Analyzing Destination Development through Responsible Tourism Planning: A Case of Neyyar

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Abstract: Tourism is one of the fastest growing sector which acts as an engine of growth in many countries. Tourism has played major role in accelerating economic growth of Kerala, popularly known as God's Own Country. The concept of Responsible Tourism was introduced as Kerala had an ideal setting of abundant natural and skilled human resources, strong local self-governments and a very responsive tourism industry. This concept of tourism includes the triple bottom line- Economic, social and environmental responsibility. This paper explores Total destination development implemented to generate greater economic benefits and enhance well being of local communities, conserving natural resources and protecting the environment, implemented through Responsible Tourism planning. The Neyyar River is 56 km long river which flows through the Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala in India. Kalikad panchayath is the area where the Neyyar dam and other tourist destinations are located. This paper is based on planning and developing this less developed area, which has immense potential to develop as water based tourism destination. The study focused on destination development of Kalikad panchayath, situated at the banks of Neyyar River, to bring positive social, economic and environmental impacts.

Keywords: Kerala, Responsible tourism, Sustainable tourism, Community participation

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries in this era. Modern tourism is closely linked to development and led to growing number of new destinations. Traditionally development can be defined in terms of economic development. But today development has become much more comprehensive in meaning, embracing many dimensions such as social, cultural, environmental, equity dimensions etc.

Kerala state, popularly known as God's Own Country (2000) is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country. In 2001, Kerala launched Tourism Vision 2025 and it aimed to develop Kerala into an up-market tourist destination and to make use of tourism for socio-economic development in a sustainable manner, without harming the state’s environment, heritage and culture. In 2007, Kerala government adopted - Responsible Tourism (RT) as the focus of the tourism policy.

The main Objective of Responsible Tourism is to create better places for people to live and visit. Responsible Tourism means that tourist operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists take responsibility, take action to make tourism more sustainable. Responsible Tourism can benefit to the local population through Total Destination Development of the area. Tourism development will act as a promoter for this Destination Development. Destination development is the process of coordination and development of amenities, facilities, products, services and to support host communities to deliver quality experiences for visitors and enhance resident’s well-being. Total destination development means overall development through enhancement of Social life and the Environment. The project is based on evolving strategies for Destination development through Responsible Tourism planning in the selected destination

2. Responsible Tourism Concept

Responsible tourism emerged in the 1980s and in terms of interpretation and application in, tourism is well carried by the following: Responsible tourism is not a tourism product or brand. It represents a way of doing tourism planning, policy and development to ensure that benefits are optimally distributed among impacted populations, governments, tourists and investors.

Responsible tourism is an ethical approach that is not to be misunderstood as a new type of alternate. It is a principle that can and must apply to all forms of tourism, including small and large scale, domestic and international, mass and individualized, and culturally and environmentally-oriented tourism. According to Goodwin, it is an approach that aims not only at tourism planners and managers in the development process of tourism but also at everyone.
involved in a tourism product, ranging from the host populations, local governments and businesses, to the tour operators and the tourists visiting a destination.

3. Objectives and Scope

The aim of the study is to develop strategies for Destination Development through Responsible Tourism planning initiatives at Neyyar.

- To study the relevance of Responsible Tourism and identify parameters required to enhance the quality of environment and Quality of life.
- To study regional priorities and existing conditions of Neyyar and identify issues and potentials.
- To analyse the infrastructure and other development needs for supporting and substantiating responsible tourism at Neyyar.
- To evolve strategies for destination development through Responsible Tourism planning based on the identified parameters.

The study will help to introduce responsible tourism in Kallikad panchayath and it may boost the destination as a responsible tourist spot.

4. Methodology

The research will carry out in three stages, preparation & collection of background materials, fieldwork & site study and data analysis & formulation of strategies. The major tasks in the first stage is to narrow down the research topic, read relevant academic materials, design the detailed research process, select appropriate methodologies, design interview question lists and a questionnaire.

