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Development of Sustainable Tourism in the State of Kerala through Community Participation

Dr. Vinod C.

Post Doctoral Fellow

Department of Commerce

School of Business Management and Legal studies

University of Kerala

Kariavattom Campus, Thiruvananthapuram

Abstracts: The United Nations has proclaimed 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, in recognition of the tremendous potential of the tourism industry. In 2017, UNESCO (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation) has launched several initiatives to support sustainable tourism development, with the European Union and other partners. Sustainable Tourism Development focus on visiting a place as a tourist and trying to make only a positive impact on the environment, society and economy. Sustainable tourism calls for new partnership to better educate and inform, to foster new behaviors and strengthen accountability among all tourism stakeholders. The South Indian state of Kerala has unlimited scope for Sustainable Tourism Development. The State of Kerala has number of heritage sites, Biosphere reserves, Geoparks and creative sites represent incredible opportunity for tourism to be positive force for sustainable development, conservation and environmental protection. However, if unplanned development, tourism can be socially, culturally and economically disruptive. For all these reasons Strategic Development of Sustainable Tourism in the state of Kerala is the need of the hour.

Keywords: Community, Conscious Capitalism, Stakeholders, Sustainable tourism

Introduction

Tourism and Travel industry opens doors to intercultural exchange and dialogue, with over 1.2 billion people now crossing international borders everywhere. Tourism fosters better understanding among peoples living in various parts of the world. It's leading to a greater awareness of the rich heritage of various civilizations, thereby contributing to the strengthening of peace in the world. Tourism has also the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) data reveals that significance of tourism as a vehicle for job creation, generating revenues for host communities, representing around 1 to 11 jobs worldwide. World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and Geoparks represent incredible opportunities for tourism, and we must ensure that they are managed responsibly and sustainably. The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development is an opportunity to strengthen this positive dynamic between heritage and tourism.



Statement of the problem

It is since more than a decade now, we have started developing tourism industry in the state of Kerala. But the contribution of this sector towards total output of the industry (tourism) is still negligible. The development practices which we are resorted now could be the reason for this reduced growth. Considering the wide prospects of tourism industry in the state, sustainability and sustainable tourism development is still in pipeline. Strategic development of Sustainable Tourism development has lot of opportunities still left to be explored in its fullest extent. Majority tourism destinations in the state of Kerala are less capital intensive with high rate of return. Strategic development of sustainable tourism industry in Kerala have host of avenues yet to be explored in its fullest extent. There is need for developing innovative development practices are essential for sustainability in the state tourism sector. The present study is an attempt to explore innovative development practices that ensuring sustainability in the tourism industry in Kerala.

Sustainable Tourism – An Overview

As the UN declared the year 2017 acclaimed the importance of Sustainable Tourism is recognized: 'In fostering better understanding among peoples everywhere, leading to the greater awareness of the rich heritage of various civilizations and bringing about a better appreciation of the inherent values of different cultures, thereby contributing to the strengthening of peace in the world'. It is in this spirit that stronger recognition of the role of culture as an enabler of sustainable development and creative economy as a driver for growth and innovation. The State of Kerala have had blended with lot of potential tourism, mismanaged tourism and ancient monuments can be damaged under the pressure of mass tourism. The intangible heritage is at risk if not properly safeguarded. Strategic development of sustainable tourism in the state is essential for inclusive and sustainable growth. Strategic development of sustainable tourism meant for strategic planning to creating and running a tourism industry. Sustainable tourism plan that sets specific goals and objectives, it is capable of being changed in response to shifting market dynamics. The present study is an attempt for developing a new model for sustainability in tourism destinations in the state of Kerala.

Review of Literature

Some of the pioneer work has been conducted on sustainable tourism in different states in India. None of the work has been conducted in this area for developing a new strategic development model for Sustainable Tourism in the state of Kerala for development. Some of the recent work has been done on this topic is presented as follows:

NishaSaha (2011) states that the destinations become affordable for the masses. The only laggard is that this immense resource of manpower needs to be channelized in form of Pro-Poor Sustainable Tourism Development, unlocking opportunities in way of economic gain, upliftment of living standard of common men, and direct involvement of the poor in decision for development planning



Thenmozhi (2013) found that road network of the state influences considerably the economy, population distribution, size of cities and towns. The environmental quality, energy, access to social infrastructure and above all the quality of life is necessary for sustainable development. Aggressive promotion and marketing campaigns through print and electronic media at national and international levels resulted in continuous increase of tourists arrivals to Tamil Nadu.

Sobhana Devi (2014) in her study pointed out that different category of accommodation operators driven towards maximizing profits without having concern for sustainable tourism development. Hoteliers have utterly failed in the duty of sharing resources for protection of ecology and environment. However, different categories of accommodation operators are driven towards maximizing profits without having concern for sustainable tourism development.

