



ECOTOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA: SOME EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Dr. Manoj P K* Vidya Viswanath**

**Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Economics, Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) Kochi, Kerala, India.*

***Ph.D Scholar (UGC-JRF) (M.G University) Department of Applied Economics (M.G University Centre) Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) Kochi, Kerala, India.*

Abstract

Worldwide governments have recognized tourism as a sector with immense potential for economic development and employment generation. Besides, various international agencies like World Tourism Organization (WTO) have pointed out the vast developmental potential of tourism, particularly with reference to the developing nations like India. It has been estimated that economies like India and China would emerge as the superpowers in world tourism by the years 2020. Of late, Asia Pacific region is fast growing in tourism though the region as a whole has been rather lagging behind the world. Similarly, India has also been late in encouraging tourism as a means of economic development, but the scenario has changed since the early 2000s. Accordingly, in the year 2006 the foreign tourists arrivals in India (4.45 million) have been almost double that of 1996 (2.29 million), while the earnings have increased almost four times during the above period, from Rs. 10,046 Crore to Rs. 39,025 Crore. Further, in line with the above increasing trend these figures have again improved in 2007 to 5.08 million (14.3 percent increase) and Rs.44,360 Crore (13.7 percent increase). Within the Indian union too, though Kerala in particular, the ‘God’s own Country’, has got an enviable resource-base for tourism development, its current status among the various Indian states is not very encouraging and is lagging behind many other states with much lesser tourism potential.

In spite of the wide recognition of the vast developmental potential of tourism and hence the appreciable growth in tourism initiatives the world over, however, there are growing apprehensions regarding the sustainability of tourism as a development paradigm. This in turn is primarily because of the adverse impacts of tourism on the environment and as such it is growingly believed that environment friendly tourism (ecotourism, in short) alone can be sustainable for development in the long run.

In the above context, this paper seeks to (i) make a cursory review of the current status of global tourism and its broad trends and patterns, with special reference to the growingly significant concept of ecotourism, (ii) make an overall study of Indian tourism and its problems and prospects, (iii) make a detailed analysis of Kerala tourism, its salient features, strengths and weaknesses, and lastly (iv) suggest eco-friendly strategies for sustainable tourism development in Kerala. The paper considers, inter alia, relevant global and Indian experiences, ever-growing environmental issues relating to tourism, and above all the peculiar socio-economic, geographic and such other characteristic features peculiar to Kerala tourism.

Key Terms: *Tourism Vision 2020, Ecotourism, Sustainability.*

GENESIS

World over, particularly among the developing nations, tourism is fast picking up as a tool for economic development and employment generation. However, the question as to the long-term sustainability of tourism is increasingly becoming a challenge for all concerned, because of the adverse effects of tourism on the environment. As such there is a growing significance for environment-friendly tourism (ecotourism) initiatives for long-term sustainability. The case of tourism in the Asia-Pacific region in general and India in particular may be taken as a classic example in this regard. Notwithstanding the appreciable performance of Indian tourism over the last few years, its relative performance vis-à-vis other nations of the world is not so encouraging. Analogously, though Kerala tourism has got an enviable potential for growth its relative position among the Indian states is quite small, in spite of appreciable growth over the last few years. In this regard, it may be stated that meticulously planned, carefully designed and clearly articulated strategies are essential to maintain and further improve the performance of tourism sector in the days to come. These strategies for tourism development in turn need to be formulated based on sound principles of ecotourism, for ensuring their long term sustainability.

ANALYTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The potential of tourism for economic development is quite promising for any developing nation and the position of India is no exception in this regard. Though India has been late in recognizing the developmental potential of tourism, of late there is appreciable growth in tourism development and hence tourism earnings. But its position nowhere in comparison with the rest of the world. Analogously, the specific case of Kerala – the “God’s own Country” – within Indian union is characterized by

an enviably high potential for tourism development, though its relative share among the different states is quite low. While there is a general pattern of fast growing tourism initiatives the world over, it may be stated that the adverse impacts of tourism are dangerously on the rise in many parts of the world. These unfavorable influences include, inter alia, degradation of the environment, fast depletion of natural resources, adverse effect on bio-diversity and ecological balance, and the like. Accordingly, there is an enhanced significance for 'nature friendly' tourism (ecotourism). For a developing nation like India, which in general is less conscious about environment, and also a late entrant into the field of developmental tourism, the utmost need for promotion of ecotourism for sustainable economic development need not be over emphasized. This situation is more acute in respect of Kerala – a state in India with one of the best physical infrastructure for tourism development, though grossly underutilized at present.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

(i) To make a cursory review of the current status of global tourism and its broad trends and patterns, with special reference to the growingly significant concept of ecotourism, (ii) To make an overall study of Indian tourism and its problems and prospects, (iii) To make a detailed analysis of Kerala tourism, its salient features, strengths and weaknesses (and also making an empirical study of the factors adversely affecting ecotourism at Kumbalangi in central Kerala) and (iv) To suggest eco-friendly strategies for sustainable tourism development in Kerala.

Organization of the Paper

Broadly in line with the objectives set for the paper as mentioned above, the remainder of the paper is divided into four major parts. Part – I gives a review of the global scenario in respect of tourism and its broad trends and patterns, Part – II discusses the case of Indian tourism in detail, its problems and prospects and Part – III deals with the case of Kerala tourism in detail, its salient features, strengths and weaknesses. Lastly, Part – IV offers eco-friendly strategies for sustainable tourism development in Kerala and discusses the findings of an empirical study done in Kerala (Kumbalangi) and is followed by the author's concluding remarks.

PART – I, A REVIEW OF GLOBAL TOURISM SCENARIO: GROWING SIGNIFICANCE OF ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

1.1. Global Tourism: General Trends:

Tourism is inherently a highly social business that has carved a niche for itself internationally. This worldwide phenomenon is increasingly being recognized as an effective tool for economic development of nations by generating employment, earning revenue and foreign exchange, and acting as a means for upward social mobility through interaction with cultures from elsewhere in the world. The social nature of this business is reflected in the presence of large number of diverse stakeholders in the host-guest relations forming part of tourism, and also in the behaviour of individual tourists, which is often taking place publicly. The impact of tourism on the diverse facets of an individual's life, a society's customs and practices, and a government's policies and priorities have got far reaching implications. Because of the above characteristic of tourism, socio-economic, environmental and ecological interests of individuals, communities and governments are greatly influenced by the dynamics of tourism. Exhibit I depicts the general trends in global tourism.

- ❑ **Distribution:** Tourism is a significant sector in almost half of the low-income countries, and in virtually all the lower middle-income countries.
- ❑ **Destinations:** The top 15 tourism destinations in the developing world (in terms of absolute numbers of arrivals or receipts) tend to be populous, low-middle income and upper-middle income countries. 5 out of these 15 destinations have a population of over 10 million living below a Dollar a day.
- ❑ **Employment:** World-wide forecasts predict a growth in tourism development of over 100 million jobs by 2007. Global tourism already accounts for over 250 million jobs.
- ❑ **Growth:** Tourism contributes to an aggregate economic growth of over 50 percent between 1990 and 1997.
- ❑ **Pro-Poor Tourism:** In most countries with high levels of poverty, tourism is a significant contributing factor, providing over 2 percent of GDP or 5 percent of exports). Some 12 countries account for 80 percent of the world's poor (living on less than a Dollar a day). In 11 of these countries, each with over 10 million poor people, tourism is significant addition to the economy and this contribution is growing.

Exhibit I. Global trends in Tourism.

[Source: UNEP 2002, WTTC 1998, Ashley et al. 2001, Roe et al. 1997, cited in Sinha 2006.]

