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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION
Chapter 6

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Tourism, which generates employment opportunities and livelihood to millions and millions of people, creates foreign exchange, promotes and develops national integration, balanced regional development, rejuvenate the art and culture, melt down prejudices and suspicions that exist between different nations and enhance international peace, is one of the major areas which economies look forward hopefully to build up and sustain. India too, is not having a different outlook, which induces the economy to benefit from developing tourism at a faster pace. India, considered to be a potential tourism paradise with a wide variety of attractions ranging from beautiful beaches, hill stations, fort, monuments, art, festivals, forest and religious centres, can no longer foresee the advantages which the tourism can bring.

Kerala, a small state with the highest literacy rate and a highest sex ratio with 1084 females per 1000 males in the country, has achieved social and educational development comparable to most Western nations. It has been acclaimed worldwide for its Kerala model of development though this achievement is not yet matched by industrial growth or economic development. The state governments from time to time have been consistently aiming at social development but alarmingly high proportions of budget allocations could not bring about the desired results. Thus considering the impact of tourism on economy, the state of Kerala cannot ignore tourism the scope for which is attributable to geographical diversity, cultural heritage, social security and peace. Famously called the “God’s Own Country.” Having been successful in creating a place of its own in the tourism sector, the State of Kerala has made it one of the most acclaimed destinations in the world. Blessed with forty one west-flowing rivers considered to be a magnificent gift of nature, it has most of the clean and finest beaches in India.

Pilgrim tourism though not been able to attract the attention it deserves needs to be viewed in the context of its capability to contribute to the exchequer. With world renowned pilgrim centres such as Sabarimala, Malayattoor, Cheraman Masjid and a host of other famous centres which are a source of attraction to the tourist
community, it is high time for the state of Kerala to probe exploitation of the potential of Pilgrim tourism. The state being more popular in this context, because of its unparalleled wealth of herbs and natural vegetation and the unique geographical position and tropical climate it possess, can develop pilgrim tourism as an important contributor to the growth of service sector in Kerala.

Pilgrimage is a major part of its cultural tourism in Kerala. Though thousands of pilgrims had been visiting these centres from time immemorial, the potential of these centres as tourist destinations had not been recognized properly and no effort had been taken to tap and market the potential of pilgrim tourism so far. With the immense developments in the transport and communication sectors, increase in the disposable incomes and various other reasons, the number of tourists visiting these centres has multiplied over the years. But the tourists who come to these destinations are seldom satisfied with the infrastructural and other facilities as well as services provided to them. In order to reap full benefits from pilgrim tourism, plans, policies and strategies have to be formulated at the administrative level. This study which focused on the problems faced by pilgrim tourists and host community as well as the prospects of pilgrim tourism in the state of Kerala, has been able to substantiate the views that such problems do exist and adequate timely intervention by policy makers can go a long way in making the state economy self-sufficient.

The major objectives are recapitulated as below:

- To identify the factors that attracts potential tourists to pilgrim centres of Kerala
- To evaluate the pilgrims’ opinion as to the cost of facilities / services provided in each of the pilgrim centres
- To evaluate the functioning of DTPC and other agencies involved in the promotion of pilgrim tourism in Kerala
- To identify the problems encountered by the pilgrims while visiting the centres.
To evaluate the social, economic and environmental impact of pilgrim tourism from the perspectives of pilgrims as well as host community

6.1 DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is both descriptive and analytical in nature. The study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, data available from the published sources like Tourism Statistics of Government of India and Kerala, articles, booklets, brochures and others related to the study were critically analysed. In the second stage, primary data were collected from 432 pilgrims visiting nine centres spread across the state of Kerala and 270 members belonging to the host community visiting nine centres spread across the state of Kerala and 270 members belonging to the host community. The sample size was determined by Kukeran formula. And Stratified random sampling was applied for selecting the sample respondents. The data were collected using two sets of pretested structured interview schedules. The data collected were processed and analysed using various statistical tools like chi-square test, ANOVA, etc. The association and significant differences between centres or religions were determined using Chi-square test, ANOVA and eta squared wherever applicable. Besides data dimension reduction in the form of factor analysis was also employed to find out the principal components in the services rendered by DTPC or other religious bodies in connection with the promotion of pilgrim tourism in Kerala. The data collected from the members of host community was also analysed to arrive at the prospects and problems of pilgrim tourism in their perspective. The mean scores, univariate ANOVA, eta squared etc were applied.

In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to give a brief outline on the nine different pilgrim centres in Kerala selected for the study and also about the problems and prospects of pilgrim tourism in Kerala from the perspectives of pilgrims and the host community. This Chapter is divided into three sections. Section A contains a summary of the entire study and the findings of the study, Section B, the conclusions of the study and Section C, the recommendations emanating from the study.
6.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

The first chapter deals with the problem of the study and its importance, the objectives of the study, the methodology adopted and the design of the survey. The operational definition of major concepts used in the study and the limitations of the study have also been mentioned in Chapter I.

A brief review of the earlier literature in the field of study is given in the Second chapter. The related literature covering areas like tourism in general and pilgrim tourism in particular were included in this chapter. The review of literature is given under six headings such as studies on Tourism – International, National and Kerala perspectives and on Pilgrim Tourism International, National and Kerala perspectives. The review of literature spans a period of 1987 to 2014.