Akshi Bhagat (2016) in his study expressed that tourism destinations need to arrange their best requests, look for the quintessence that craft them distinctive and alluring to tourists, and reliably advance this embodiment throughout all marketing interchanges as well as conduct. In future, this will definitely assist a destination accomplish a solid notoriety, in light of these brand value.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the present status tourism industry in the state of Kerala
2. To examine the sustainability in the present tourism industry in the state
3. To identify the present local participation in tourism industry for promoting sustainability
4. To develop a model for strategic development of sustainable tourism in the state.

Database and methodology

The researcher collects both primary and secondary data for the present study. The main objective of this study is to develop a new model for strategic development of sustainable tourism in the state.

Research Design

The present study was designed as an empirical and exploratory nature based on survey method. The researcher visit and interacts with stakeholders engaged in various tourism destinations in the state of Kerala. The researcher conduct the present study in four different phases viz, Review of literature, Pilot study, Data analysis and model development.

Sampling design

The state of Kerala is gifted with lot of natural and ecological places. Most of the tourism destinations are located at ecologically sustainable places. The present study, the researcher collect data from stakeholders engaged in ecological places identified by Kerala Forest & Wildlife Department. The stakeholders includes domestic and foreign tourists, Government officials, local community and other parties that are directly involved in the sustainable development of tourism in



the state. The researcher collect data through interview schedule. The annual report of Kerala Forest & Wildlife Department 2016 reveals that 55 ecologically sustainable tourism places located at 21 territorial division in the state. The researcher would be collect data from tourists on the basis of total number tourist visited during the period 2015-16. The multi-stage random sampling technique used for design of sample frame.

Results and Discussions

Local community participation is essential for sustainable tourism development, it increases the visitor satisfaction, increase the economic benefit of local community and to establish a development programme that is consistent with the cultural, social and economic richness of the local community. The process of local community participation can be ensured through sustainable tourism awareness campaign, high degree of community participation through providing employment opportunity and sharing of returns.

Table 1.01
Measures to ensure community participation in Sustainable Tourism

Measures	Region					
	Southern		Central		Northern	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Tourism managed for the benefit of all stakeholders	29	2	56	4	43	2
Employment opportunity provided to local community	28	3	53	5	43	2
Awareness campaign provided to local community	24	4	59	2	41	4
Ownership participation in tourism industry	29	2	60	1	43	2
Increase local community job satisfaction	28	3	56	4	42	3
Local community and society seen as ultimate stakeholder	31	1	59	2	42	3
Safe guarding trust, reputation and credibility of community	31	1	57	3	44	1

Source: Primary data

The respondents' opinion relating to the measures required to ensure local community participation in sustainable tourism development is shown in the Table 1.01. The region wise analysis reveals that community participation in sustainable tourism development can be ensured through safeguarding trust, reputation and credibility of community which constitute 31 responses in southern region and 44 responses in northern region (Rank 1). In southern region the variable local community and society seen as ultimate stakeholder also ranked first position (31 responses). In