It has been observed that, internationally there has been growing attention on environmental issues of tourism as governments started using tourism for developmental needs. This trend has been quite evident from the mid-1980s. The implications of tourism on the society at large, from a social and ecological perspective is often studied based on the conceptual framework

propounded by Brundtland (1987) [1] viz. Ecologically Sustainable Development Framework. World over, this framework has been used for managing the key issues related to the tourism development. As already noted, world over ecologically sustainable tourism (or, 'ecotourism' in short) is fast gaining momentum. According to Lane (1991) [4], ecologically sustainable tourism should strive for, "providing satisfying jobs without dominating the local community. It must not abuse the natural environment, and should be architecturally respectable. The benefits of tourism should be diffused through many communities, and not concentrated on a narrow coastal strip or scenic valley". Globally, it has been recognized that the heart of eco-tourism lies in the preservation of the nature and the environment, i.e. a tourism that seeks to maintain a harmonious co-existence with the nature. Table I gives an account of the international tourism policies, which point to the growing focus on environmental issues which of late is at the stage of international regulation and agreement in respect of tourism policies.

Phase	Characteristics
1945 - 1955	The dismantling and streamlining of police, customs, currency, and health regulations following the Second World War
1955 - 1970	Greater involvement in tourism marketing in order to increase tourism earning potential.
1970 - 1985	Government involvement in supply of tourism infrastructure and in the use of tourism as a tool for regional development.
1985 - present	Continued use of tourism as a tool for regional development, increased focus on environmental issues, reduced direct government involvement in the supply of tourism infrastructure, greater emphasis on development of public-private partnerships and industry self-regulation.
Late 1990s (onwards)	In addition to the characteristics for the period from 1985 to the present, there is now an emerging stage of international tourism policy marked by international regulation and agreement with respect to matters such as environment, trade in goods and services, investment and movement of people.

Table I: International Tourism Policies, 1945 – Present.

[Source: OECD (1974), Hall (1994, 2000) and Hall and Jenkins (1995), cited by Hall, C.M in Pender and Sharpley (Ed.), *The Management of Tourism*, Sage, New Delhi, 2005.]

From an analysis of global scenario in respect of tourism, it is apparent that there is almost universal acceptance by governments around the world, regardless of ideology, that tourism is a good thing, with most tourism policies being designed to expand tourism industry (Hall, C. M., 2005). Thus, apart from the immense potential of tourism to contribute positively to socio-economic, political and cultural environment of a nation, tourism is increasingly being recognized as an effective means of economic development, particularly by the developing nations of the world. This policy shift by the governments is more prominent among the countries in the Asia-Pacific region including India, because this region has been lagging behind the world in tourism development. As is evident from Exhibit II, there are excellent growth prospects for tourism in the Asia-Pacific region, wherein tourism is growing at a fast pace of late. However, the growing challenges posed by tourism on the environment is as important as its ever-increasing growth prospects.

- ❑ **General Statistics:** Current growth rates in relative terms tend to be lower than world average. With a very large population, the scenario in absolute terms is different however. Domestic and regional tourism are significant and growing in importance. Both mass and alternative tourism have grown in past & despite economic downturns and currency fluctuations, continue to grow.

South East Asia:

- ❑ **Economic contribution:** Some 21 million people are employed in tourism, its economic impact is expected to grow by 80 percent in the next decade.
- ❑ **Coasts and Seas:** In coastal and marine areas, tourism pressures (along with increasing urbanization, industrialization etc.) have contributed to degradation of coastal areas, reduced water quality and increased pressures on marine resources. Besides, tourism pressures, industrialization and urbanization – are resulting in critical depletion of coastal resources.
- ❑ **Coral Reefs:** More than half the world's coral reefs are located in the Pacific Island countries, and large areas are already degraded. Tourism and recreation activities are one factor that leads to this degradation. (eg. unsafe diving activities, tourism development.)
- ❑ **'Ethical Tourism':** is a growing sector. Tourists and tour companies are staying away from countries like Burma (Myanmar) where torture, human rights abuses, forced labour on tourism projects, and mass disruption for local communities from tourism development occur.

