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CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY IN KERALA VIA TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Kerala offers a cultural kaleidoscope in its literature, language, music, dance, theatre and rituals; the pluralist basis of Kerala's culture mosaic is reflected in its art forms. That is the cultural heritage of Kerala can be seen from its different art forms and customs. There is no other state in India which can match up with the creativity of arts of Kerala. Kerala also is highly concerned about the aspect that tourism can adversely affect the cultural fabric of the community and in fact there are a large number of groups within Kerala that are highly concerned about the impact of tourism on culture and keeping a watchful eye on tourism development. Kerala feels that it will continue to be a tourism driven economy due to the focused and concerted efforts of the government with the private sector participation and involvement of local population in the development process. Thus the Kerala model of tourism seems to be more culturally sustainable and less in conflict with the long term cultural survival of their native population.

KEYWORDS

culture, sustainability, kerala, impact, art.

INTRODUCTION

Culture we are told is the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. The story of Kerala is mirrored in the evolution of its art and culture. Kerala's long and inviting coastline that witnessed the arrival of many foreign people and cultures and its backbone of hills that provided the state insularity from the rest of the country, facilitated the retention of its legacy as well as the integration of the winds of change that have swept over the land from time to time. Consequently, Kerala offers a cultural kaleidoscope in its literature, language, music, dance, theatre and rituals; the pluralist basis of Kerala's culture mosaic is reflected in its art forms. That is the cultural heritage of Kerala can be seen from its different art forms and customs. There is no other state in India which can match up with the creativity of arts of Kerala. While almost all the host communities are affected by tourism in one way or the other there is general fear, often not unfounded, that tourism can adversely affect the cultural fabric of the community. Kerala also is highly concerned about this aspect and in fact there are a large number of groups within Kerala that are highly concerned about the impact of tourism on culture and keeping a watchful eye on tourism development. Art forms, especially traditional art forms, are not meant to be commercial. They are collective expression of a society, its reflection on the day to day lives of the people and a social form of communication.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the present study is to analyse the cultural sustainability of Kerala.

METHODOLOGY

The study is in a descriptive manner and it is based on both the primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected from different cultural artists in Kerala through telephone interview and from DTPCs. Major sources of secondary data are Ministry of Tourism and its different websites, different articles and journals.

CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY IN KERALA

Every culture originates in a specific geographical setting and forms a close link with the natural environment that surrounds it. The culture and society are no more an exception to this phenomenon. The society and culture at Kerala is an expression of typical Indian culture, which is so beautifully mixed with its natural environment that has, became a source of attraction for the tourists. The culture of Kerala carries the aesthetics and excellence of the past, which even in the modern times has few parallels. It is this unique character of culture that is found preserved and nurtured in tourism industry of Kerala which has a worldwide recognition. These manifestations of culture can be seen in various fascinating and interesting modes like dance, food, textile, painting, monuments and palaces. This admires across the world that who can be counted as tourists. The table below gives a statistical account of the admirer's i.e., tourist of Kerala culture and society.

TABLE NO. 1: TRENDS IN FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC TOURIST ARRIVALS INTO KERALA (2001-2014)

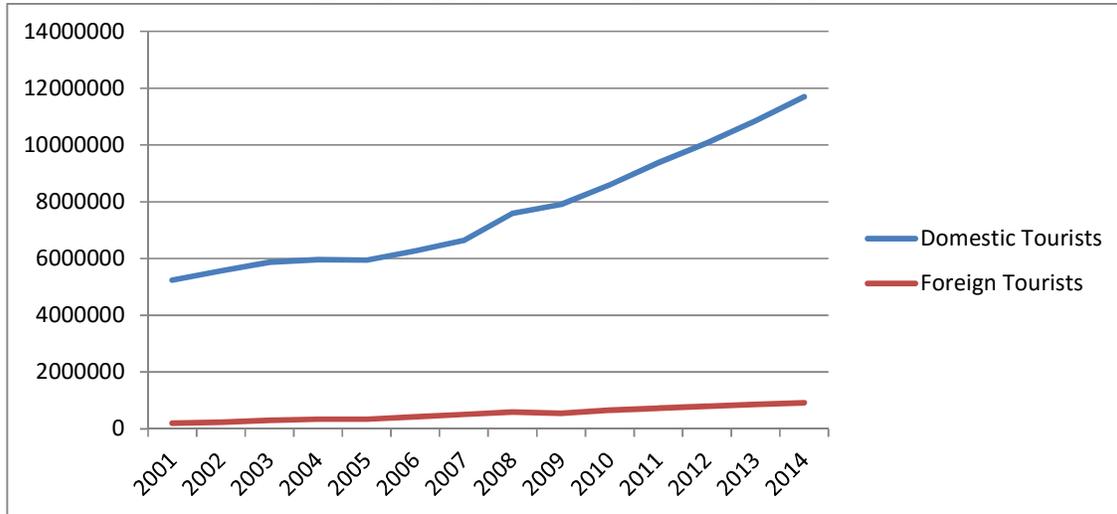
Year	Domestic Tourists	Percentage VAR	Foreign Tourists	Percentage VAR
2001	5,239,692	4.5	208,830	-0.5
2002	55,68,256	6.3	2,32,568	11.3
2003	58,71,228	5.4	2,94,621	26.7
2004	59,72,182	1.7	3,45,546	17.3
2005	59,46,423	-4.3	3,46,499	0.27
2006	62,71,724	5.47	4,28,534	23.7
2007	66,42,941	5.92	5,15,808	20.37
2008	75,91,250	14.28	5,98,929	16.11
2009	79,13,537	4.25	5,57,258	-6.96
2010	85,95,075	8.61	6,59,265	18.31
2011	93,81,455	9.15	7,32,985	11.18
2012	100,76,854	7.41	7,93,696	8.28
2013	108,57,815	7.75	8,58,143	8.12
2014	116,95,411	7.71	9,23,366	7.6

