

A Case Study on the Importance of Responsible Tourism Destinations in Kerala with Special Reference to Periyar National Park, Thekkady

Mintu Mathew¹, Shahafas K. A², Shibi Gopi³, Merin Joseph⁴, Jagdeesh Chandran⁵

Student, Nirmala College of Arts and Science, Meloor, Kerala, India²

Assistant Professor, Nirmala College of Arts and Science, Meloor, Kerala, India^{1,3,4,5}

Abstract: A novel strategy called "responsible tourism" makes sure that the local community benefits fairly from the growth of the tourism industry. It attempts to develop better tourist attractions and gives visitors a better experience. The host community may experience a variety of economic, social, and environmental repercussions as a result of this strategy. Responsible visitors can improve the quality of life for the villages by supporting the local economy, upholding customs and traditions, and preserving the environment. This study on Periyar National Park will provide useful information to ITDC (Indian Tourism Development Corporation), KTDC (Kerala Tourism Development Corporation), management of Periyar National Park and other national parks and sanctuaries about Responsible tourism, and destinations in Kerala, to identify a responsible tourist and non-responsible tourist, and to enhance the waste management in the area, Characteristics (both demographic and travel) of tourists. This will be helpful to understand the importance of Responsible tourism and that may generate more tourists to visit Periyar National Park hence it will generate more revenue for the tourism economy of the destination.

Keywords: Responsible Tourism, Periyar National Park.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the biggest and fastest-growing sector in the world. It offers both employment and revenue. It also gives people the chance to learn about a country's culture, civilisation, and religious characteristics. For many countries, tourism is a significant source of income. It is a covert export that produces substantial amounts of foreign currency without actually or materially reducing internal resources. Tourism falls into a particular category of industries with high labour demands¹. It provides a wide range of amenities that incoming tourists expect and need. The tourism industry is among the top sectors in terms of the amount of money spent by travellers. Occasionally, the tourism industry's revenue exceeds the GDP. Historical landmarks, beaches, places of worship, and hill resorts all lure tourists, as well as other attractions. Each area has its own unique people, festivals, traditional dances, music, and handicrafts². In India, tourism comes in second in terms of earnings in foreign currency. The tourist industry employs large numbers of both skilled and unskilled individuals. It promotes both national and international unity³. A unique industry that needs a lot of labour is tourism. It provides a wide range of amenities that incoming tourists expect and need.

Kerala, a delightful South Indian location that embodies tranquilly, ought to be on every traveller's must-see list⁴. Kerala tourism provides a variety of tourist destinations that you will fall in love with right away⁵. These destinations are adorned with emerald backwaters, wide and lush tea farms, beautiful hill stations, and the turquoise Arabian Sea. Due to its breathtaking and extensive 2000-year-old cultural history and natural beauty, Kerala is quickly rising to the top of the list of travel destinations worldwide⁶. Kerala is referred to as "God's own country" and is a popular tourist destination both domestically and outside. With its pristine beaches, coastal plains, hill towns, backwaters, and mountains, it is a stunning and soothing vacation destination. Figure 1 prominently displays Kerala's location on the Indian political map and its top tourist attractions.

Responsible tourism is a management strategy embracing planning, management, product development and marketing to bring about positive economic, social, cultural, environmental impacts. It provides more rewarding holiday

experiences for guests, enables local communities to enjoy a better quality of life and conserves the natural environment. The responsible tourism initiative in Kerala was first implemented in four destinations viz., Kovalam, Kumarakom, Thekkady and Wayanad. The Kerala Institute of Tourism and Travel Studies (KITTS) under Kerala Tourism is the nodal agency to implement RT initiatives in the State. Thekkady in Kerala State, India's largest wildlife sanctuary is a dream destination for any tourist visiting India. There are a lot of responsible tourism initiatives (activities) such as the cultivation of vegetables, rearing of cows, hens and other domestic animals at households, papad making, rice flour making, samrudhi unit and community-based tourism products etc put forward by local as well as state and central government for the development of Thekkady and the local community. These responsible tourism initiatives at Thekkady are expected to generate direct benefits for local people by contributing to the development of local economies which in turn is expected to provide better living conditions for the host communities⁷.

In the twenty-first century, ecotourism is a great substitute for mass tourism because it is not as destructive. This is an alternate form whose main goal is to give nature enthusiasts access to the wilderness. Promoting responsible travel for the sake of learning about, taking in, and admiring the beauty of nature, wild animals, plants, and indigenous cultures is a paradigm, concept, and catalyst. Promoting ecotourism with the aid of the local population can enhance locals' quality of life while also preserving the ecology and environment. The principles of ecotourism place a strong focus on the sustainable use of natural resources, as well as the potential for revenue production and job possibilities. Both the conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity are implicitly and openly woven into these principles.

Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) is located on the Western Ghats between 9^o 15' and 9^o 40' N Latitude and 76^o 55' and 77^o 25' E Longitude in the Idukki district. The Reserve is unique and renowned for its wide variety of large mammals. The formation of the reserve is closely associated with the construction of Mullaperiyar Dam across the river Periyar in 1895 for diverting water to Tamil Nadu State. As early as 1899, an area consisting of 600 sq. km surrounding the dam was declared Reserve Forests (Periyar Lake Reserve Forests) by the then Maharajah of Travancore. The intention of the declaration might have been to protect the catchment areas for the prevention of silting of the dam. The wildlife sanctuary was established in 1934. In 1950 the area was extended by 177 sq. km. Recognising the importance of the reserve it was brought in 1978 under Project Tiger and came to be known as the Periyar Tiger Reserve. For the purpose of management, the entire reserve is divided into three zones viz., Core area (350 sq. km), Buffer zone (377 sq. km) and Tourism zone (50 sq. km). The core area of the sanctuary was declared a National Park in 1982. The two streams of Periyar and Mullayar and the lake with an area of 26 sq. km form the major aquatic ecosystem of the reserve. The Mullayar stream originating at an altitude of about 1780m above MSL has a length of 31 km and joins the southern tip of the lake.

The Periyar stream having a length of 41 km originates at an altitude of 1593m MSL (Map 2.2) and joins the lake at its eastern tip. The system is more or less a closed one due to the presence of the Mullaperiyar dam. Water from the reservoir overflows downstream when the water level reaches 41m though this happens very rarely (only twice for a couple of days in a decade). The only outlet of the reservoir is to the plains of Tamil Nadu through drainage pipes laid from lake.

PTR has been known to be a mega biodiversity zone due to its rich and diverse ecosystems. About 5,000 of India's 15,000 species of flowering plants are found in this area. Of these 2100 species are endemic to the Western Ghats. There are five distinct vegetation types identified within the sanctuary viz. evergreen, semi-evergreen, deciduous forests, grasslands, and eucalyptus plantations. Evergreen and semi-evergreen forests are found in the buffer and core zones and occupy about 40 per cent of the total area of the reserve. Owing to heavy stocking and the presence of different layers, light penetration is low and hence ground vegetation is not significant.

II. SAMPLING

The primary data are mostly gathered from the thoughts and points of view of 100 respondents after a set of 30 questions is produced and distributed to tourists at "Periyar National Park in Thekkady."

Data Analysis.

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO GENDER

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Male	67	67%
Female	33	33%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE NATIONALITY

Nationality	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Indian	80	80%
Foreigner	20	20%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE AGE GROUP

Agegroup	Number of Respondents	Percentage
15-25	56	56%
26-35	14	14%
36-45	12	12%
46-50	18	18%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING THE AWARENESS ABOUT RESPONSIBLE TOURISM (R.T)

HeardaboutRT	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	60	60%
No	40	40%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE TOURIST

ResponsibleTourist	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	77	77%
No	23	23%

Total	100	100%
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CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE FIRST TIME FREQUENCY OF THE VISIT TO THE LOCATION

Firsttimevisit	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	74	74%
No	26	26%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF VISIT

Purpose	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Leisure	51	51%
Research	8	8%
Experience	41	41%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF TIMES THEY GO ON HOLIDAY IN A YEAR

Times	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1-2	66	66%
3-4	23	23%
5+	11	11%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE FIRST VISIT TO PERIYAR NATIONAL PARK

First visit	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	70	70%
No	30	30%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL PARK

Protect	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	96	96%
No	4	4%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Information	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Brochures	14	14%
Online website	43	43%
Books	24	24%
Tourism promotions offices	5	5%
Others	14	14%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE OPINION ON DISABLED FRIENDLY DESTINATION

Disabled friendly	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	54	54%
No	46	46%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE MAIN MOTIVATION TO VISIT THEKKADY

Visit Thekkady	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Wildlife watching	40	40%
Study purpose	8	8%
Natural beauty	35	35%
Indigenous culture	5	5%
Rest and Relaxation	10	10%
Others	2	2%

Total	100	100%
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CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO SUGGESTION ABOUT THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS

Protections	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	80	80%
No	1	1%
Neutral	19	19%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO PROPER WASTE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Waste Management Practices	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	46	46%
No	54	54%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE AVAILABILITY BINS FOR PLASTIC AND PAPER WASTE