Chapter Three deals with the status of tourism in India, in terms of the foreign Exchange earnings from Tourism over a period extending from 2000 to 2017 and also the number of foreign tourists arrival both in the national and state levels. It also presents an overview of basic concepts of pilgrim tourism, its economic and social significance and also a brief outline of the nine pilgrim centres in Kerala selected for the study.

Chapter Four and Five are devoted for the analysis and interpretation of the data used for the study. The Evaluation of Pilgrim tourism in Kerala from the perspective of the pilgrims is being presented in Chapter Four. The socio economic profile of the pilgrims visiting the selected nine centres, the factors that attract them to these centres, how often do they visit the centres, whether they visit the pilgrim centres alone or in groups – all these are investigated in this chapter. Pilgrims’ opinion about the cost of facilities/services availed by them in the different centres, the amount spent on the different items of expenses are also discussed in this chapter. How the pilgrims feel about the local community’s response towards them is another aspect that is being analysed. The problems faced by the pilgrims in reaching the centres of their choice, their views on the prospects of developing sustainable tourism in Kerala, the negative aspects of pilgrim tourism in the opinion of the pilgrims are also analysed and set forth in this chapter. The quality of the services/facilities provided by the DTPC/ other religious bodies as perceived by the
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Pilgrims is also discussed in this chapter. These different dimensions of pilgrim tourism were analysed based on the centre visited as well the religion to which the pilgrims belong and appropriate tools were used to find out if there are significant differences in the opinion of pilgrims based on the centre of visit as well as their religion.

The subject matter of Chapter Five is the perception of the members of the local community about the impact of pilgrim tourism on the economic, social and environment aspects of the pilgrim centres. This chapter also sets forth the socio-economic profile of the members of the host community. It also inquires into the opinion of the host community about the factors that may pose a threat to pilgrim tourism.

This Chapter six presents the major findings and conclusion of the study under two sections- Pilgrim Tourism – Evaluation from the perspective of pilgrims and Pilgrim Tourism – Evaluation from the perspective of host community.

6.3 MAJOR FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

6.3.1 Pilgrim Tourism in Kerala - Evaluation from the Perspective of Pilgrims

6.3.1.1 Profile of sample pilgrims

- A total of nine pilgrim centres distributed across 3 zones in the state of Kerala were selected in such a manner that three from each zone represented the three major religions- Hindu, Muslim and Christian. Thus each stratum namely the centres represented 11.1 per cent of the total. From each of these centres, a sample of 48 pilgrims were selected at random and their profile reveals that majority (83.3 per cent) of the pilgrims were from within the state of Kerala. Pilgrims from other states of India who had visited the pilgrim centres in Kerala accounted for 16 per cent while a meagre 0.7 per cent were from other countries. Muslim and Christian pilgrims were equally distributed at 29.2 per cent each, while the Hindu pilgrims accounted for 41.7 per cent of the total respondents. Majority (61.1 per cent) of the respondents were male. Most of the pilgrims were middle aged (between 49 & 50 years) and very few below 20 years were found visiting the pilgrim centres.
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- The pilgrims are generally found to be well educated with even professional degrees. This is not a strange phenomenon as Kerala is a 100 per cent literate state. Businessmen (39.6 per cent) and agriculturists (34 per cent) form a significant portion of the total pilgrims surveyed than teachers and professionals. The lower and middle income groups are more inclined towards pilgrimage than the high income group as is evident from the fact that only 2.1 per cent of the respondents were having a monthly income above Rs.100001.

6.3.1.2 Factors that attract potential tourists to pilgrim centres of Kerala.

- The first objective was to identify the factors that attract potential tourists to pilgrim centres of Kerala. For tourists visiting a particular place, there must be some factor attracting them towards the same. As a preface to the analysis of the factors that influence a pilgrim to choose a religious centre over others, the particulars relating to whether the pilgrims are first time visitors or visit regularly or occasionally, the source from which they first came to know about the centre etc were studied in detail. The analysis revealed that a significant number of respondents (38.9 per cent) regularly visit the centres of their choice while 46.5 per cent visit occasionally. The word of mouth communication was found to be the pre-dominant source of information regarding the choice of pilgrim centres. This is highlighted by the fact that 51.4 per cent of the pilgrim chose the centre to visit on the basis of information provided by friends and relatives.

- The factors that attract pilgrims were ranked by the pilgrim tourists on the basis of their priority and it was found that Worship, Highly satisfied service and Guidance from authorities as well as presence and interferences of authorities were the major factors that draw them to the particular centre. The serene beauty of the place where the centre is located was found to be the least attracting factor for the pilgrims. This highlights the fact that pilgrim tourism is more prone to worship rather than leisure and relaxation. Friedman test revealed that there are significant differences in the opinion of pilgrims regarding the factors of attraction towards the pilgrim centres.
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- Majority (73 per cent) of pilgrims visit the pilgrim centres in groups. Only 27 per cent preferred to visit such centres alone. Statistical tests show that there are significant differences between number of pilgrims visiting the centres alone or in groups. Small sized groups were common than large sized groups. Most of the pilgrims (39.05 per cent) travelled in groups consisting of 2 to 5 members. Only 29.84 per cent of the pilgrims who travel in groups were found to be travelling with large size groups with more than 10 members.

