, whereas in Kovalam, 25 CBT products could be effectively utilized. The Government has to provide a well-designed resource directory to industry as well as stakeholders so that these tourism resources can be used as income generating models. Collective effort to brand and manage these resources in a sustainable way can bring positive changes in destination management. It is equally important to assure that traditions, heritage and culture are protected from commercial exploitations.

6.7.2. **Environment Management**

Environmental sustainability is the central pillar of sustainable development. The study found significant relationship between RT and environmental sustainability; and environmental sustainability and health and safety well-being. However, the hypothesized relationship between environmental sustainability and overall QOL was not significant. Though RT plays a crucial role in environmental sustainability, community members do not perceive that environmental sustainability affects their life satisfaction in general. This reflects the lack of environmental consciousness of people.
Here, the emphasis should be on sensitization programmes to raise environmental consciousness among people; as individuals consider personal hygiene as the best. Thus, personal hygiene and environmental hygiene are constantly at loggerheads. N.G.Os, civil society organizations and various organizations of similar interest ought to consider this. Also, among the indicators on environmental sustainability, the adverse impact of business on the environment was loaded high (0.92). It hints at the concern of local residents on the negative environmental impacts of tourism industry. The Government should take necessary steps to take stock of this situation and curb activities which deteriorate the environment. Environmental organizations and eco activists can also put in their best suggestions and efforts for this noble cause.

6.7.2.1. Pollution Control

A collective effort to check and control land, air, water, noise, and vision pollution is critical in places where water resources are more susceptible to pollution. Proper fencing of water resources wherever required, decentralized waste management, strict watch on environmental management, and creative awareness programmes are of great importance.

6.7.2.2. Sustainable Agriculture Practices

An enquiry into the ailments of the people in the backwaters region of Kumarkom hinted that unwise and rampant use of pesticides was the cause of chronic diseases among local residents. As it is a cause of concern and will ultimately hit the
tourism sector, suitable intervention in this matter is solicited. The promotion of sustainable agriculture practices and development of a green agriculture policy can bring changes to this sad state of affairs. Policy makers shall mull over the possibility of declaring tourism destinations as ‘clean centres’ by developing a productive mechanism for encouraging environment friendly cultivation and homestead farming.

6.7.2.3. Biodiversity Preservation

There are incidents where mangroves and vegetation are being destroyed for the purpose of construction which in turn causes disequilibrium in the ecosystem. A blanket ban on the destruction of bio-diversity, especially mangroves and indigenous varieties, vegetative regeneration campaigns, strict implementation of environmental laws and norms is the need of the hour. Also, a mandatory provision of environmental impact assessment for all development projects may prevent illegal structures which create imbalance at destinations.

6.7.2.4. Promotion of Environment Friendly Practices

It is a proven fact that an appealing environment can influence people to re-visit such places. Efforts to develop tourism destinations as eco-conscious centers may bring positive results. The Zero Waste Kovalam run by ‘Thanal’ (an NGO) is an attempt to promote zero waste concepts at tourism destinations in Kerala. It is a model worth emulating as it promotes an economic and ecological way of handling waste. It is often projected as an approach that goes beyond the just segregate-
reuse-reduce-recycle. Proposals to tap renewable sources of energy and steps to harness solar power for all tourism related purposes, setting up bio/energy/renewable parks at destinations, installation of proper displays on environmental conservation, and distribution guidelines on environmental management will change the image of destinations. Though it will happen gradually, conscious endeavors to encourage visitors to consume environmental-friendly products and behave sensitively to the environment, are to be sought.

6.7.3. Strategies for Social Resilience

Among the social sustainability indicators of the construct, ‘Responsible Tourism’, initiatives like ‘social programmes/schemes’ and ‘opportunities for the backward’ scored very high, along with ‘community engagement’ and ‘employment opportunities for the backward’. Hence, emphasis should be on implementation of effective social programmes/schemes, empowerment of socially and economically backward communities and engagement of local residents in tourism related activities.

6.7.3.1. Inclusive Actions

It would be commendable, if employment practices that provide opportunities/provisions for socially and economically backward people are encouraged. The Government can support the development of enterprises by disadvantaged people. Such policy interventions can bring meaningful changes in society by bringing the backward to forefront. Tourism promotions should take into
consideration the combined needs of tourists and local residents. It is equally important to consider the requirement of differently abled people.

6.7.3.2. **Community Participation**

Participation of the local community is an integral component of Responsible Tourism. It would be ideal to set up an institutional mechanism for destination management; which should consist of local stakeholders. It has to be constituted in such a way that more prominence should be given to the views of the local populace. In order to facilitate this movement, community members shall be sensitized on how tourism influences local people along with providing guidelines for active engagement in tourism development. Government should devise a mechanism to ensure community participation in tourism development, especially in decision making and destination management.