Source: Department of Tourism 2014 and previous reports. *Tourism Statistics* Government of Kerala

The table amply makes it clear that the socio-cultural products of Kerala have great appeal for the international and domestic tourists. Foreign tourist arrivals to Kerala during the year 2013 was 9, 23,366. It shows an increase of 7.6 % over the previous year's figure of 8, 58,143. Domestic Tourist arrival to Kerala during the year 2013 is 116, 95,411. It shows an increase of 7.71 % over the previous year's figure 108,57,815. In India Foreign Tourist Arrival during 2011 were 6.29 million with a growth rate of 8.9% as compared to the Foreign tourist arrival 5.78 million with a growth of 11.8% during the year 2010 over 2009. the growth rate of 11.18

in Foreign Tourist Arrival in Kerala for 2011 over 2010 is much better than UNWTO’s projected growth rate of 4% to 5% for the world during the same period and 7% to 9% for Asia and Pacific.

FIGURE NO. 1: TOURIST ARRIVAL TRENDS IN KERALA: 2001–2014



Source: Department of Tourism 2014 and previous reports. *Tourism Statistics*, Government of Kerala.

The consistent innovative campaign by Kerala Tourism has again consolidated Kerala’s position on the world tourism map with fantastic strides in all aspects of tourism. These increased amounts of tourists contribute much to the state’s income also. Foreign exchange earnings for the year 2011 are Rs.4221.99 Crores which recorded an increase of 11.18% over the previous year. Total revenue (including direct and indirect) from tourism during 2011 is Rs.19037 Crores, showing an increase of 9.47% over the last year’s figure. According to the latest statistics released by the state government, Kerala Tourism’s total revenue, both direct and indirect, touched the Rs. 21,125 crore marks in 2012 compared to Rs. 19,037 crore in 2011. In 2012, Kerala witnessed 7.94 lakh foreign tourist’s arrival in 2012 as compared to 7.33 lakh in 2011. Domestic arrivals have also gone up to 1.01 crore compared to 93.88 lakh in 2011. As a result, the foreign exchange earnings also went up from Rs. 4,221.99 crore in 2011 to Rs. 4,548 crore in 2012.

TABLE NO. 2: EARNINGS FROM TOURISM

Year	Foreign Exchange Earnings (Rs In Crores)	Percentage of Increase	Total Revenue Generated from Tourism (Direct& Indirect) Rs. In Crores	Percentage of Increase
2001	535.00	1.85	4500.00	9.58
2002	705.67	31.90	4931.00	20.42
2003	983.37	39.35	5938.00	12.83
2004	1266.77	28.82	6829.00	15.01
2005	1552.31	22.54	7738.00	13.31
2006	1988.40	28.09	9126.00	17.94
2007	2640.94	32.82	11433.00	25.28
2008	3066.52	16.11	13130.00	14.84
2009	2853.16	-6.96	13231.00	0.77
2010	3797.37	33.09	17348.00	31.12
2011	4221.99	11.18	19037.00	9.74
2012	4571.82	8.29	20430.00	7.32
2013	5560.77	21.63	22926.55	12.22
2014	6398.93	15.07	24885.44	12.11

Source: Department of Economics and Statistics 2014. *Statistics for Planning 2009*, Government of Kerala and Department of Tourism 2014 and previous reports, *Tourism Statistics*, Government of Kerala.