- The association between the different centres and the number of pilgrims visiting in groups were studied using Pearson's Chi Square that revealed that there is an association between centres and number of people in groups as far as pilgrim visits are concerned.

6.3.1.3 Facilities and services offered to the tourists at the pilgrim centres

- The second objective was to make an evaluation of the cost of facilities and services offered to the tourists in each of the main pilgrim centres.

- Twelve different facilities namely food, drinking water, accommodation, cloth and allied materials, shopping, fees paid for various services, offerings to god, transportation services, health services, cloak room service, incidental expenses inside the centres other than offerings and incidental expenses outside the centres other than the above were identified and the opinion of tourists regarding cost of facilities at the pilgrim centres collected using five point scale and mean scores were calculated. In general there are differences between centres regarding costs for different facilities that determine the choice of tourists in the selection of centres.

- The centre-wise analysis brings to light that pilgrims visiting Sabarimala in the south and Guruvayoor in the central Zones- both Hindu pilgrim centres- opine that the cost of various services and facilities provided in these centres are very high. A univariate ANOVA test was administered and F statistic was calculated to understand if there are significant differences in the opinion of pilgrims at the selected nine centres which revealed a significant difference in the opinion of pilgrims visiting the nine centres.
On the other hand the religion wise analysis reveals that pilgrims belonging to Christian and Muslim religions feel that the costs of various facilities are high. The result of the univariate ANOVA test and F statistic show that there are significant differences in the opinion of pilgrims belonging to different religions regarding the cost of facilities at the pilgrim centres.

Though the findings of these analysis based on centre and religion seem to be inconsistent, there are valid reasons supporting the results. While centre-wise, the sample size is equal, religion-wise, Hindus outnumber Christians and Muslims. This may be the reason for the high mean scores of Christian and Muslim pilgrims.

6.3.1.4 Costs of Pilgrimage

Pilgrim Tourists, like other tourists have to spend money for different purposes like travelling, food, accommodation etc. The attempt made to understand how much is being spent by them in absolute terms on the different items of expenses reveal that on an average pilgrims spend Rs.1724.31 on Transportation in the form of Taxi/ Van/ air charges, Rs.1263.89 for shopping and Rs. 915.28 on lodging/ accommodation. These are the three major items of expenditure as far as pilgrim tourists are concerned. Further analysis shows the same trend in all the nine centres though the amount spent is different.

The results of ANOVA reveals that there are significant differences at least between two centres/ places of visit regarding the costs of pilgrimage. The measures of association in terms of Eta and Eta squared between the identified variables influencing costs of pilgrimage and centres/ places of visit show that a high level of association was observed in all the cases except lodging in which case, the association can be termed as medium.

The mean spending on Aircraft/ Van/ Taxi, Local transportation, Restaurant/ Meals, Shopping and Lodging were found to be the highest in Hindu religion, while Muslim religion showed highest mean spending on other activities and entertainment. The Christian religion had the lowest mean spending in all cases,
except in restaurant/ meals where it was equal to that of mean spending by Muslim religion.

- The religion wise analysis show that there are significant differences between at least 2 religions regarding the cost of pilgrimage except the 3 variables namely other activities, shopping and lodging in which case the difference is not significant. Since the Eta Squared values are considerably low there is a very small association between other activities, shopping and lodging to religion. In all the other cases a medium or high association is found to exist as is obvious from a greater than 0.015 Eta Squared values.

6.3.1.5 Response of host community towards pilgrims

- How the local community responds to the pilgrim tourists is of great importance for the repeated visits of the pilgrims. The ten attributes identified were rated by the respondents and the calculated mean scores show that pilgrims visiting Guruvayoor have rated nine out of the ten attributes to be very poor. In the attribute ‘honesty and fairness in dealing’ Guruvayoor stands second last only next to Sabarimala. Next to Guruvayoor, Sabarimala in the south fares bad in terms of the host community’s responses towards pilgrims. Mother of God Cathedral in the North Zone fares better in terms of host community’s response as pilgrims to this centre have rated the least for five out of ten attributes. Since the mean scores are higher than the theoretical mean ‘3’ it can be construed that the pilgrims generally are not happy about the local community’s response towards them.

- Unlike the pilgrim tourists visiting other centres, Pilgrims visiting Sabarimala in the south and Guruvayoor in the Central zone both Hindu pilgrim centres- opine that the local community’s behaviour towards the pilgrims is deplorable. This can be inferred from the finding that the mean scores for all the attributes are greater than ‘4’.

- ‘F’ Tests conducted to examine if there were significant differences between centres in the pilgrims’ opinion regarding the responses of host community proved in the affirmative. i.e. there are significant differences between centres regarding the responses of host community.
• The religion wise analysis reveals that while Christians and Muslims are highly critical about the response of local community towards them, the pilgrims belonging to Hindu religion exhibit a neutral opinion with regard to this.

• Since the probabilities of F statistic is less than 0.01 in all the cases, it can be inferred that based on religion, pilgrims differ significantly in their opinion with regard to the responses of host community.