Organize bins	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	80	80%
No	20	20%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO KIND OF WASTE PEOPLE THROW IN THE DESTINATION

Kinds	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Paper	10	10%
Plastic	24	24%
All	66	66%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO CONSTRAINTS ENCOUNTERED

Constraints	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Overcrowding	33	33%
Long waiting time	37	37%
Entry and exit restrictions	19	19%
Lack of amenities and Cleanliness and hygiene	9	9%
Others	2	2%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING (R.T) AT PERIYAR

Suggestions	Number of Respondents	Percentage
E-ticketing for all eco-tourism activities	14	14%
Better, reasonable priced packages covering more than one eco-tourism activity	8	8%
Better coordination among staffs at Periyar	19	19%
Orientation on precautions for nature walk and other eco-tourism activities	28	28%
Better education and interpretation programs	33	33%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO TOURIST SATISFIED WITH PERIYAR NATIONAL PARK

Satisfied	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	94	94%
No	6	6%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES ARE IMPORTANT

Important	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	94	94%
No	6	6%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THE PROBLEMS FACED

Problems	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Noise	44	44%
Congestion	8	8%
Spillover garbage	15	15%
Littering	12	12%
Lack of transfer from Main gate to Boat jetty	2	2%
Uncleared garbage	8	8%
Photography Hindrance	5	5%
Long Queue	6	6%
Total	100	100%

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO SUGGEST PEOPLE TO USE WASTE BIN

Suggest	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	93	93%
No	7	7%
Total	100	100%

III. FINDING.

1. The majority of respondents are male.
2. The most of the respondents are Indians.
3. The respondents are from between the age group of 15-25.
4. Most the tourists are aware about the concept of the responsible tourism.
5. The most of the respondents are Responsible Tourist (R.T)
6. The most of the respondents are first time visitor to Eco-tourism destinations.
7. Respondents travel for the purpose of Leisure is high in the destination.
8. People take vacations 1-2 times every year.
9. Respondents are travelling to Periyar national park for their first time.
10. People really want to protect the national parks.
11. Most of the respondents got the source of information about Periyar from online websites.
12. The destination is disabled-friendly.
13. Wildlife watching is the major motivating factor people travel to the Periyar wildlife sanctuaries
14. People want to protect the animals in the area should be considered.
15. The waste management practices are not maintained at Periyar national park.
16. There is a need to categories the waste bins for different wastes.
17. The people throw away are all kinds of both paper and plastic waste.
18. The respondents most constraints encountered is long waiting time.
19. Better education and interpretation programs must be provided.

20. Most people are satisfied with Periyar national park.
21. The majority of the respondents want to protect the wildlife sanctuaries and think it is very important.
22. Respondents will take the plastic bottle waste with them and it shows they are a responsible tourist.
23. Waste management in the destination is poor.
24. Majority of the respondents are taking plastic bags with them so they can place in or appropriate place by taking with them.
25. Most respondents are facing Noise as a major problem in Periyar wildlife sanctuaries
26. The majority of the respondents will refer Periyar national park to their friends and family.
27. Most of the respondents will suggest to use waste bin in destination.

IV. SUGGESTIONS

- The tourist must create aware about the waste management system in the area is necessary.
- Promote boats that runs through electrical motor.
- Enhance the waste management at Periyar national park.
- Provide bicycle to explore the area.
- Introduce R.T destination packages for the tourist.
- Education and awareness about the importance of the national parks.
- E-Ticketing for the tourist must be considered.
- The protection of the wildlife sanctuaries in Kerala must be given importance
- Camping sites should be improved by providing good and clean campsite
- Modifying the path way and providing litter bins must be considered.
- Respect the local culture
- Minimize your waste
- Educate Others to Be Responsible Travelers

V. CONCLUSIONS

The most prominent project in India, responsible tourism, has a huge impact on destinations in terms of better horticulture and community involvement. The benefits of responsible tourism are particularly noticeable in the current environment, when top tourist locations are attempting to maintain a balance between their expansion of tourism-related activities and preservation of their traditional

Most of these factors—livelihoods, culture, and heritage—are unquestionably the distinguishing features of certain locations. This was made feasible by the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala's long-term planning and prompt involvement in the project, which was developed in accordance with the most recent global trend in the tourism industry.

This concept could be emulated due to the success of responsible tourism in destinations and Kerala's dominant position in the global tourism sector to assure the sustainability of Kerala's tourism development efforts, in all top tourist sites.

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