

Back Water Tourism in Kerala: Challenges and Opportunities

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Introduction

The backwaters of Kerala are what have given it the sobriquet "God's Own Country". It became of the 50 must see places in the world (National Geographic Travel).Kerala's houseboats/kettuvalloms, lakes and backwaters are once again posing to be the ultimate brand ambassadors of the state's tourism industry by generating huge foreign exchange and employment. To appreciate a cruising in these backwaters cannot be missed, because it leaves the feeling rejuvenated entirely. The banks of these backwaters in Kerala are the spots of picnic more the enchanters. The study is to envisages about Back water Tourism in Kerala Challenges and Opportunities with focus on Allapuzha Backwaters and also to find the amount of waste(sewage discharge, feed wastes and plastic materials) which are generated from tourism houseboats which is aggravating the pollution of backwaters.

Global Tourism Industry

World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) is the forum for business leaders in the travel and tourism industry. It addresses challenges and opportunities that affect all sectors of the industry globally. It works to raise awareness of travel and tourism as one of the world's largest industries, employing approximately 231 million people and generating over 10.4 per cent of world GDP. It is firmly committed to realizing Indian tourism industry's potential for growth and ensuring maximum and sustainable benefits for everyone involved. According to the WTTC, tourism accounted for 10.6 per cent of global GDP, 12.0 per cent of the total world exports and 8.3 per cent of global employment in the year 2005. For 2006, it forecasted that travel and tourism would generate 234 million direct and indirect jobs worldwide, accounting for 8.7 per cent of global employment, and contribute up to 10.3 per cent of global GDP .The 76.1 million Travel &Tourism Industry jobs account for 2.7% of total employment in 2007 and are forecast to total 86.6 million or 2.8% of the total by 2017. It is estimated world travelers will spend over US\$ 7,063.3 billion as per estimates of WTTC for year 2007.According to the same estimate, the global travel and tourism activity is expected to increase by 4.7 per cent between 2007 and 2016

Indian Tourism Industry

It is estimated that India generates only US\$ 61.0 billion for year 2007 (WTTC). Research report on "Indian Tourism Industry Forecast (2007-2011)" by (RNCOS) has revealed that the tourism industry in India is booming. The number of tourists arriving in India grew at a CAGR of 13.92% during the period 2004-2006. According to the figures released on 10th July 2007(RNCOS), the number of tourists arriving in India was 1.82 Million in the year 2005 and 2.82 Million in 2006. The foreign exchange earned during the first half of 2005 and 2006 was \$2,661 Million and \$3,307.04 Million respectively. In January 2007, nearly 5,32,00 tourists arrived which is the highest number so far. During the first six months of 2007, over two million foreign tourists arrived generating over \$3,589,00 Million for the country. By May 2007, the number of tourist inflow had reduced to around 267,000. The tourist inflow had increased again in June 2007 to more than 310,000. These impressive figures reveal an upbeat structure of the industry and also witness an influx of 10 Million international visitors by 2010, compared to just 5.42 Million tourists in 2007, which will represent a CAGR of 22.65%. The three distinct segments of travel: Indians going abroad or Outbound tourism, Domestic tourism or Indians traveling in India and tourists coming to India or Inbound tourism.

India tourism industries will remain one of the fastest growing through the next 10-15 years and expects Indian tourism to generate \$89.9 Billion by the year 2014. (World Travel and Tourism Council). The reasons for this stupendous growth, as per the report are increased traveler confidence, strong economic growth and an expected GDP of above 8% for the coming years. The report has also cited that the growth in number of arrival of tourists in India has ensured a bright year ahead for the tourism industry. The steady inflow of foreign tourists witnessed in the last two decades is due to number of factors. The vivid Indian culture is imperative in attracting foreign tourists from around the globe to India. The splendid beauty of the virgin countryside and the matchless monuments lures the leisure tourists to the holy land. Moreover, the promotion campaigns like Incredible India has made India 'Global' and helped boosting the tourism industry of the country. There has been a remarkable growth, in the recent years, in foreign tourist arrivals to India due to the various efforts made by the Ministry, including promoting India through the 'Incredible

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India' campaign in overseas markets. Incredible India is a multi-pronged promotional campaign launched by the Ministry in order to position the country as a preferred tourist destination for the travelers the world over. As a result of all such efforts, India's share in international tourist arrivals, which was 0.34 per cent in 2002, has increased to 0.49 per cent during 2005. The foreign tourist arrivals has increased by about 65 per cent from a level of 2.38 million in 2002 to 3.92 million in 2005. In the year 2006, it has risen to 4.43 million, registering an impressive increase of around 13 per cent. Similarly, the foreign exchange earnings from tourism have also shown a phenomenal growth from US\$ 5730.86 million in 2005 to US\$ 6569.34 million in 2006, achieving an increase of 14.6 per cent. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), in the year 2005, about 808 million tourists traveled internationally (registered a growth of 5.6 per cent over 2004) and the tourism receipts have been about US\$ 682 billion.