- ❑ **Waste:** Litter and discarded waste in popular sites like Himalayas (Mount Everest) has been a major problem for a number of years. Parts of the Himalayas recently underwent a clean-up campaign which has been a major success for the area.

Exhibit II. Regional Trends in Tourism (Asia-Pacific Region)

[Source: UNEP 2002, WTTC 1998, Ashley et al. 2001, Roe et al. 1997 cited in Sinha 2006.]

The magnitude of tourism industry the world over is evident from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) statistics. Accordingly,

- In the year 2002, travel, tourism and related activities contributed approximately 10 per cent of the world's GDP. This will reach 10.6% by the year 2012.
- The tourism industry is estimated to help generate 1 in every 12.8 jobs, 7.8 percent of total employment. This will rise to 8.6 percent by 2012.

In view of the foregoing discussions, it is worth pointing out here that India is in an excellent position to exploit the opportunities in tourism for its development, as most of the leading tourism destinations in the world have their infrastructure (economic in general, and tourism in particular) that is much lower than that of India. Within India too, the case of Kerala is much more superior than most other states, though the state has been quite late in tapping its vast and diverse tourism potential.

1.2. Ecotourism: Concept and Main Features

The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as “responsible travel that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of the local people.” A tourism programme that is nature based, ecologically sustainable, environmentally educative, locally beneficial and generates tourist satisfaction can be called ecotourism. Eco-tourism seeks to achieve the following broad goals: (i) To improve the material and non-material well being of communities, (ii) To protect biological diversity and maintain ecological systems, and (iii) To ensure the cultural integrity and social cohesion of communities. The key characteristics of ecologically viable tourism are as follows: (i) It has social equity and community involvement, (ii) Tourism, which maintains the full range of recreational, educational and cultural opportunities within and across generations, (iii) It is based on activities or designs that reflect the character of a region, (iv) It is integrated into local, regional and national plans. The main features of ecotourism are:

- (1) Ecotourism seeks to make the visitor aware of the protective, productive and regulatory functions of the forests.
- (2) Its principal aim is benefiting from nature, landscape or specific species (eg. watching lions, elephants, whales etc.)
- (3) It involves low visitor impact and should contribute to the well-being of local population.
- (4) It involves a purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing the economic opportunities that make conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people.
- (5) It is a very powerful means to preserve and develop the biodiversity.
- (6) Ecotourism involves sharing of the responsibility by both travelers and service providers.
- (7) It underlines the sustainability of tourism, ie. The needs of today's visitors should not be met at the expense of future generations.
- (8) It may involve travel to any area of nature for admiring and enjoying the bio-diversity, natural landscapes and cultural and social heritage of the area.

1.3. Adverse Impacts of Tourism on the Environment: Vital Need for Ecotourism

- **Pressure on Natural Resources:** Tourism adversely affects land and landscape, marine resources, atmosphere, fresh water, etc. and also pressure on other local resources (like, energy, food, other raw materials etc.).
- **Harm to wildlife and habitats, with associated loss of biodiversity:** This mainly arises on (i) biological resources – in the form of disruption of wildlife habitats, clearance of vegetation for tourism development, increased pressure on endangered species etc., (ii) ecologically fragile areas, like, rain forests, wetlands, mangroves, coral reefs etc.
- **Pollution and wastes:** These cause contamination of land, freshwater, marine waters and coastal areas, air etc. and also causes noise pollution.
- **Social and cultural pressures for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity:** These include, (i) social and cultural impacts – that is, disturbance to the local way of life and of social structures, and (ii) adverse impacts on livelihoods – lack of benefit sharing with those who bear the tourism related costs.
- **Environmental Threats to Tourism:** These include, inter alia, (i) global warming, (ii) loss of bio-diversity, water pollution, and local air pollution.

PART – II, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF INDIAN TOURISM: AN ANALYSIS FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1. Tourism in India: Location Advantages and other Favourable Features.

