

**CONTRIBUTION OF TOURISM TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL
COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY ON THALIKULAM SNEHATHEERAM BEACH IN THRISSUR
DISTRICT**

Dr. Josheena Jose*

Assistant Professor,

P.G Department of Commerce, Christ College (Autonomous) Irinjalakuda.

Abstract:

Tourism is travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people who "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four (24) hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. "Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. Many developing countries consider tourism to be important for economic progress and poverty reduction. However, it is also clear that the link between tourism and economic growth and poverty reduction is not automatic. It is very much depend on whether tourism generates employment opportunities, creates linkages – in particular with agriculture and service-providing sectors – and stimulates the development of basic infrastructure through the construction of roads, port and airport facilities and the provision of financial services from which the economy as a whole can benefit . A range of policies and regulations, investments and training are necessary to make all tourism-related activities sustainable and to contribute to sustainable development. Here an attempt is made to identify the key issues that should be addressed in considering the contributions of tourism to sustainable development of the local community.

Key words: sustainable development, sustainable tourism, impacts of tourism, mass tourism, cultural tourism.

1.1 Introduction

Tourism plays a pivotal role in promoting goodwill among the people and thereby fostering socio-economic development of the country. Development of tourism has been given a high priority in the economic development programs of the country since 1980s. The state of Kerala, which is now stylized as 'God's own Country' in the global tourist map, has also accorded it a major position in order to reorient its economic development utilizing its natural green development.

1.2 Beach Tourism

Beach Tourism means the utilization of the coastal environment in such a way as to attract tourists. The

natural environment including the beach sand, the waves and the cottages are all important factors in beach sand, the waves and the depth along these areas, security, and the sights visible and ability to set up eco-friendly cottages are all important factors in beach tourism.

1.3 Review of literature

In a study conducted by Peters (1968)¹ the economic benefit of tourism is mentioned by citing that many countries promote tourism as it is a way to increase foreign exchange earnings.

Matheison and Wall (1982)² mention that tourism is the largest earner of foreign exchange and leading industry in terms of income and employment in countries such as Jamaica, Spain and Mexico.

Joseph (1990)³ in his study reveals the economic background and the pattern of preferences of the tourists for different types of tourism attractions.

According to **Leela Shelley (1991)**⁴ "Tourism Development in India" appraises the hospitality industries in India, and the role of hoteliers, tourism promoting agencies, city planners or the environmentalists in the promotion of tourism in India. Transport, accommodation, entertainment shops and other businesses are all involved with tourism in the form of subsidiary industries.

Vijayakumar (1995)⁵ in his study explains the importance of native tourism, ecotourism and evaluate the demand for the same in a state like Kerala.

1.4 Need and Significance of the Study

Kerala is blessed with beautiful beaches which are the most important tourist attractions. The state has about 580km long coastlines, studded with world's best string of beaches. Throughout the world, the beaches of Kerala are renowned for their breath taking beauty. The blues of the sky and the blue waters of the beaches of Kerala come together give enchanting experience tourists. Amongst the popular beaches of Kerala are Kovalam Beach and Varkala beach. The other much visited beaches of Kerala are Thangasseri beach, Cherai beach, Tannur beach, Beypore beach and Muzhappilangad beach, Bekal beach and Kappad beach. Though the beaches are the centers of attractions, there is a concentration of tourists, only in the southern side beaches of Kerala, especially Kovalam and Varkala. The other beach centers attract comparatively a smaller number of tourists. Though a number of studies have been conducted on tourism, the beach tourism has not been able to draw the attention of researchers. Tourism is still an emerging discipline and hence any academic or research work ought to enrich the existing stock of knowledge on the subject. The state has very little information on the precise impacts of tourism, particularly beach tourism on the economy and the environment of Kerala. The present study focuses on contribution of tourism to the sustainable development of the local community- a case study on Thalikulam Snehatheeram beach in Thrissur district.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the various facilities provided at Snehatheeram Beach and various programs conducted at Snehatheeram Beach.
2. To analyse the contribution of tourism to the sustainable development of the local community- a case study on Thalikulam Snehatheeram beach in Thrissur district.

1.6 Methodology

The present study is descriptive in nature. Special focus is given to the beach tourism potentials of Kerala. The present study uses primary data. Due to the special nature of the study the qualitative data has also been used in the present study.

Primary data : The primary data has been collected from the tourists and natives at Snehatheeram Beach in Thalikulam.