Kerala Tourism Industry

Foreign Tourist arrival to Kerala during the year 2006 is 4,28,534 . Domestic Tourist arrival to Kerala during the year 2006 is 62,71,724 . Foreign exchange earnings for the year 2006 is 1988.40 Crores. Total Revenue from Tourism during 2006 is Rs 9126 Crores (www.keralatourism.org).Kerala has been Best Performing State Award Kerala for the year 1998-99, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 in the tourism sector. Kerala tourism has also won the best performing state award instituted by the Outlook Traveller for the year 2000-2001. There has been a constant increase in the state plan allocation from Rs. 6.7 crores in 1994-95 to Rs.40.00 crores in 2001-2002. The central allocation has also gone up from 2.1 crores in 1995-96 to Rs. 14 crores 2001-2002. The other claims received by the kerala tourism include one of the 100 great trips for the 21st century, (Travel and Leisure). One of the ten hotspots for the millennium (Emirates Inflight Magazine). One of the best breakfast in the world (Travel and Leisure). One of the ten love nests in India (Cosmopolitan) one of the six destinations of the millennium, (Khaleej Times) Tourism Vision 2025 is to serve as a guiding force to provide a clear vision and direction for optimizing tourism potential of the state in sustainable manner.

Kerala Backwaters & Destinations

The backwaters in Kerala consist of Allapuzha, Kottayam, Trivandrum, Kollam, Kuttanad, Kozhikode, Kazaragod, Cochin and Kumarakum backwaters. A network of lakes, rivers and canals fringe the coast of Kerala. These backwaters, while a great inland thoroughfare on water, offer an alternative lifestyle. The criss-crossed, palm-fringed lakes traversed with Chinese fishing nets are very popular cruises, especially between Kollam and Allappuzha. The backwaters have become important attractions though they are threatened by population growth and industrial development. Of the 29 major lakes on the backwaters, seven drain into the sea. Stretched over a total expanse of 1500 kms, the backwaters have a network of 44 rivers, lagoons and lakes from north to south. Allapuzha backwaters is prominent on the tourist trail as it is one of the major centers for backwater boat trips. With Arabian sea on the west, Alappuzha has a large network of lakes, lagoons and several freshwater rivers intersections. Alappuzha has grown in importance as a backwater tourist center, attracting several thousands of foreign tourists every year who come here to enjoy the serene marine beauty of the state. Boat races, houseboat holidays, beaches, marine products and coir industry are some of the major attractions offered by Alappuzha. The inflow of tourist in backwaters of kerala, has generated social, cultural, economical and environmental problems.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out the effect of back water tourism on the environment.
2. To find out the use of kettuvallom by tourists arriving at backwaters of kerala.

Hypotheses of the study are:

1. H0: The effect of backwater tourism with respect to environment is nil.
2. H0: The kettuvallom are not the integral part of back water tourism in kerala

Methodology

The study is based on the primary data, derived through sample survey using pre-tested structured instrument (questionnaire).The questionnaires are designed in such a way that can elicit information on challenges and opportunities of back water tourism in kerala . The questions were pertaining to influence of kettuvalloms in back water tourism, social and ecnomocal impact of backwater tourism etc. The sample designs were based on random sampling. The study was done in Nedumudy Grama Panchayat of

Allapuzha District (Kerala). Nedumudy in Allapuzha District is the most sought after destination of backwater tourism in Kerala. The data was collected from the kettuvallom owners, tourists and Local people numbering 120 selected at random. For testing the hypotheses, chi-square tests were to be administered at 5% level of significance with the aid of SPSS.

The period of study was from December 2007 to March 2008 which is considered to be ‘season’ time at Nedumudy.

