

Responsible Tourism Practices in Wayanad: A Study of Community Development Parameters in Responsible Tourism Practices

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing sectors and can provide a significant economic opportunity for countries that establish themselves as a vacation spot. Unfortunately, tourism has historically negatively affected the environment, people, and cultural identity. To ensure a healthy tourism practice that gives adequate importance to the well-being of people and the planet, the only option for the world is to move away from irresponsible, mass tourism and learn from existing examples of Responsible tourism models. Responsible tourism tries to address impacts on the economy, society, and ecology. Responsible Tourism Practices in Wayanad and Major Challenges Related to this practice have been studied in this research paper. A descriptive research method has been used in this research, considering both primary and secondary data. The collected data was analysed using various statistical tools like bar diagrams & pie charts. The majority rated the practices of responsible tourism in Wayanad as good, but community development practices as average. Most of the respondents perceived strong efforts in preserving the environment. Education initiatives for the local community are viewed as average. The results suggest a need for improvement in communicating and educating local communities about responsible tourism practices.

Keywords: Community Development, Local Community, Mass Tourism, Natural Environment, Responsible Tourism.

Introduction

According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon. It involves people traveling to countries or places outside their home environment for not more than one consecutive year for personal or professional purposes. As a service industry, Tourism contributes considerably to the gross domestic product of many economies worldwide. Tourism is crucial for many countries due to the income generated by the utilization of goods and services by tourists, and other expenditures. For these reasons, NGOs and government agencies support and promote some areas as tourist destinations. They also develop such areas and give adequate promotional activities. Then there emerges a concept called Responsible Tourism. The vision of this form of tourism was much discussed in the 1980s. Through its mission, Kerala Sets Tourism Record in 2024 with over 2.22 Crore Visitors.

Responsible tourism means it supports local culture, traditions, and environment through sustainable development. So, it requires stakeholders like operators, governments, local people, tourists, and other service providers to take responsibility, take action to make tourism more sustainable. Responsible tourism helps to minimize economic decline and environmental and social impacts. It generates greater income and opportunities for local people and improves host communities' well-being, working environment, and industry access. Responsible Tourism tries to empower local people in decisions that affect their livelihood. It makes positive contributions to the conservation of nature and cultural heritage to maintain the world's diversity, making awesome experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people and a greater understanding of local cultural, social, and environmental issues. Provide access for people with disabilities and the disadvantaged. Kerala

Tourism's official initiative aims to improve the travel experience and optimize the operational process by streamlining the interaction between the stakeholders.

Wayanad, a scenic district in Kerala's Northern hills. We can say it's a paradise for all nature lovers. The DTPC Wayand promotes Trekking and camping trails, Breathtaking waterfalls, Caves, and birdwatching sites. Most of the tourist destinations offers a wide variety of products like spices, coffee, tea, bamboo crafts, honey and herbal plants which are known as the unique treasure of Wayanad.

Wayanad showed the world how to transform the world into a better place to live in and a better place to visit through its Responsible Tourism initiatives. Responsible Tourism (RT) Mission is the nodal agency formed by the Government of Kerala to spread and implement the ideologies and initiatives of Responsible Tourism all over the State.

Statement of the Problem

The blooming tourism industry in Wayanad is gaining importance worldwide. It also brought economic and social benefits to the region. Same time it has raised concerns about the impacts of tourism on the normal life of the community and ecosystems. Generally speaking, there is a lack of knowledge about the current state of Responsible Tourism in Wayanad. The attitude of local stakeholders towards this mission is a hurdle to its success.

Significance of the Study

This study on Responsible Tourism initiatives in Wayanad is significant for many aspects. This study will contribute a clear picture of this mission and its status. This study will also help the stakeholders to identify the possible ways to promote responsible tourism practices. This study will enhance the attitudes and perceptions of the local community about RT mission.

Scope of the Study

As a nature-based destination, the Wayanad district in Kerala has recognized the importance of Responsible tourism practices in tourism management and promotion. This study aims to look at the government initiatives to promote responsible tourism in the Wayanad district. It also gives importance to understanding the perception of the local community about RT initiatives. This study also keeps an eye on understanding the impact of responsible tourism initiatives on the socio-economic well-being of the local community.