6.3.1.6 Problems faced by pilgrim tourists

• The next objective of the present study is to evaluate the problems encountered by the pilgrim tourists and the intensity of these problems. Nine problems were identified as No proper transportation, High cost, No proper schedule & control by authorities, Heavy rush & much delay, Exploitation by the private agencies/tour operators, Lack of parking facilities, Lack of workshop / service facilities, Inadequate fuel filling & allied facilities and No guidance from staff / volunteers. The sample respondents were asked to rate these variables on a five point scale ranging from 1 for Strongly Disagree to 5 for Strongly Agree.

• The mean scores of the pilgrims’ opinion based on the centres of visit reveal that pilgrims flocking to Guruvayoor and Sabarimala face very little problem in reaching their destination in all respects. While pilgrims to the Christian centre-Mother of God Cathedral in the northern zone disagree on the difficulty of reaching their centre, in all other centres pilgrims encounter problems though in differing intensity.

• There are significant differences in the opinion of pilgrims visiting the different centres regarding the problems in reaching their destination as revealed by the F Statistics, the value of which is less than 0.01.

• The religion wise analysis brings to light that when Muslim and Christian tourists do not agree on the problems in reaching the centres, the Hindu pilgrims highly agree that all the identified problems were very much present. Statistical tests reveal that there are significant differences in the opinion of pilgrim tourists belonging to different religions regarding the problems faced by them in reaching their centres.
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6.3.1.7 Sustainable Development of Pilgrim Tourism

- Tourism being an economic activity should bring about a balanced development in three fronts-economic, social and environmental. Here an attempt was made to understand whether the pilgrim tourists see pilgrim tourism as a sustainable activity. Ten variables namely Heavy flow of pilgrims, Increased spending and buying habit, Increase of employment in allied sectors, Increase of income in transport sector, Increased sales in the surrounding vicinities of pilgrims centres, Increase in revenue to government exchequer leading to local development, Increase in demand for accommodation leading to New building construction and New employment opportunities, increase in number of pilgrims leading to environmental pollution, Increase in number of pilgrims leading to health issues-spread of contagious diseases and Pilgrim tourism ultimately cause ecological imbalance were identified and the respondents were asked to rate them on a 5 point scale where 1 represented No idea, 2 -Not at all, 3 -To a very little extent, 4-To a moderate extent and 5- To a great extent.

- The centre-wise analysis of pilgrims’ opinion regarding sustainability of tourism shows that in general, pilgrim tourism has influenced the economy, society and environment to a moderate extent as the mean scores of all the variables were found to be more than 3, the theoretical mean. In Sabarimala and Guruvayoor, the impact of pilgrim tourism on the economy and environment is high as the mean scores are greater than 4. Hence it can be inferred that while pilgrim tourism seem to influence the economy in a positive manner, its impact on the environment and health of the people is negative. Hence pilgrim tourism raises concerns of sustainable development.

- The one way ANOVA test applied revealed that there are significant differences in the opinion of pilgrims between at least two centres regarding sustainability of pilgrim tourism in Kerala.

- Irrespective of the religion to which the pilgrim tourists belong, the inclination towards prospects of sustainable tourism development is high since the mean ranged between 3.3667 and 3.80.
• The one way ANOVA test brings to light that there are no significant differences in the opinion of pilgrims belonging to different religions since the p values of F-statistics were greater than 0.05. Hence it can be concluded that irrespective of religion of the pilgrims they all opine that pilgrim tourism offers prospects for development of sustainable tourism in the state of Kerala.

6.3.1.8 Provision of Infrastructural Facilities at Pilgrim Centres

• The adequacy of infrastructural facilities provided by the authorities was assessed, by respondents rating the identified five variables namely Provision of prayer related articles and materials, Provision of clothes and allied articles necessary for their pilgrimage, Provision and assistance to pilgrims for resting during pilgrimage, Provision of alternative transportation facilities to old aged / physically challenged people and Provision of proper place for the safe custody of their belongings during the peak hours of prayers and related activities on a 5 point scale 1 representing highly adequate, 2- adequate, 3- satisfactory, 4- inadequate and 5 – highly inadequate.

• In general the pilgrim tourists are not happy about the infrastructural facilities provided by the authorities. But there are significant differences between centres as far as provision of facilities at such centres are concerned since the p values of F statistics is less than 0.05

• Religion wise analysis also tend to affirm this. i.e there are significant differences between religions as far as provision of facilities at such centres are concerned.

6.3.1.9 Services Offered By DTPC & Religious Bodies

The services offered by DTPC & religious bodies in connection with the promotion of pilgrim tourism in Kerala were studied and the following sub variables were identified.

(1) Proper provision of information (2) Satisfactory guidance (3) Timely help and assistance to pilgrims (4) Issue of timely guidance and direction for the prompt performance of prayers and related devotions (5) Protecting pilgrims from the exploitation by the intermediaries (6) Helping the pilgrims in health issues
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(7) Supplying medicine and other amenities during pilgrimage (8) Proper security and guidance (9) Making provision for the articles and materials necessary for the performance of prayers (10) Extending physical help and support to pilgrim during their waiting in long queue (11) Extending physical support during their activities like climbing hills / steep places during pilgrimage (12) Providing drinking water and other facilities (13) Helping them in handling luggage (14) Sharing the importance and benefits of pilgrimage in the respective centres. Factor analysis was applied after testing the sample adequacy using Kaiser – Meyer- Olkin Test and Barlett’s test for testing the homogeneity of variances.