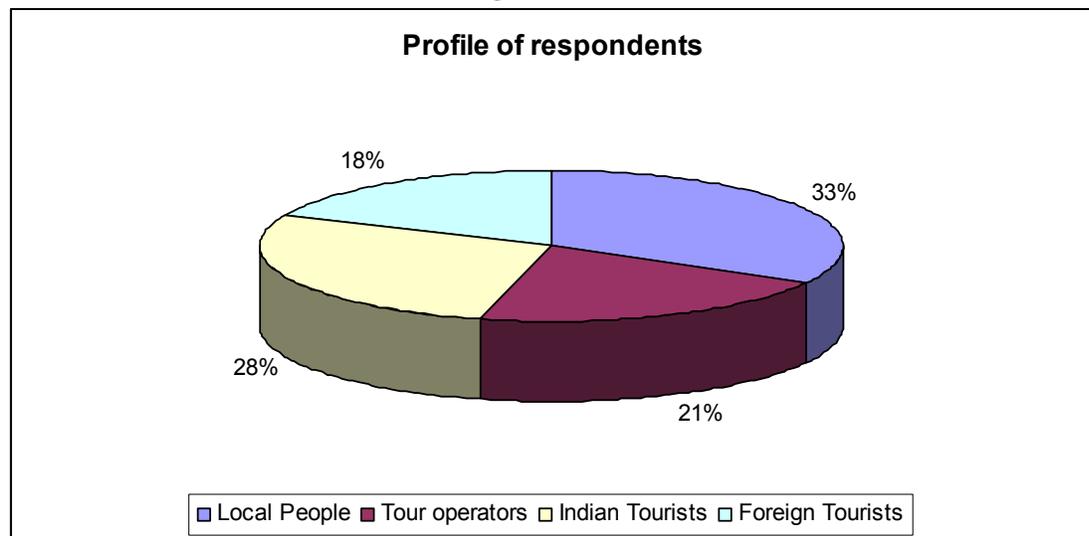
Findings of the study

Table No.1 Profile of respondents

Category	Number	Percentage
Local People	43	33.1
Tour operators	27	20.8
Indian Tourists	36	27.7
Foreign Tourists	24	18.5
Total	130	100.0

Data was collected from 130 persons by visiting Kuttanadu area. The respondents include local people, Tour operators and service providers, Indian and foreign tourists.

Diagram No1.



2. Effect of back water tourism on environment

Table No. II

Observed Frequencies				
Respondents	Extent of effect on environment			Total
	Very much affected	Slightly affected	Not affected	
Local People	21	17	5	43
Tour operators	7	8	12	27
Indian Tourists	12	18	6	36
Foreign Tourists	11	6	7	24
Total	51	49	30	130

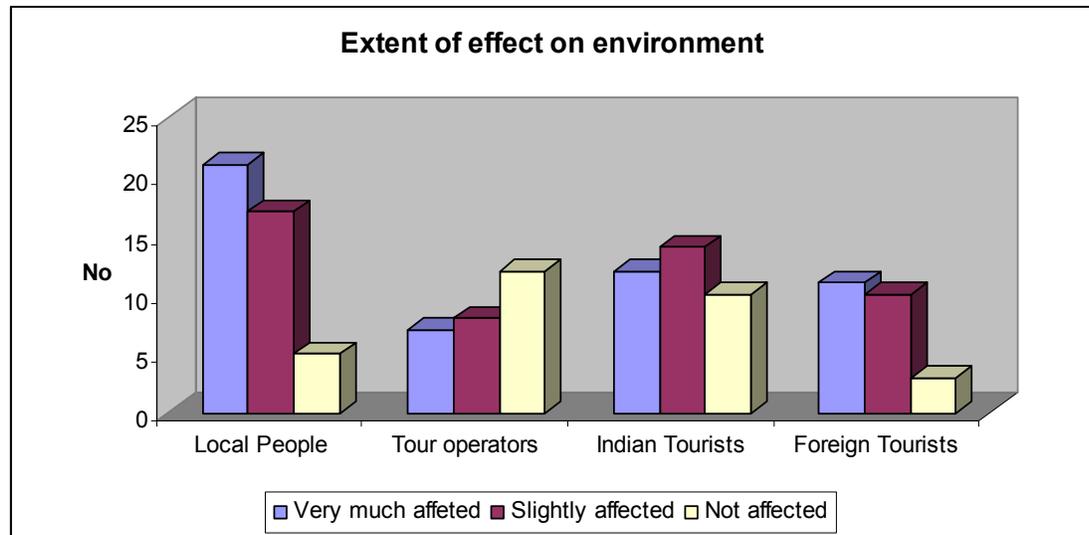
Results	
Critical Value	12.59157742

Chi-Square Test Statistic	14.60362151
p-Value	0.023574131
Reject the null hypothesis	

Among the 130 respondents, 51(39.2%) were of the opinion that environment is very much affected by back water tourism. 49 (37.7%) were of the opinion that environment is slightly affected and 30 (23.1%) opined that environment is not at all affected. This implies that the effect of environment as felt by the different category of people can not be ignored.