As already noted, tourism is fast emerging as a sector which has got immense potential for bringing in rapid economic development of nations, particularly in developing nations like India. India has certain unique features that make it specially suited for taking maximum advantage out of tourism promotion. It is well-known that India is the seventh largest, second most populous, tenth industrialized and the sixth nation to have gone into outer space in the world. However, India's uniqueness in respect of attracting the world as one of the most sought after tourism destinations, lies primarily in her very rich cultural heritage, presence of so many number of historical places including world wonders like the Taj Mahal, very vast coastal areas and hillocks that are exceedingly serene. Because of these reasons, from time immemorial India has been a land of bounty and prosperity, a nation with vibrant colours with people who are joyous and tolerant. Further, geographically also there are certain peculiarities that are favourable to India which make this country stand out distinctly from the rest of the world. India and its five neighbouring countries (viz. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) together form a self contained mass of land, fit to be called as a major sub-continent within the continent of Asia. In fact, physical unity to this sub-continent is provided by the numerous ranges and mountains in the North and mighty water bodies in the south. Further, the mountain ranges comprising of Kirthar, Sulaiman, Hindukush, Karakoram and Himalayas cut-off the sub-continent from the remaining parts of Asia. Besides, the peninsular region of this sub-continent is surrounded by water bodies like the Arabian sea in the west, Indian ocean in the south and the Bay of Bengal in the east. Here, it is worthwhile to point out that the third largest ocean in the world came to be known as Indian ocean because the sub-continent of India is located at the head of this ocean.

India's extensive mass of land covers an area of 32,80,483 sq. km and is the seventh largest country in the world after Russia, China, Canada, USA, Brazil and Australia. India is favourably situated in the world's highways of trade and commerce. The oceanic routes serving South East Asia and Australia pass through the Indian Ocean. India is connected with Europe, North America and South America through Suez Canal and the Cape of Good Hope. In short, India has got a geographical location, natural resources as well as historical and cultural background which are quite conducive for development of tourism.

2.2. Huge Potential, not Properly Tapped; but Appreciable Growth since FY 2003.

India has got excellent potential for being developed as one of the best tourism destinations of the entire world. However, statistics relating to the previous years reveal that by and large this potential is underutilized. For instance, in respect of foreign tourist arrivals, the growth trend has been rather poor till FY 2002, as evidenced by low single digit or even negative growth rates, in spite of a generally growing pattern of the absolute figures. But, since FY 2003 there has been reasonably consistent double digit growth rate over the years, till FY 2006. Table I is self-explanatory in this regard.

Table I: Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India, 1996-2008.

Year	Foreign Tourist Arrivals (in million)	Percentage Change over the previous year
1996	02.29	08.00
1997	02.37	03.50
1998	02.36	(-00.40)
1999	02.48	05.10
2000	02.65	06.90
2001	02.54	(-04.20)
2002	02.38	(-06.30)
2003	02.73	14.70
2004	03.46	26.70
2005	03.92	13.30
2006	04.45	13.50
2007	05.08	14.30
2008 (Jan-June) (P)	02.72	11.10 @

[Source: (Official Statistics of) *Bureau of Immigration*, Government of India, for 1996-2007]

[P: Provisional, @: Growth over the corresponding figure viz. Jan-June 2007.]

In respect of India's share in international tourism also, the trend over the years has been quite similar to the one relating to foreign tourist arrivals in India as shown in Table 2.1. That is, till FY 2002, the share has been quite poor, so also the growth rates over the years. However, since FY 2003, there has been consistently high growth rates. In spite of this fact, it is worth

noting that India's share in international tourist arrivals is just about 0.52% (2006). This suggests that India has to leap frog several times, given its vast potential for tourism. Table II clearly depicts the above pattern of India's tourism growth vis-à-vis the entire world.

Table II: Share of India in International Tourist Arrivals in World and Asia-Pacific Region 1996–2007.