Objectives of the Study

- To know more about responsible tourism.
- To understand various responsible tourism initiatives in the Wayanad district.
- To evaluate community development parameters in Responsible tourism practices.
- Looking at the key challenges in the effective implementation of RT initiatives.

Research Methodology

This study used a descriptive research method, considering both primary and secondary data. Data was collected using convenience sampling methods from the tourists in Wayanad, active units in Wayanad, and employees who work in Organizations to promote tourism in Wayanad by administering a structured questionnaire. 200 respondents were participated in this study. The collected data was analysed using various statistical tools, such as bar diagrams and pie charts.

Review of Literature

Shilpi Saraswat (2022). "Impact of Responsible Tourism on The Sustainability of Destinations And The Quality of Life of Local Residents". There exists a crucial association between responsible tourism and destination sustainability. The attitude of the local community is an important factor in destination sustainability which includes environmental concerns, quality of life, community well-being, local well-being, and the health and safety of the local community

Alvaro Dias (2021) "A Measure of Tourist Responsibility". A tourist's perception and attitudes vary significantly from their actual behavior. Even when they are aware of the consequences of their actions, they are in no position to contribute positively.

Shuhaibu H (2021) "The Role and Scope of Responsible Tourism in India". Sustainable tourism can increase the competitiveness and image of tourism destinations, which will enhance the inflow of tourists to various tourist sites.

Regi Francis (2020) "Impact of COVID-19 in Responsible Tourism Activities of Kerala with Special Reference to Wayanad District". The government of Kerala has formulated many projects in the tourism sector. The success of the projects and the state's global position in the world market ensure sustainability in the long run.

Paul V Mathew (2019) "Measurement for Responsible Tourism: Development of a Stakeholder-Based Scale". People are trying to use responsible tourism and sustainable tourism synonymously. But here is explained the difference between these two terms. Sustainable tourism is a broad concept, responsible tourism focuses on the benefits that the host community derives from tourism. Where Sustainability gives first preference to planning, the latter contributes to implementation and action.

Renu Chowdhary (2014) "The Study of Sustainable Tourism in India and Major Challenges Related to The Tourism Sector". To safeguard and conserve the natural environment as well as the socioeconomic and cultural heritage, the stakeholders have pledged their support to this endeavour. To ensure that our customers' visits benefit local communities, panchayats, and individuals, as well as to encourage them to respect the local way of life and stay away from engaging in abusive or exploitative forms of tourism, the Department of Tourism works closely with local authorities, regional and national governments, and other organizations. The Department of Tourism also conveys information on initiatives to promote sustainable tourism development and management.

P. Diaz (2013) "Sustainable-Responsible Tourism Discourse – Towards 'Responsustainable' Tourism". According to some scholars, tourism damages traditional socio-cultural institutions, increases reliance, and results in a loss of socioeconomic and environmental control. Others see it as a chance for social progress and cooperation. The three primary effects of tourism are social, socio-ecological, and economic. Both the local population and the natural and cultural landscape are directly impacted by them. "Proper management" has the power to bring the community together, strengthen historical memory, and create a respect for the landscape as a legacy that should be preserved.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

• Familiarity in Responsible Tourism

Table 1: Familiarity in Responsible Tourism

Particulars	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	74	37
Some what	80	40
Rarely	36	18
No	10	5

Sources: Primary data

Interpretation

The survey reveals that 37% of respondents are familiar with the concept of responsible tourism, while 40% are somewhat familiar. A smaller portion, 18%, is rarely acquainted with the concept, and only 5% claim to have no knowledge of it. This suggests a moderate level of awareness and understanding of responsible tourism among the surveyed individuals.