Using Factor Analysis these fourteen variables were filtered into seven principal components namely Provision of guidance and articles, Information and security, facilities, medical and physical support, Assistance, Health Issue Support and Protection to pilgrims. Seven principal components identified as factors together account for 66.02 per cent of the variability regarding service offered by DTPC& religious bodies in connection with the promotion of pilgrim tourism in Kerala.

6.3.1.10 Negative Aspects of Pilgrim Tourism

- To understand if pilgrims are deterred from visiting a centre because of the presence of any negative aspects, and if so the intensity of such problem, 15 variables and 6 sub-variables have been identified and the respondents were asked to rank these negative aspects as they perceive in a 10 point scale ranging from 1 being the lowest rank and 10 the highest, which represents that the issue is acute in their opinion. The variables identified were Drug trafficking, Over paying, Host’s exploitation of tourist, Spread of acute diseases, High Degree of environmental pollution, Growth of unscientific yoga centres, Functioning of sex rackets, Inadequate instruction to tourist, Exploitation of tourists by Taxi / Auto rickshaws, Hotels/ Restaurants, Unlicensed hawkers, Massage parlours, Yoga centres Contaminated water, Insufficient bathing facilities, Insufficient sanitation, Beggars’ menace, Lack of proper medical facilities and Over charging for all prayer related materials.

- A centre wise analysis brings to light that in all the selected nine centres the mean scores for all the variables and sub variables are higher than the theoretical
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mean 5 indicating that in the opinion of the pilgrims all these problems are acute though in differing intensity. But statistical tests reveal that there are significant differences between centres regarding all the negative aspects except exploitation of tourists by massage parlours in which case the p value of F statistics is greater than 0.05.

• The univariate analysis shows that religion wise, there are differences in the opinion of pilgrims as to the negative aspects of tourism such as host exploitation of tourist, spread of acute diseases, high degree of environmental pollution, growth of unscientific yoga centres, Exploitation of tourists by taxi/auto rickshaw & yoga centres, insufficient bathing facilities & sanitation, Lack of proper medical facilities since p values of F statistics were lesser than 0.05.

• Conclusive evidences were obtained that in spite of drawbacks and negative aspects, the prospects of pilgrim tourism in Kerala is bright since the recommended visits of pilgrims in future can be expected from the word of mouth promotion by those who have visited pilgrim centres in Kerala.

• Pilgrim tourism raises ecological issues and only a concerted effort on the part of both the pilgrims and the members of local community along with the authorities can bring about a positive change. The ecological issues in tourism/ pilgrim centres need to be informed so as to enable a pilgrim choose the centre to visit or not. Such information sources are of vital importance, since the informed visitor is likely to spend more time and money at the centre which he/she considers ecologically friendly. In order to determine the potential of improving pilgrim tourism prospects in the state of Kerala, the respondents were asked to report their preferred sources of information regarding ecological issues at pilgrim centres. The results show that Television, newspapers and tourism promotion agencies, and other professional bodies working in tourism sector. are the most preferred sources of information.
6.4 PILGRIM TOURISM IN KERALA- EVALUATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HOST COMMUNITY

The preceding section clearly sets out the major findings of the present study- Pilgrim Tourism in Kerala- An Evaluative Study, from the perspective of the pilgrims. A study of this nature, though requires an in-depth understanding of the problems and expectations of the pilgrims from their perspective, it will not be adequate, if not complete, unless it considers the local community’s view on this matter. This is because, tourism being a multi-dimensional activity encompasses all aspects of human life and leaves its imprint not only on the economic aspects of life, but also on their social, spiritual and environmental aspects. Though tourism generates revenue for the host community, it also affects their social life.

6.4.1 Profile of the Respondents from Host Community

The major findings emanating from the information collected from the sample members of the host community are presented in this section.

- An equal representation was deliberately provided for the three religions and 30 respondents each were selected from each centres altogether comprising of 270 respondents representing the same 9 centres in Kerala, from where the responses of pilgrims were made available. Thus 11.1 per cent of respondents from host community pertain to each of the specified centre comprising a total of 33.33 per cent of respondents for each zone.
- Males constitute a sizable proportion (62 per cent) than females.
- The majority of the members of host community was from Christian religion while Muslims represented the minority.
- Majority (70 per cent) of the sample respondents were between 21 and 50 years of age. Members above 50 years of age accounted for 27.8 per cent, while youth below 20 years constituted only 2.2 per cent of the total sample.
- Most of the respondents have good educational qualification. Only a minority (10 per cent) of the respondents have not cleared S.S.L.C.
• While 21 per cent of the respondents surveyed were local residents who were not explicitly providing any service to pilgrims, 22 per cent were merchants, 17 per cent were taxi drivers, and 16 per cent were hotel owners at pilgrim centres.