Year	International Tourist Arrivals (Millions)		FTAs in India	Share of FTAs in India (%)	
	World	Asia-Pacific Region		World	Asia-Pacific
1996	572.40	90.40	02.29	00.40	02.53
1997	596.00	89.70	02.37	00.40	02.65
1998	614.30	89.40	02.36	00.38	02.64
1999	637.40	98.80	02.48	00.39	02.51
2000	684.70	110.60	02.65	00.39	02.40
2001	684.40	115.80	02.54	00.37	02.19
2002	704.70	124.90	02.38	00.34	01.91
2003	692.20	113.20	02.73	00.39	02.41
2004	761.00	144.10	03.46	00.45	02.40
2005	803.00	155.30	03.92	00.49	02.52
2006	847.00	167.00	04.45	00.53	02.66
2007*	903.00	184.30	05.08	00.56	02.76

[Source: *Tourism Market Trends*, 2006 Edition (UNWTO) for the years upto 2004, *UNWTO Barometer*, Oct. 2007, for 2005, 2006 and 2007.] [* Provisional]

The share of India in respect of international tourism receipts shows a pattern similar to that of international tourist arrivals. But, it is worth noting that, here, the relative position (percentage share) of India is better than that of arrivals throughout the period. Accordingly, as of FY 2006, India's share of receipts is 0.89 % (as against 0.52%, for arrivals.) (Table III)

Table III: Share of India in International Tourism Receipts in World, 1996–2008.

Year	International Tourism Receipt in World (in USD Billion)	Tourist Receipt in India (in USD Billion)	Percentage share of India
1996	438.30	02.832	00.65
1997	441.80	02.889	00.65
1998	444.10	02.948	00.66
1999	457.30	03.009	00.66
2000	474.10	03.460	00.73
2001	462.20	03.198	00.69
2002	480.10	03.103	00.65
2003	527.20	04.463	00.85
2004	629.00	06.170	00.98
2005	680.00	07.493	01.10
2006*	742.00	08.634	01.16
2007**	856.00	10.729	01.25
2008***	NA	6385 (Jan-Jun 2008)	NA

[Source: *Tourism Market Trends*, 2006 Edition (UNWTO) for the years upto 2004, *UNWTO Barometer*, Oct. 207 and June 2008, for 2005, 2006 and 2007. and *Ministry of Tourism* for Tourism 2008, for the period Jan – June 208]

[* Provisional; ** RBI Statistics, Revised Estimates; *** Ministry of Tourism, Jan – June 2008]

2.3. Foreign Tourist Arrivals to India: Top Ten Countries of the World.

Table IV: Top Ten Source Countries for Foreign Tourist Arrivals in India in 2007.

Sl. No.	Source Country	Foreign Tourist Arrivals (Million)	Percentage Share
01.	USA	0.799	16.50
02.	UK	0.796	15.70
03.	Bangladesh	0.480	04.00
04.	Canada	0.208	03.90
05.	France	0.205	03.50
06.	Sri Lanka	0.204	03.50
07.	Germany	0.184	02.70

08.	Japan	0.146	02.50
09.	Australia	0.136	02.40
10.	Malaysia	0.113	02.10
Total of Top 10 Countries		3.271	64.37
Others		1.810	35.63
All countries		5.081	100.00

[Source: Official statistics of Bureau of Immigration, Government of India.]

Table IV depicts top ten source countries for foreign tourist arrivals to India. It is worth noting that two advanced nations (viz. USA and UK) together account for more than 32 % of the total number of tourist arrivals to India in FY 2006. Besides, the top ten countries together account for 64.37% of the total foreign tourist arrivals as of 2007. It is observed that this share is on the rise. India compares quite unfavorably with top ten countries of the world in respect of its relative share of international tourist arrivals. As of 2007, India has got international tourist arrivals of just 5.08 million representing a meager 0.56 % of the total for the whole world. This is quite low compared to 81.90 million (9.07%) for France and 21.40 million (2.27%) for Mexico; representing respectively the first and last among the top ten countries. (Table V).