1.7 Tools for analysis

A questionnaire was designed for the purpose of achieving the research objectives. In order to analyze the sustainable tourism development of the local community and its effect on standard of living by using multiple linear regression and the significance of difference between the perception of tourists and natives with regard to the various facilities available in the Snehatheeram beach is tested by t-test statistic etc.

Part II

2.1 Beach tourism potentials of Kerala

In Kerala, it is observed that tourists are visiting only in a few beaches in spite of the fact that there are a number of beautiful beaches in Kerala. It may be due to the absence of information to the tourists and the lack of planned efforts on the part of the authorities to make aware the tourists about the beach tourism destinations of Kerala.

Kerala's abundant water body with plenty of greenery offers the most enthralling happenings a tourist would imagine. Kerala beaches are the most perfect choice for the beach combers. Sit under the soothing sun or on the soft sand, the palm veiled beaches of Kerala will transmit the most delightful atmosphere a tourist will admire. Blessed with a rich coastline the beaches display a romantic affair between the sunny sun and velvety sand. The beach tour in Kerala will be an overwhelming experience while encountering the coconut palm grooves, natural lagoons and harbors and feeling extreme serenity and solitude. The ravishing beauty of Kerala beaches is a prime attraction among travelers. Thus the present study focuses on contribution of tourism to the sustainable development of the local community- a case study on Thalikulam Snehatheeram beach in Thrissur district.

Snehatheeram beach is a wide and virgin beach blessed with an endless stretch of golden soft sand and swaying palm trees. This tremendous place is comfortable for beach holidays. The resort in the beach provides all facilities with a Kerala village environment.

A visit to the beautiful coastal town of Thrissur is simply incomplete without a trip to one of its

super-scenic beaches. Sun, sand and the enigmatic Arabian Sea, all come together in a beautiful harmony that descends upon the Snehatheeram Beach, right in the middle of the Kerala coastline. Upon setting foot on this popular beach, one realizes at once why it is christened “Snehatheeram” or ‘Love Shore’ – the reason is simple. It is impossible to come here and not fall in love with the ambient music of the sea waves hitting softly against the shore, and watching the Sun take a gradual dip in its waters, before disappearing completely.

The beach, located at a distance of 3 kilometres from the Thalikulam Taluk of Thrissur, and about 30 kilometres from the town itself, is an idyllic setting for everyone who visits it. Children can be spotted playing catch and making sand castles, lovers come here to enjoy a romantic walk in the breezy atmosphere against the backdrop of the sea, and families come for a fun-day out. Because of this universal appeal, the beach attracts national and international tourists at all times of the year. The beach was selected as the best beach tourism destination by the Department of Tourism (Kerala) during the year 2010. The beach is maintained by Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) and is definitely one of the most beautiful beaches in Kerala. Thalikulam Snehatheeram destination is under the control of an executive council headed by MLA as the chairman, Thalikulam Gramapanchayat President as Vice Chairman and DTPC secretary as CEO. The day to day affairs are managed by 10 staff appointed by Destination management council. The idea behind the setting of Snehatheeram goes to T.P.Prathapan M L A who is the master brain behind the starting of the project.

Facilities and Main Highlights

1. A tiled pathway and 4 stone mandapams with benches along to sit and enjoy the beauty of the sea
2. A kid’s park with an aquarium of different varieties of fishes. Kids can play and enjoy rides and swings with a panoramic view of the sea. Snehatheeram beach is the only one in Thrissur to have a dedicated beach park for children. Since it is government-maintained, the entry charges for the park are a nominal 5 Rupees for children and 10 rupees for adults
3. An open stage to conduct various programmes.
4. A high mask light and a dancing fountain decorated with lights.
5. Bathroom and cloak room facilities for gents and ladies .
6. Two hotels to provide delicious sea food to tourists run by private parties. One is Nalukettu built with wood and coconut palm leaves offering attractive visual treat.
7. Parking facilities at three places providing ample parking space.
8. Snehavanam composing of various varieties of trees.

Source of Revenue

The main source of revenue is the entry fees charged at the kids’ park. For video recordings 1500 to 5000 is charged. For conducting programmes on the stage rupees 3000 is charged. Quotation wise tender is provided for two parties to sell ice cream inside the enclosed area. The manager

reported that an average of 2½ lakh rupees was able to collect on a monthly basis from the area.

Part III

3.1 Data analysis and interpretation

The third section of this paper analyse the perception of tourists and natives with regards to sustainable development of the local community viz, cleanliness and hygiene conditions, safety and security measures and other various facilities available in the Snehatheeram beach.