The outstanding financial performance of the state tourism is the result of the change in shift of Kerala’s promotional strategy. During their stay in the destinations tourist interact with local residents and the result of their relationship is changes in the host individuals and host community’s quality of life, value systems, labour divisions, family relationships, attitudes, behavioral patterns, ceremonies and creative expressions. The larger the culture and economic differences between tourists and local residents, the more obvious and more significant these changes are. Sometimes these changes may have gone in favour of host society and some time it may have gone against it. Tourism has capability to promote unfamiliar scenes of society and culture. Not it provides monetary benefits but also helps to preserve old customs and rituals that are on dying stage. All this sounds positive. Though some times, because of commercialization and overuse of customs for tourism and financial gains it brought negative picture of tourism. When locals started to mix the original forms with new ones to satisfy tourists, the old customs started to lose its originality.

Once again, tourism effect both ways as far as communication or language is concerned. One side it proves beneficial with the introduction of new forms of communication and introduction of new language forms. On the other hand, in urge to learn new we are forgetting our own accents or speaking language. However, these cross-cultured contacts caused by tourism are considered a function of at least three factors. The first is the type of the tourist. The different categories of tourist in the world are reflected in expected differences in their kinds of interaction with local people. Second is the context in which the contact occurs and language ability will help to determine the depth of communication that taken place. Finally, there is the role of cultural brokers, who are an intermediary occupational group such as interpreters and tour guides, who are the conduits through which much of the contact occurs. Their activities are thought to have a considerable effect on the manner and speed, with which new ideas and influences are transmitted. Many a traditional art form would have fast disappeared from the scene but for the patronage of tourists and tourism agencies. It is also encouraging to note that more young people are rediscovering their heritage and culture due to the effort of tourism. Annual events like Tourism Week Celebrations, Utsavam- Kerala Arts Festival, Naattukalalude Drishyavishkaram, Nishaganthi Dance and Music Festival, other festivals and regular programmers in tourist resorts and hotels also sustain many cultural forms. The arts forms showcased for UTSAVAM 2012-13 includes 65 different and variety art forms like Arjuna Nritham, Ayyappan Theeyattu, Balikkala, Bhairavikkolam, Badrakaliyattam, Charadupinnikkali, Chattupattu, Chavittukali, Cimmanakkali, Gaddika, Irulanrutham, Kakkarrisnadakam, Kanyarkali, Koothamooripattu, Kethrattam, Kooliyattam, Kummattikkali, Kurumba nrutham, Koodiyattam, Kuthirakali, Kuthiyottam, Malapulayattam, Malayenkettu, Padayani, Pakkanarattam etc. conducted in different and important tourist places in Kerala. Similarly, NATTUKALAKALUDE DRISHYAVISHKARAM conducted from 23rd December 2012 to 24th

February 2013 all over Kerala also includes 37 different art forms like Thottam pattu, Sastham pattu, Alamikkali, Pakkanarattam, Panapporattu, Mariyattam, Thudippattu, Kuthiyottam, Badrakaliyattam etc. The above list of art forms shows that, these art forms are rare and on the stage of extinction. Here the tourism department is making an opportunity to the outliving of the art forms as well as the artists. These programmers conducted in the name of tourists are enjoyed not only by the foreigners but also by the natives. Rahul from Calicut said that he watched the art form Tholppavakkothu for the first time in his life as a part of the NATTUKALAKALUDE DRISHYAVISHKARAM. The famous PADAYANI artist Saji Othara, working in a private firm, opined that he is following his father's hereditary by performing this art form. He was the chairman of folklore academy for a period of five years and winner of many awards like, ISRO award, Nehru Yoga award, Natrad fellowship etc. is continuing this performance only because of the tourism department; because there is no help or aid from the government for the existence of this particular art form. The same opinion is put forward by Arjuna nrutham artist Nadesan Kurinchi, Velakali artist Gopalakrishnan, Kurathiyattam performer A.K. Mani and Balukkala artist Gopi Palusseri.

Many traditional buildings, which were either neglected or discarded, are being rediscovered and to put alternate use to the growth of tourism and thanks to the interest foreigners are showing in these products. Handicrafts industry and antique markets are also active due to tourism. Artisans in large numbers stated reproducing copies of same artifacts mechanically and are losing their artistic talents. Another area, which traditionally well patronized in the state, was "ayurveda" the Indian system of medicine. Oil massages using ayurvedic herbs have become extremely popular among foreign tourists in Kerala today. Along with that, complaints of misuse of the name of ayurveda for nefarious activities have also come up in the state. The State government has recently introduced voluntary approval system for ayurveda centers to overcome this. Similarly, temples are places of worship in India. But the presences of large number of visitors in these places are only as a tourist attraction resulting in the commercialization of these places of worship.