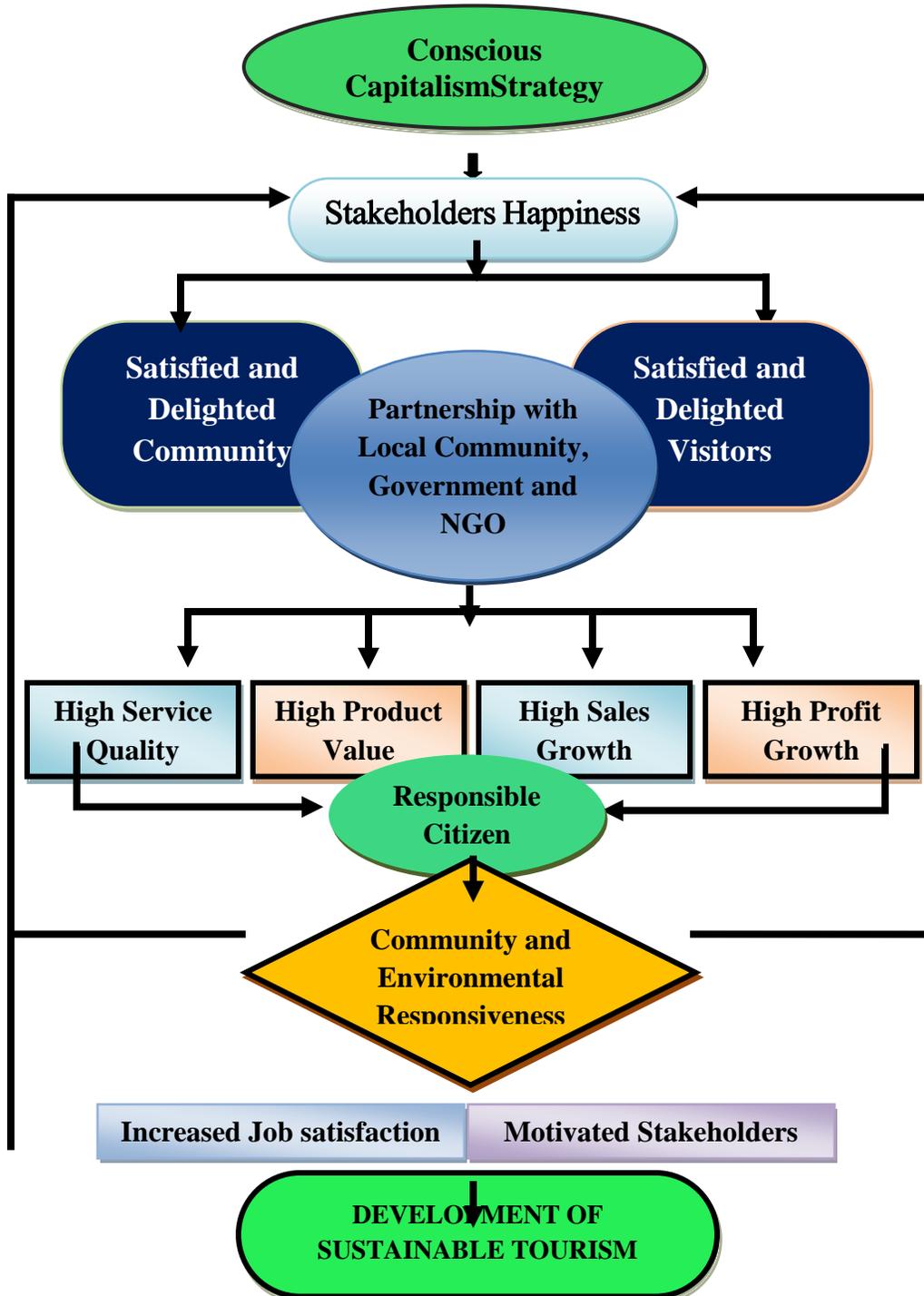
central region majority (60 responses) of the respondents expressed that ownership participation in sustainable tourism development is important measure to ensure community participation (Rank 1).

Awareness campaign provided to local community and local community and society seen as ultimate stakeholder was the next major measures for ensuring community participation in tourism industry in the state. The variable scored 59 responses each in central region ranked as second position. For testing whether there is any significant difference or not in the opinion of local community and stakeholders relating to different regions of Kerala, Kruskal- Wallis test (H test) is applied. The absolute value of H is 17.805 and the table value of χ^2 at 2 degree of freedom, at a 0.05 level of significance is 5.991. The absolute value of H is 17.805 is greater than the χ^2 value of 5.991. The test result proves that there is significant difference in the opinion of local community and stockholders regarding the measures to ensure local community participation in developing sustainable tourism development in different regions of Kerala.

Based on the analysis carried out in the initial stages of research, more enlightened strategies were identified in the final stage of research for development of sustainable tourism in the state. Both visitors and local community in host destinations are part of stakeholders group. Stakeholder's happiness depends on the degree of local community participation in sustainable tourism, Government role in developing facilities and products at the destinations and NGOs active participation in various development activities in the sustainable tourism area. A higher level of local community participation in sustainable tourism will produces positive impact on the destinations image. Figure 1.01 shows the Conscious capitalism strategy model for developing community participation in sustainable tourism development.



Figure 1.01: Model for developing Community participation in Sustainable tourism





Community participation can be ensured through the application of major conscious capitalism doctrines like local ownership and employment opportunity in tourism industry. More satisfied and delighted local people are engaged freely into the sustainable tourism development activities. Community will act as a watchdog for protecting and preserving the resources of destination. Government/NGOs role in producing facilities in tourism destinations will lead to delighted and satisfied tourists. This in turn will boost the tourism revenue and profit. The application of internationally acceptable sustainable practices at the tourism destinations produces Responsible Citizens in the host area.

Conclusions

Conscious sustainable tourism start with the principle that community is an important, even the primary stakeholder in the sustainable tourism development. The present scenariodictates tourism industry has to practice conscious capitalism strategy in order to achieve sustainable success. Conscious sustainable tourism practicewill spread the well-being and happiness among all stakeholders and in promoting the legal and cultural ecosystem within which profitability increasingly tracks contribution to community prosperity and environmental sustainability.

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Corresponding Author: dr.vinod1chandran@gmail.com