• A significant section (37 per cent) of the host community falls into middle income group with monthly income between Rs 25001 to Rs. 50000. Only 8 per cent of the respondents reported a high income of above Rs. 100000 per month.

• Most of the respondents (32 per cent) were found to be in service in their respective fields or were residents of the respective centres for 5 to 10 years. Yet another significant 30 per cent were in service for 10 to 15 years, while only 6 per cent of the respondents were having above 25 years of service in their respective fields at their centres of residence.

6.4.2 Perception of Host Community on the Impact of Pilgrim Tourism

• As a prelude to the analysis of the host community’s perception about the impact of pilgrim tourism on the economic, social and environmental aspects of the community, the attempt taken to find out the general opinion on the overall performance of the pilgrim centres revealed that around 51 per cent of the respondents feel that the pilgrim centres perform generally well. While 19 per cent consider it satisfactory, 9 per cent consider the performance very poor.

• The host community’s perception as to the impact of pilgrim tourism on economic development of the tourist centre were analysed using a 5 point scale, with weightage ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. 10 sub variables identified for economic development due to pilgrim tourism were(1) more income to merchants, (2) more income to transport operators, (3) more income to Hotel owners,(4) more income to small scale merchant and Vendors,(5) Increase in direct and indirect employment opportunities,(6) more demand for banking facilities,(7) increase in income due to the offerings to god, (8) more demand for article’s and goods for
prayer related activities (Agarbathi, sandals, special clothes etc), (9) pilgrim tourism indirectly promote small scale & cottage industries and (10) More construction leads to rapid economic development. The mean of all the 9 centres considered collectively varied between 3.22 to 3.52, indicating an inclination toward the positive side of agreement regarding economic development induced by pilgrim tourism.

- **ANOVA test discloses the significant differences in the opinion of host community members with regard to the economic development induced by pilgrim tourism.**

Pilgrim tourism may lead to developments of many kinds in the society. The parameters of societal development were defined in terms of (1) more demand for accommodation, (2) more demand for food and beverages, (3) more demand for paid sanatorium facilities, (4) more demand for communication and infrastructure facilities, (5) demand for transportation services, (6) demand for massage & allied service, (7) demand for professional service, (8) demand for dry cleaning & laundry Service, (9) demand for Yoga and Meditation facilities and (10) demand for other allied & auxiliary service. And the respondents’ opinion were collected on a five point scale ranging from 1 indicating strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree and standard deviation. The mean scores below 2.5 in all the three Christian centres- Parumala, Malayattoor Church, and Mother of God Cathedral, and the Muslim centres- Malik Dinar Masjid and Mampuram Mosque reveal the respondents’ disagreement on tourism’s contribution to the development of the society. It can also be construed that at these Christian and Muslim pilgrim centres there is a potential of social development that can be induced by pilgrim tourism.

- **There exist significant differences between centres regarding the impact of pilgrim tourism on social development as per the result of ANOVA test.**

A high degree of environmental issues arise as a consequence of tourism in general and pilgrim tourism in particular. With a view to identify how environmental concerns arising out of pilgrim tourism is perceived by the
host community, 9 sub variables were identified as (1) More water pollution, (2) More atmosphere pollution, (3) Creates more environmental issues (4) Results in Spreading of communicable diseases, (5) It creates severe health issues, (6) Increase in transportation result in high degree of a pollution, (7) The use of Electronics & electronic equipment’s results in high degree of sound pollution & Health issues, (8) Irrational disposal of plastic waste old clothes and solid waste results in environmental issues and (9) Increase in number of pilgrims results in high degree of pollutions in nearby rivers and water resources. Using scaling technique, the variables were rated and the centre wise analysis show that Irrespective of the centre, hosts are of the opinion that there is a high degree of environmental issues that may be viewed as a concern that endangers the prospects of pilgrim tourism in Kerala.

- To find out if there are significant differences in the opinion of host community with regard to the impact of pilgrim tourism on environment ANOVA test were applied and the result disclose that all the respondents agree on the one statement “pilgrim tourism creates more environmental issues” while there are significant difference between two centres as far as all other statements are concerned.

- Though the variable defined as pilgrim tourism creates more environmental issues showed no significant difference between centres in earlier analysis, it was found to have least association as is evident from a low eta squared of 3.55per cent. A relatively high eta squared of 17.38per cent, 16.33per cent and 14.01per cent, indicating a relative better measure of association was found in the cases of irrational disposal of plastic waste, old clothes and solid waste results in environmental issues, use of electronic and electrical equipment results in high degree of sound pollutions and health issues and more atmosphere pollution due to pilgrim tourism respectively. All other variables showed a mediocre association with centres though not insignificant.
6.4.3 Threats to Potential of Pilgrim Tourism

- The threats to the prospects of pilgrim tourism in the state of Kerala was examined from the responses of host community towards the ten sub variables identified as: Some pilgrims practice fraudulent and unethical methods, Some pilgrims tend to cheat the host community, Some tourists tend to practice Drugs trafficking, Some tourists are carriers of communicable diseases, Some tourists exhibit irrational/ bullish character while dealing with the host community, Most of the pilgrims are unhygienic, Some pilgrims do not obey the instructions of the authorities of the pilgrims centres, Most of the pilgrims lack basic etiquettes. The heavy flow pilgrims results in damage to the infrastructure facilities like roads & bridges, More demand for Yoga and meditation facilities lead to anti-social activities. The mean scores on an average for the 9 centres did not exceed 3.05, which indicate that threats to prospects of pilgrim tourism cannot be a big concern for the state of Kerala. Irrespective of the centre, hosts are of the opinion that there is a high prospect for increase in number of pilgrims that may be viewed as a potential for the prospects of pilgrim tourism in Kerala.