6.7.3.3. **Leadership of Local Government**

The experience derived from Responsible Tourism initiatives of Kerala has invariably proved that ownership of local self-governments in tourism development is essential for sustainable tourism development. Destination management bodies are to be led by LSG. The Government must offer capacity building programmes for members of local governing bodies and people’s representatives to improve their knowledge of tourism and its sustainability. Also, measures to ensure transparency and accountability of Government and industry may bring good tidings in tourism destination management. Involvement of LSG representatives in devising tourism polices and developmental plans are to be considered with immediate priority.
Chapter 6  Findings and Recommendations

6.7.3.4. Women’s Participation

As the participation of women has proved to be instrumental in the progressive development of tourism initiatives, projects aiming at leadership development and empowerment of women will be a welcome move. Women’s enterprises and different cultural groups in RT destinations are contributing to the sustainable livelihood of village community. It’s an inspiring move to replicate it, especially by involving the active services of Kudumbasree (under Kerala Poverty Eradication Mission). However, Kudumbasree still faces the lacunae of professional domain expertise. This mission requires elevation to new heights by enticing people from the educated class or by bringing the lower strata to a professionally equipped body to perform more serious role in the business development.

6.7.3.5. Community Resilience

Though social issues like drug trafficking, child labour and commercial sex trade are not addressed by the respondents in RT destinations of Kerala, vigilance is vital in monitoring these aspects. Careful management and scientific approach for infrastructure development is important in limiting the development within its carrying capacity. Also, social and environmental impact assessment studies and audits shall be considered for all projects. Since emotional well-being is not a predictor of overall QOL, instead of recreation opportunities, attention should be on the development of basic infrastructure facilities like roads, shopping options, health care, education, banking and other immediate facilities.
6.7.4. **Policies for the Preservation of Art and Culture**

The path co-efficient between Responsible Tourism and cultural sustainability is strongest among all linkages. Also, among the indicators of cultural sustainability, all the items are loaded very significantly with high relevance. In this context, the following suggestions are made.

6.7.4.1. **Artisan/Artist Development Programmes**

Kerala is blessed with natural and traditional rural attractions and rich resources. All efforts must be deployed to utilize and market rural products for the overall benefit of the local community. Preparing a depository of traditional lifestyles, heritage and art and culture can be used for developing community-based tourism products. Professional training shall be given to artisans and performers to brand their services and to equip them to meet various industry requirements.

6.7.4.2. **Exclusive Souvenir Shops**

Souvenirs are of great demand in the tourism industry. Designing and developing regional handicrafts as distinctive souvenirs of destinations may give a unique identity to these places. Developing region-wise handicraft making workshops and outlets will greatly help in this business.

6.7.4.3. **Art and Cultural Theatres**

Along with souvenir outlets, centers exhibiting indigenous art forms and traditional lifestyles may be an enriching experience to visitors. The
demonstration of a warm host culture and a live display of art forms will certainly instill pride among the local communities when they realize that their indigenous resources are augmenting the cultural sustainability of destinations. It is equally important to develop a local lifestyle as an attractive tourism product. The village life experience packages/tours designed by the RT wing of Kerala Tourism is a stellar example of this concept.

Additionally, the development of destination should be appropriate to the local conditions and environment. Creating platforms for tourists as well as local residents may foster cultural exchange. As traditional structures are distinct features of a destination, scientific management principles should be adopted for heritage conservation. It would be ideal to organize classes/lectures for the stakeholders on the sensitivity of local concerns in preventing indigenous culture from being degraded.

6.7.5. **Responsible Business Interventions**

Five areas under Responsible Business have been discussed earlier. In order to achieve sustainability of destination, a voluntary drive rather than compulsion in initiating affirmative action from the industry is what is needed. Even though multiple guidelines available for tourism destination management, a context/location specific Responsible Business policy that addresses the concerns of all stakeholders should be implemented in all business enterprises. Involvement of local communities in framing this policies shall be well-thought.
6.7.5.1. Local Sourcing

The study reveals that many of the resources for business requirements can be sourced from local premises even though it happens the other way. Human resource requirements including to the managerial level positions shall be filled from the local community members. However, it is observed that many industry players show negation to this idea apprehending that such a leniency would affect the smooth functioning of their organization, as local community members create undue pressures by way of trade union interference and local influences. It has to be addressed.

At the same time, it is felt that people show least interest in tourism jobs and do not have the necessary skill sets to fit into the job roles. It calls for imparting the necessary skill sets to the destination community andorienting them to adhere to the business policies.

6.7.5.2. Affirmative Actions

Beyond charity, business has the responsibility of uplifting its local populace. It is a stark fact that business partners are the major beneficiaries in a destination though all the benefits from tourism are to be shared among all the stakeholders, as the communities are forced to accommodate the pressure created by tourism.