In the second stage fieldwork is conducted. Major tasks in this stage are interviews, surveys, on-site observation in the city, and search for relevant secondary data from concerned authorities. The applicability of responsible tourism in the area is analyzed and further strategies and suggestions can be evolved by analyzing the data.
5. Study Area

The study area consists of Kallikkad, which is about 30 kms west of Trivandrum city. Kallikkad is a village in Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala. The Neyyar Dam area is situated in Kallikkad panchayath. The panchayath consists of 13 wards which includes neyyar dam as one of its ward. All the 13 wards are taken as the study area. The area is surrounded by Neyyar wild life sanctuary and Agasthnyarkoodam mountains, which is a part of western ghats at the east, Peepara wild life sanctuary at the north, Kattakada town at the west and Neyyatinkara at south Kallikkadu panchayath is connected to Nedumangad Highway at Kallikkadu ward. The nearest airport is Trivandrum International Airport which is located 29.5 Kms away from Kallikkadu. The nearest railway station is Trivandrum central railway station which is about 23.8 kms away from Kallikkadu. There are so many Kani settlements in this panchayath. Vlavetti is one of them. This panchayath have prominent historical and cultural backgrounds. The travancore king, Marthanda varma's plight against Etuveetil pillars were through the mountain paths of kallikkadu.

6. Analysis of the Existing Status

On analyzing the existing population density variation within the study area, it is seen that a marginal decreasing growth rate was found in panchayath level. The population density in the area is also less. Migration levels are seen in the area due to lack of employment and services. The potential tourism sector is still underutilized here. A marginal decrease can be seen in the number of households from 2001 to 2011. These depict decrease in population due to migration and other factors.

The number of male population in the area is 4605 and the number of female population is 4808. The sex ratio in the study area is 1028. The literacy rate in the area is 89.6% out of which almost 50% are males and 50% females.

The amount of marginal workers are the highest in the area which means a huge amount of people stays unemployed throughout half of the year. It is a good opportunity for those people to get involved in tourism related activities by introducing Responsible tourism. From the datas, it is evident that the male working population is higher than the female working population.

From an online survey conducted on 50 respondents from the study area, almost 70% of the working population present there are men. Almost 76% of the female populations were willing to go for work to urban areas but the main challenges were lack of job opportunities and distance. The major working population in the study area are marginal workers and other working category especially urban labourers and daily wagers. From the survey, 88% of the respondents were ready to do jobs related to tourism activities which is a potential factor for implementing responsible tourism in the area.

Area Preparedness

This study was done in order to know whether the area is ready to face such a project implementation. It was done to know how much prepared is the area or to know whether the area is ready to accept the changes brought up by Responsible tourism in the area.

An online and a telephonic survey was conducted among the natives in order to gather the data required to analyze the willingness of the area. The online survey was based on 50 respondents while the telephonic survey was based on 10
respondents. The major questions involved were regarding the workforce, employment pattern, knowledge on responsible tourism, acceptance of tourism related employment, willingness to participate.

The result was that most of the people are aware of the tourism potentiality of the area. From the survey, almost 70% of the people are willing to co-operate with Responsible Tourism in the area. Most of the hotels and resorts of the area agreed to buy groceries from local people. It can trigger the possibilities of RT in the area. Local art forms and crafts should be showcased in the area. A platform to display these forms will increase the possibilities of RT in the area.

7. Suggestions

- The residents and the tourists should be made aware of the possibilities of responsible tourism in the area.
- Government should efficiently involve in the development of responsible tourism behavior in the area.
- Small scale industries and local businesses promoting responsible tourism should be encouraged in the area.
- More resource protection activities should be introduced in the ecotourism project.
- More steps should be taken from the government’s side to promote the responsible tourism activities in the area.
- Effective waste management should be introduced in concerned area to reduce pollution.
- Adequate tourism infrastructure facilities should be provided.

8. Conclusion

Tourism planning is relevant for the development and protection of an area. Tourism Planning can focus at the national, regional, or even at a destination or a site level. A combination of all aspects will achieve most desired outcome. Tourism planning at any level can be aimed giving special attention understanding the spatial needs and fabric. Responsible Tourism initiative was successfully implemented to achieve sustainable Tourism planning. So, while developing a tourism potential destination, the tourism sector can play the key role of a promoter in development of that area. The study significantly has a positive relationship between responsible tourism and Neyyar. It was concluded that efficient destination development and more employment opportunities for local residents were the key elements to promote the responsible tourism in this study area. Through peoples participation, more economic and social activities can be implemented with support of government and private agencies. Thus, the area can be developed into a beautiful destination following the three pillars of sustainability and can be extended to tourists from all over the world.

References


Figure 4: 2 Map showing approach roads to the Study Area from the city and outskirts


Author Profile

**Pranav B San** received B.Arch (Bachelor of Architecture) degree from NRM School of Architecture in 2019. Now, pursuing M. Plan (Urban Planning) degree in TKM College of Engineering, Kollam (2019-21 batch).