Government, by understanding the changes taking place in the society as above, is trying to restrict the number to quality tourists by not focusing on mass tourism. Knowing fully the dangers of beach tourism alone, the official dome carefully crafted a mixture of beach tourism, natural medicine tourism (ayurveda and naturopathy), back waters and boating tourism, hill station and spice garden tourism, wild life and jungle tourism and to extent cultural tourism. Sensuality and sensual image building in most cases has been carefully muted. Their advertisements have rarely projected swim-wear clad models. Two distinct strategies are being deployed in Kerala to prevent the spillover effects of beach tourism. Increased regulation and strong signals of disapprovals by police officials were conveyed to tourists indulging in partial or full nudism on Kerala beaches. Secondly, many of the beach resorts were generally isolated and often not within the easy reach of the local population. The case of beaches with high tourist inflows, almost merging into local population areas were few and far in between. Beaches frequented by local population in large numbers were carefully kept out of the hyped foreign tourist circuits.

In Kerala, since the tourist ratio is low, the police force is often composed of police officials who come from non-tourist interiors of Kerala. Before they get ensconced in the ways of the beach tourism and its contributory effects of drugs and related – obnoxiousness, they are often transferred to hinterland areas. This salutary mingling of police personnel exposed to rampant coastal tourism and non-tourism implanted police constabulary from hinterland, results in keeping the force relatively clean from the evils of tourism. Kerala's multi-pronged tourism strategy also makes sure that diverse types of tourists visit the state. While some visit it for natural health and rejuvenation purposes, other visit it for back water tourism and still others take the route of wild life jungle and adventure tourism. There are still others who would like to sample a little of everything that Kerala has to offer including it an ancient cultural ethos and religious festivals and unique sea food based spicy cuisine. The inflow into Kerala is controlled by the imagery of Kerala projected to tourists. However, once the tourists enter the state, all-out efforts are made to enchant those using different types of tourism experiences. In Kerala, the tourism enterprises are still not a behemoth and limited to playing marginal role in a society still dominated by social groups, public opinion, stronger government and powerful regulatory authorities.

Since Kerala's religio-cultural roots are rather well entrenched and tourist arrivals are a substantially smaller fraction of its overall population, the interaction of locals with the tourists are friendly, yet largely without compromising their native cultural values. Another reason for this perfunctory friendliness in Kerala could be the fact that although statistically the average foreign tourist stays for around 7-14 days in Kerala. The tourists' sojourn in Kerala is often characterized by movements to different parts of Kerala to enjoy different aspects of Kerala tourism experience. This doesn't provide enough time for deeper familiarity and interactions with the tourism enterprise staff of a single facility. Besides, the tourism related employees in Kerala often have only rudimentary knowledge of English and western etiquette. Although they exhibit friendliness, in most cases it remains more superficial and short-lived. By educating the tourists to respect the local customs and culture and by enforcing strict regulations government hopes to minimize the negative impact of tourism on the host communities. Duration of their stay, the ratio of tourists to local population and strict regulatory presence make it difficult for foreign tourists to disseminate their cultural influences in Kerala, thus making their tourism ventures more culturally sustainable. The tourism strategy in Kerala has been multi-pronged and promotion of tourism is based largely on non-sensual imagery. The tagline 'God's own Country' has been used to paint and convey a picture of unparalleled natural beauty, harmonious environment –friendliness and moral rectitude. The low tourist ratio in Kerala is a result of carefully calibrated tourism philosophy or overall tourism marketing future is not very clear, but from the angle of culturally sustainable tourism, it is undoubtedly a welcome development. Government is taking all care for the sustainable development of the region by learning from the mistakes of older destinations in the world.

CONCLUSION

Tourism development directly and indirectly helps in protection or conservation of natural and cultural heritage. Tourism can be promoted anywhere and everywhere, even in urban where otherwise no alternative economic activity is even distantly possible (beaches, snow peaks, deserts etc.). Tourism can be promoted, hand in hand with other ongoing economic activities; it rather energizes other sectors of the economy. Kerala feels that it will continue to be a tourism driven economy due to the focused and concerted efforts of the government with the private sector participation and involvement of local population in the development process. Thus the Kerala model of tourism seems to be more culturally sustainable and less in conflict with the long term cultural survival of their native population.

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