In this scenario, business members are expected to take a lead role in community development activities like offering employment, providing space for local enterprise on their premises, giving/sponsoring facilities for training, skill
development programmes and recreation, promoting community based tourism products, fostering community involvement in tourism, building community infrastructure like basic amenities and launching philanthropist endeavors. As culture and art are important attractions of tourism, business enterprises can promote local artisans, performing artists and people with exposure to various skill fields. Organizations have the key responsibility of making stakeholders aware of facts like social, economic, environmental and cultural commitments. Such things can create waves of change in society and can bring about community-industry resilience. Government has to develop a separate policy/ranking for industry to assuring community development initiatives.

6.7.5.3. Eco-Friendly Practices

Business activities should not be at the cost of the local environment and the community. No action which spoils or disrupts local life, micro enterprises and income opportunities of local residents should be tolerated. Most importantly, utmost importance should be given to waste management. Proper working mechanisms are to be adopted to dispose of all kinds of waste matter within the compound, and that too in a particular place. Outsourcing of this responsibility must be checked by all other stakeholders and a consensus in this matter shall be evolved to keep the purity and quality of the destination environment.

6.7.5.4. Legal Compliance

Organizations must have the willingness to go beyond the borders of legal obligations. In order to improve its transparency and accountability, sustainability reports can be published for public reference. Organizations are to adhere to the
norms on human rights, welfare and other policies. Guidelines on responsible management and employment of people-friendly policies can develop positive precedents. In addition to all these, if the stakeholders were to follow voluntary guidelines on Responsible Business, it would be a move in a positive direction.

6.7.5.5. Training Platform

Instead of organization-wise training, a mandatory training programme should be designed by the industry players in participation with the Government to tackle the prevailing issues in training management.

6.7.6. Pro Active Governance

Local Self Government has a key role in the success of Responsible Tourism. Ownership of local Government to expedite RT process will bring positive tides in destinations. Building institutional mechanism, developing participatory approach for tourism development, organizing consultations, liasing with stakeholders, and active monitoring and interventions are the need of the hour. These will rid the industry of destination-related issues. The Government should strengthen the certification programmes or subsidy schemes for industry partners on the basis of Responsible Business or Responsible Tourism benchmarking criteria. This may encourage industry partners to walk an extra mile in the sustainable movement.

All the measures and recommendations given above can take tourism promotion to greater heights in a sustainability way.
6.8. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Even though the concept of Responsible Tourism is a globally accepted strategy for sustainable destination management, only meager empirical evidences are available to showcase its impact in triple bottom-line spheres. This calls for a collective effort to assess the impact of Responsible Tourism in quantitative terms as well. Considering its significance and contemporary relevance, the study has considered the perceptions of local residents as the target population. However, it is essential to consider the views of diverse stakeholders on various dimensions in order to benchmark destinations on the basis of their responsibility towards triple bottom line areas. This would be an added advantage to clearly articulate the impacts of tourism. As studies on tourism are mostly destination specific, further improvisation of scales can be considered.

When Responsible Tourism emerges as a viable model for sustainable destination management, similar studies in various destinations can guide policy makers and tourism planners. In the destination marketing perspective, perceptions of visitors on Responsible Tourism aspects and subsequent effects on destination-clean image, visitor satisfaction, re-visit intention etc. can bring more clarity to destination branding strategies. Being an innovative marketing tool, compilation of innovative practices in Responsible Tourism sector will definitely help tourism practitioners and the industry.

Another important aspect of the study was the role of business enterprises in Responsible Tourism and sustainable management of destination. The influence of
Responsible Business practices of business units on local community/tourists and its far reaching effects on destinations will definitely pave way for setting a new paradigm in tourism development. The index developed for measuring Responsible Business practices has an immense scope for revalidation and testing in multiple locations which in turn can use for certification and ratings.

Further, specific impacts of Responsible Tourism on multiple stakeholders, especially women and local enterprises, and underprivileged, will be a worthy contribution to sustainable tourism studies. As the study has developed a constructive model for sustainable destination management, further validation and adoption of this framework in various other destinations can bring more clarity to literature and sustainable destination management models.
7. CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to provide a theoretical framework on sustainable destination management and to suggest a few steps in climbing the ladders of sustainability. It has also endeavored in identifying and listing the best Responsible Tourism practices in the industry and destinations. The study found a significant positive relationship among Responsible Tourism, Destination Sustainability and QOL of local residents. It was concluded that creation of sustainable livelihood opportunities and income-generating endeavors for local communities are the key predictors of QOL. An effort to measure Responsible Business has made a theoretical contribution to the indicator framework on Responsible Business. The study found that there is an apparent relationship between Responsible Business practices and Destination Sustainability.

As a responsible industry is a prerequisite of Destination Sustainability, Responsible Tourism activities should strive to maintain industry-community harmony by promoting sustainability principles. Based on the findings of the research, a few policy suggestions have been made which may be useful for policy makers, tourism professionals, social scientists, and tourism planners. While tourism destinations across the world strive to maintain balance between sustainability and development, the findings of the study may throw light on the endeavors of sustainable tourism development and destination management that in turn can improve image and competitiveness of tourism destinations.