Comparison of mean scores of perception of tourists and natives with regard to the various facilities available in the Snehatheeram beach.

Table 3.1 shows the result of the test of significance of difference between the perception of tourists and natives with regard to the various facilities available in the Snehatheeram beach.

Summary of the test of significance of difference between the mean perception scores of respondents with respect to various facilities available in the Snehatheeram beach.

Table 3.1 Summary statistics

Nature of respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Tourist	25	3.49	0.48	0.10
Natives	10	3.83	0.47	0.15

Independent Samples Test										
average	Equal variances assumed	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
		0.304	0.585	-1.943	33	0.061	-0.3446	0.1774	-0.70551	0.01631
average	Equal variances not assumed			-1.965	17.052	0.066	-0.3446	0.17535	-0.71447	0.02527

Spss output

The table 3.1 shows the summary statistics and the variable score selected for the independent sample t - test for both the groups viz, tourist and natives. This table contains two sets of analysis. First assumes equal variances and the second do not assume equal variances. As per the hypothesis, H0: There is no significant variance among the two groups. H1: There is significant variance among the two groups.

Levene's test for equality of variances shows the F value is 0.304 and its associated significance value is 0.585 ie, greater than 0.05. It means that the variability in both the conditions is about the same. The t- value is -1.943 in the first condition and in the second condition it is -1.965. The values indicate the variability in two conditions is not significantly different.

Multiple linear regression analysis is used to examine the relationship between standard of living of local community with other independent variables like value appreciation of local resources, creates new business opportunities, improves infrastructural facilities etc. The result of the analysis is shown in the table 3.2 below. The table 3.2 explains the main characteristics of regression model results. R is the square root of the R squared. R- square value ie.0.714 shows the 71 % of variation in the standard of living of local community is explained by all the other independent variables. F- value is 9.362. The p- value associated with this F - value is very small (0.001) and it is less than 0.05. It means that all the independent variables jointly explain there is a significant variations in the standard of living of local community due to sustainable tourism development in the Snehatheeram beach.

Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.845 ^a	0.714	0.638	0.413	2.633
a. Predictors: (Constant), value appreciation, new business opportunities, infrastructural facility, increase in income					
b. Dependent Variable: standard of living					

ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.39	4	1.598	9.362	.001 ^b
	Residual	2.56	15	0.171		
	Total	8.95	19			
a. Dependent Variable: standard of living						
b. Predictors: (Constant), value appreciation, new business opportunities, infrastructural facility, increase in income						

3.2 Findings of the Study

1. Kerala has huge potential for beach tourism. There are a large number of beaches which are unutilized and available for tourism development. Among these Snehatheeram beach is a wide and virgin beach blessed with an endless stretch of golden soft sand and swaying palm trees.
2. Domestic tourists are less interested in visiting the beach centers.

3. Though initiative was taken by the Government authorities for providing facilities in beach centers, no follow up measures were taken thereafter.
4. Security measures were very poor and only a few policemen were deployed to manage any crisis in the beach centers.
5. The hotels and restaurants located near the beach centers are very costly .So the middle and lower income groups can't afford the hotel facilities near the beaches.
6. The domestic tourists and the natives have more or less the same opinion about the cleanliness and hygiene conditions, safety and security measures and the various facilities available in the beach
7. Majority of the natives and tourists pointed out that beaches in Kerala are polluted.

3.3 Suggestions for Change

1. As a part of the study information's and suggestions were collected from tourists and locals they are as follows.
2. Kids Park is now under dilapidated condition without proper and timely maintenance.They must be properly maintained by including more swings and rides.
3. Aquarium inside the park must be kept neat and clean.
4. There is a small well-constructed building inside the park without any use it can be converted into a small restaurant.
5. Fees can be charged at the entrance gate of Snehatheeram.
6. Fisheries museum can be arranged along with the park.
7. Snehavanam is not properly maintained . Steps must be taken to protect it.

3.4 Conclusion

Considering the unique strengths and potential of the state the focus should be on the development of new tourism products especially beach tourism, which is a main source of attraction to domestic and foreign tourists alike. The partnership between the department of tourism and local bodies will be strengthened for developing local tourism products to ensure the passing of tourism benefits to rural areas and communities. The guiding factors in any tourism scheme taken up by the government would be indigenouness, environmental friendliness and community involvement. The participation of the government with private sector groups also is required for developing Kerala as a first class beach tourist destination.

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