- A relatively high eta squared of 30.63 per cent, indicating a relative better measure of association was found in the cases of pilgrims not obeying the instructions of authorities.

- Majority (64 per cent) of the host community was of the opinion that the increase in number of pilgrim tourists will lead to an increased cost of living to natives at the pilgrim centres.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Kerala known to be one amongst the rare places where all major religions have coexisted peacefully for centuries offers vistas of economic and social development induced by pilgrim tourism. Each religion has left its mark on the culture of the state and pilgrimage has been a major part of its cultural tourism. Though thousands of pilgrims had been visiting these centres from time immemorial, the potential of these centres as tourist destinations had not been recognized properly and no effort had been taken to tap and market the potential of
pilgrim tourism so far. In order to reap full benefits from pilgrim tourism, plans, policies and strategies have to be formulated at the administrative level. This study aimed at highlighting on the problems faced by pilgrim tourists and host community as well as the prospects of pilgrim tourism in the state of Kerala was undertaken on major pilgrim centres in Kerala classifying them on the basis of three major religions such as Muslim, Hindu and Christian. Data collected as responses from 432 pilgrims and 270 representatives of host community at 9 different pilgrim centres in the state of Kerala were subjected to analysis in order to arrive at the problems and prospects faced by pilgrim tourism both from the perspectives of pilgrim and that of host community.

The findings based on the analysis of information collected from the respondents – both pilgrims and members of host community as well as the observation made by the researcher lead to the following conclusions.

- Tourism has been playing a vital role in the economy of India and Kerala which is evident from the inflow of foreign exchange earnings over the past several years. The tourist arrival has also grown over the years and Kerala fares better than the nation in this regard. The numerous pilgrim centres in Kerala too have a significant role in attracting the pilgrims to them. Unlike the tourists who visit Kerala to enjoy its serene beauty or its exquisite cuisine, the pilgrim tourists are attracted by the spiritual cause and the scenic beauty of the place seem to have the least effect on them. Visiting the centres in groups rather than alone seem to be the most preferred mode.

- The pilgrims are neither pleased with the attitude and behaviour of the members of local community nor with the cost of various services available in the centres. They opine that the cost is very high especially in the two Hindu pilgrim centres- Sabarimala and Guruvayoor.

- Reaching the pilgrim centres is not a big problem for the pilgrims who visit Sabarimala and Guruvayoor, but for others especially those who visit Mother of God Cathedral the problems are indeed intense.

- In general pilgrim tourists are not happy about the infrastructural facilities provided by the authorities in the centres.
Summary of Findings and Conclusion

- The pilgrims view that Pilgrim tourism also suffers from all the negative aspects of tourism for entertainment. But they agree that pilgrim tourism offers prospects for development of sustainable tourism in the state of Kerala but they are also concerned with, its impact on the environment and health of the people is negative.

- The members of the local community in the different pilgrim centres also affirm that economic prosperity and social progress have resulted as a result of pilgrim tourism but its impact on environment is of great concern. Irrational disposal of plastic waste, old clothes and solid waste resulting in environmental issues, use of electronic and electrical equipment resulting in high degree of sound pollution and health issues, and a high level of atmosphere pollution are the results of pilgrim tourism. The members of the local community do not feel that the threats/dangers associated with the increased inflow of tourists was alarming but they do opine that it will lead to an increased cost of living to natives at the pilgrim centres.

6.6 SUGGESTIONS

The underlying suggestions, if implemented properly can go a long way in tapping the potentials of pilgrim tourism in Kerala.

1. The religious centres in Kerala are currently dominated by pilgrims from within the state. Initiatives from the state government and tourism department to encourage pilgrimage beyond faith in religion by emphasising cultural and historic importance of religious centres can enhance the pilgrim tourism revenue. It is in this context a state policy for promotion of pilgrim tourism summons attention of authorities.

2. Since the word of mouth communication was found to be the pre-dominant source of information regarding the choice of pilgrim centres, the scope of cost effective utilisation of other media and publicity should be contemplated.

3. The costs of facilities at certain centres were observed to be high at least from the point of view of certain religions. The possibility of providing
subsidised rates for essential facilities at least during seasons may be enquired and efforts may be directed towards monitoring of prices charged for various facilities by private entrepreneurs around the centres.

4. Though responses of host community towards pilgrims were found to be reasonable good, inculcating the values behind pilgrimage among host community is essential. Only by imbibing a culture underlined by the ethics of the statement “Atithi Devo Bhava” – which means that the guest is equivalent to God, can the host community responses towards pilgrims be liberated from the commercial exploitation aspect entailing a fox eye on chicken’s coup.