The following diagram shows distribution of respondents on the basis of their profile and opinion about the effect of backwater tourism on environment. Opinion about the effect of backwater tourism on environment is related to profile of respondents. Number of local people and foreign people who believe that there is no effect on environment is very small. But among the tour operators it is high. This may be because; the local people are actually facing the problems such as waste, plastic deposit, increase in price of food items due to demand from the part of rich customers, decrease in the cultural and moral values as perceived by them, etc. The foreign tourists are aware of its impact and the tour operators may not be willing to say the negative effect of their own bread earning job. Instead the tour operators are saying much about the foreign money, tourism development, employment opportunities etc. The domestic tourists especially from other states do not seem to have much concern about any of these arguments. They feel that they pay for what they enjoy and the positive impact are their rights for the price they pay and the negative impacts are inevitable. There fore there is an urgent need for awareness generation about the environment preservation.

Diagram No.II



The respondents were asked about the importance of Kettuvallom in back water tourism. The following table gives the opinion about this query.

Among the 130 respondents, 74 (56.9%) were of the pinion that Kettuvallum is very much important in back water tourism. 37 (28.4%) were of the opinion that Kettuvallum is important in back water tourism and 19(14.7%) opined that Kettuvallum is not at all important in back water tourism. This implies that the Kettuvallum is an integral part of back water tourism.

3.Importance of Kettuvallom in back water tourism

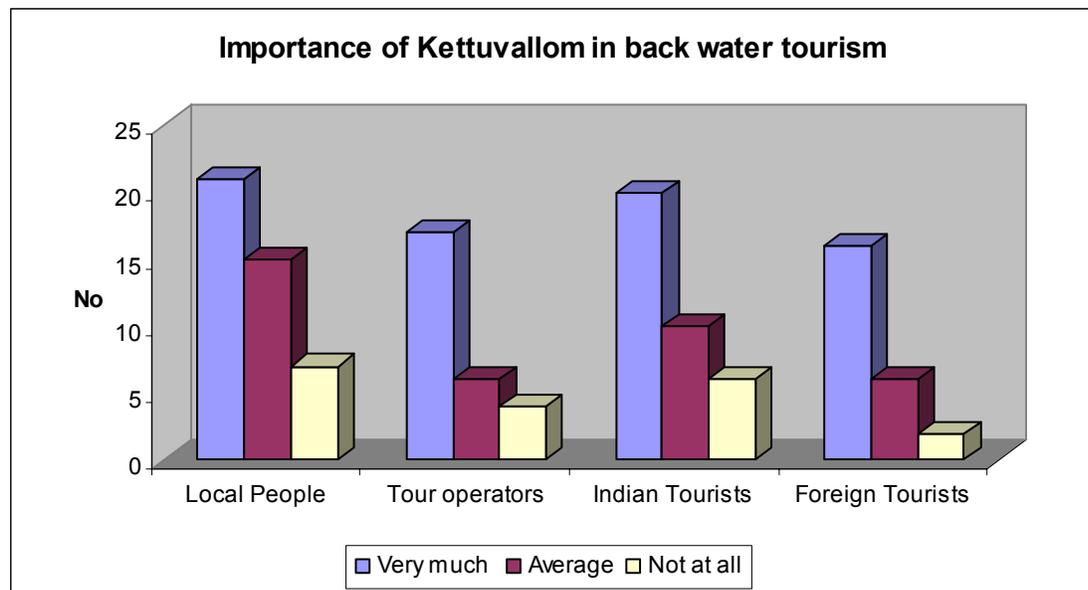
Table No. III

Observed Frequencies				
	Importance of Kettuvallom in back water tourism			
Respondents	Very much	Average	Not at all	Total
Local People	21	15	7	43
Tour operators	17	6	4	27
Indian Tourists	20	10	6	36
Foreign Tourists	16	6	2	24
Total	74	37	19	130

Results	
Critical Value	12.59157742
Chi-Square Test Statistic	3.012265632
p-Value	0.807305797
Do not reject the null hypothesis	

The following diagram shows distribution of respondents on the basis of their profile and opinion about the importance of Kettuvallom in back water tourism. Opinion about the importance of Kettuvallom in back water tourism is not related to profile of respondents. Majority of respondents in all the category say that Kettuvallom is an integral part of back water tourism.

Diagram No. III



Conclusion

The study finds ample evidence to conclude there is an adverse effect on environment and house boats (Kettuvallom) are integral part of backwater tourism .

In summary the conclusions found from the study are

- There is an adverse effect on environment by backwater tourism . So (Null Hypothesis H0 is rejected).
- House boat (Kettuvallom) is an integral part of backwater tourism . So (Null Hypothesis H0 is rejected).

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