• Responsible Tourism Practices Rating

Table 2: Responsible Tourism Practices Rating

Particulars	Community Development (%)	Preserving Nature (%)	Educating the Local Community(%)
Good	38	57	30
Average	59	39	52
Bad	3	4	18

Sources: Primary data

Interpretation

Community development practices in responsible tourism are rated as average by 59%, followed by good at 38% and bad at 3%. This suggests a mixed perception, with a slightly favourable view. Preserving nature receives a positive rating, with 57% considering it good, 39% average, and a small 4% expressing a negative opinion. This indicates a generally strong support for efforts in preserving the environment. Education initiatives for the local community are viewed as average by 52%, good by 30%, and bad by 18%. The results suggest a need for improvement in communicating and educating local communities about responsible tourism practices.

- **Community Development Parameters**

Table 3: Community Development Parameters in Responsible Tourism Practices

Particulars	Local Employment (%)	Women Empowerment (%)	Poverty Eradication (%)
Good	46	29	28
Average	48	65	59
Bad	6	6	13

Sources: Primary data

Interpretation

Local employment: 46% good, 48% average, 6% bad. Generally positive but with areas for improvement. Women empowerment: 29% good, 65% average, 4% bad. Mixed perceptions, leaning towards average performance. Poverty eradication, 28% good, 59% average, 13% bad. Indicates a need for improvement in addressing poverty-related issues. This shows that there is a need for improved ideas to promote these three important aspects.

- **Willingness to Pay Premium**

Table 4: Willingness to Pay Premium in Responsible Tourism in Wayanad

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	46	23
Some what	96	48
No	58	29

Sources: Primary data

Interpretation

The data indicate that 48% of respondents are somewhat willing to pay a premium for accommodations and services adhering to responsible tourism practices in Wayanad, suggesting a moderate level of interest in supporting sustainable initiatives. Meanwhile, 23% expressed a clear willingness to pay a premium, indicating a commendable commitment to responsible tourism. However, 29% responded negatively, stating that they are not willing to pay a premium, suggesting a portion of respondents who may prioritize cost over supporting responsible tourism practices. This result pointed a clear answer to this challenge that there must be a conformity between the service and the cost.

Findings and Recommendations

The majority perceives the government's actions for monitoring responsible tourism positively, with a significant minority holding dissenting views. Responsible tourism practices in Wayanad are generally rated positively, with a majority considering them good or very good. Community development practices and education initiatives in responsible tourism receive mixed perceptions, indicating room for improvement in communication and implementation. Local employment opportunities are generally viewed positively, while aspects like women's empowerment and poverty education show mixed perceptions with areas for improvement. There is a moderate level of awareness and understanding of responsible tourism among respondents, with a significant portion being familiar or somewhat familiar with the concept. While some are willing to pay extra for responsible tourism, others are not, indicating a division in support for sustainable initiatives based on cost considerations.

There are some possible suggestions to improve this mission's purpose and extend it into other areas, too. Authorities should focus on improving initiatives to engage and empower local communities. Increase efforts to inform the community about responsible tourism. Promote and support businesses within the community for sustainable growth. Offer training on responsible tourism practices for locals. Create opportunities for locals to participate in community projects and volunteering. Find ways to provide value-added services to encourage tourists to pay more premium pricing.

Conclusion

According to the findings, there is a positive outlook on responsible tourism efforts in Wayanad, with notable support for government actions and positive sentiments towards responsible tourism practices, community development, and environmental preservation. However, there are areas for improvement, particularly in communication and education initiatives, addressing poverty-related issues, and increasing awareness and adherence to responsible tourism guidelines. In addition, there is significant engagement from respondents in supporting local businesses, seeking information about the result of their tourism activities, and providing feedback to tourism establishments, indicating a

willingness to contribute to sustainable tourism practices. Overall, while there are areas of strength and areas for improvement, the survey highlights a strong foundation for responsible tourism in Wayanad, with opportunities for continued growth and enhancement in various aspects, including community engagement, diversity and inclusion efforts, collaboration with stakeholders, resource allocation, and skill utilization within the RT mission units.

Future Scope of the Study

This study gives an insight into the perceptions of local communities towards the Responsible Tourism (RT) mission and its practices for community development. However, a more detailed and comprehensive study is necessary to further enhance and improve the mission's purpose, practices, and impact. Such a study would inform valid suggestions for improvement and potential expansion of the mission to other parts of Kerala, ensuring its successful implementation and sustainability.

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