5. The role of governments, at national, state and local level in provision and maintenance of infrastructural support to pilgrimage cannot be overlooked. The potential of public private partnership (PPP) model by partnering with authorities of pilgrim centres may be enquired in the areas of construction of bridges and roads.

6. The problems faced by pilgrims in reaching destinations such as no proper schedule and control by authorities, lack of parking facilities and exploitation by private agencies/ tour operators are controllable by adequate and timely intervention of local authorities and pilgrim centre administration. Such issues needs careful attention which once solved can go a long way in generating sustainable income and employment potential for the state.

7. The costs of pilgrimage in terms of transportation as well as food and accommodation should be brought down to a very low percentage of total costs of pilgrimage. Package offers attracting pilgrims to centres needs to designed by tourism promotion agencies and religious bodies associated with centres

8. The concerns raised regarding sustainability of pilgrim tourism needs to be addressed at the earliest, from the perspective of employment generation and new investment in construction and allied sector without endangering the environment.
9. Provision and assistance to pilgrims for resting during pilgrimage and provision of alternative transportation facilities to old aged/physically challenged people still raises concern, which the authorities in liaison with the local and state governments should overcome by alternatives such as home stay and responsible tourism.

10. Regarding service rendered/offered by DTPC/religious bodies in connection with the promotion of pilgrim tourism in Kerala can be transformed effectively by addressing the principal components identified such as provision of guidance and articles, information and security, facilities including drinking water, medical and physical support, assistance, health issue support and protection to pilgrims. Comprehensive solutions addressing the variability regarding service rendered/offered by DTPC/religious bodies in connection with the promotion of pilgrim tourism in Kerala needs to be formulated by meticulous planning and intelligent implementation and vehement control.

11. The intervention by the state police, intelligence, excise authorities and other bodies such as metrology should be made more vigilant in averting the negative aspects of pilgrim tourism. Proper co-ordination among the above mentioned control authorities can be ensured by help desks at pilgrim centre level. The alternative use of resources intended for pilgrim support during off seasons can be contemplated with the idea of keeping aloof the negative aspects of pilgrim tourism.

12. In view of the probability of induced negative aspects affecting spirituality that visitors seek, the role of support agencies become crucial. Such spirituality pilgrims seek is often lost at the level of supporting industries, which eye mainly on the commercial advantage they could derive. A policy formation of role of support industries and the extent to which they must coordinate with the pilgrimage cycle and needs has to be brought about. Promotion of a faith based tourism in which the supporting agencies essentially connect with the arts and cultural communities to develop an
overall faith based product rather than a muddle of unrelated offerings should be the pinpoint target.

13. Faith-based travel provides a steady flow of income to a local tourism economy, since pilgrims are committed travellers who tend to save for their religious experiences and travel irrespective of the state of the economy. Hence, the host community is not deprived of a steady income. It is in this context that the permissions and sanctions for setting up of small businesses and conversion of temporary ones to permanent ones, need be made more transparent by the local authorities.

14. The possibility of revival of local traditional art and culture as well as handicraft industry that are in the verge of extinction is yet another option that can be worth considering, especially in case of religious centres where local culture is the base for attracting pilgrimage tourists to the region. The socio economic impact of pilgrim tourism on host community needs to be tapped by committing local resources including human capital.

15. A high degree of the gravity of environmental issues which is viewed as a major concern by local host community at religious centres needs to be resolved. The threat to environment pollution whether it be air, water or sound endangers the prospects of pilgrim tourism in Kerala. The prospects of involving non- governmental organisations and self- help groups in disposing refuse have to be explored. The organised way of handling solid waste and cleaning up of rivers lakes and ponds should be made part of responsibility of local host community which benefits from pilgrim tourism.

6.7 \textbf{SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH}

The pilgrim tourism is recognized as one of the most resilient and emerging area of potential markets in the travel industry. The areas of income that emerged as a result of pilgrim tourism has not only been viewed as an economic inducement to the economy but also as an influential cultural phenomenon that could bring about changes in the daily life of residents, whether employed or not. It is in this context that the policy makers should envision pilgrim tourism and encourage research into its potential influence on socio economic and cultural conformity to development.
The following areas of pilgrim tourism are worth researching and are hence suggested in general.

1. The prospect of pilgrim tourism in employment generation and formation of new economic activities that raise the income of the people affects their living standards.

2. The role of pilgrim tourism in maintaining peaceful co-existence where the spiritual values of economic well-being dominates the commercial outlook can be explored so as to validate or repudiate the claims that pilgrim tourism can act as a vital force for peace and communal harmony.

3. The social influence of pilgrim tourism on the host societies entailing the positive constructs of mutual appreciation and understanding of cultures, tolerance and awareness paving way for a greater family bonding within host communities as well as respect and liking of different cultures besides its negative impact on environmental damages, tension, hostility and suspicion among religions.

Some of the specific areas in which studies can be taken up in future are:

1. Marketing Strategy for Promoting Pilgrim Tourism.


3. Promotion of pilgrim tourism and its effect on the ecology.

4. Ethical marketing in Pilgrim Tourism.

5. Segmentation and marketing aspects of pilgrim tourism.

6. Sustainability and attractiveness of Pilgrim Tourism.