Table V: International Tourist Arrivals: India Vs Top Ten Countries of the World (2007)

Rank	Country	International Tourist Arrivals* (in Million)	Percentage Share
01	France	81.90	09.07
02	Spain	59.20	06.56
03	USA	56.00	06.20
04	China	54.70	06.06
05	Italy	43.70	04.84
06	UK	30.70	03.40
07	Germany	24.40	02.70
08	Ukraine	23.10	02.56
09	Turkey	22.20	02.46
10	Mexico	21.40	02.27
Total of Top 10 Countries		417.30	46.22
India		05.10	00.56
Others		480.60	53.22
Total		903.00	100.00

[Source: UNWTO Barometer, June 2008.] [* Provisional]

2.4. Broad Trends of Economic Benefits of Tourism; Appreciable Growth since 2002.

Tourism has got tremendous potential for economic development of a nation. It contributes towards the national GDP and also creates considerable level of employment opportunities.

Table VI: Economic Benefits of Tourism in India vis-à-vis the World.

Indicators	India	World
Contribution of Tourism to GDP*	05.83 % (2003)	10.00 % (2002)
	05.90 % (2004)	10.20 % (2003)
	06.11 % (2005)	10.40 % (2004)
	NA (2006)	10.60 % (2005)
Employment in Tourism Sector*	38.6 million (8.27 %) (2003)	198.098 million (7.8 %) (2002)
	41.8 million (8.78%) (2004)	194.562 million (7.6 %) (2003)
	NA (2005)	214.697 million (8.1 %)
	NA (2006)	221.568 million (8.3 %)

[Source: *Tourism Statistics 2006 at a Glance*, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, Sept. 2007.]

[* Direct as well as indirect contribution of tourism.]

[Figures in bracket for employment shows the percentage share in total employment].

[World figures shown above are drawn from World Tourism & Travel Council (WTTC)].

As is evident from Table 2.6, in India tourism has got somewhat high share in the overall GDP of the country, though the same is only about half of the international average. In respect of employment generation, the share of employment offered by Indian tourism is slightly higher than the world average. This fact points to the immense potential of Indian tourism to

create more employment opportunities. Table 2.6 is self-explanatory in this regard. In fact, WTTC estimates that the top ten countries with the greatest expected relative growth in employment over the next ten years are all developing countries. In view of the above, it is worth pointing out that for a developing nation like India, tourism promotion can help achieve fast economic development as well as high level of employment, apart from its potential for earning high level of foreign exchange.

2.5 Low Share of India in the Global Tourism: High Growth Prospects.

India's share in the global tourism market (foreign tourist arrivals) has been quite low over the years. As of the latest (2007) statistics also, the same is just a meager 5.08 million tourists (ie. 0.56 % of the total) which is roughly one-fourth as that of the tenth largest country (Mexico) and just one-sixteenth as that of the largest country (France). In view of the abundant potential of India as one of the most preferred tourism destinations, there is tremendous scope for improvement. Equally important, however, is the fact that along with rapid growth in tourism, the adverse impact of the same on the environment is also on the rise. The case of Himalayas in India itself is a classic example. Therefore, while it is fact that tourism development is of utmost significance for economic development for developing nations like India, equally important is the need to check the adverse impact of the same on the environment that is dangerously on the rise over the years, thus underlining the need for eco-friendly tourism.

2.6. Ecotourism: the Indian Scenario

The religious tradition of India is often quite conducive for preserving the nature, particularly in many rural and tribal settlements. As per Hindu religious scriptures, one is expected to follow certain rules ('Dharma', in religious language) regarding the sanctity to be maintained in temples and other places of worship, hills, sanctuaries, holy rivers and other water bodies, historical monuments etc. This is a feature that favours promotion of ecotourism India. Certain tourist locations in India have already attracted world attention because of their extreme uniqueness. Floating accommodation in Dal Lake (Kashmir) and the serene back waters (and also the boat race held therein) are just two classic examples. The above type of tourist locations bring people close to the nature.

2.7. Facets of Indian Ecotourism: Quite Diverse

Ecotourism in India has got a number of facets. These include, inter alia, the following:

- **Rural Tourism:** Indian society is characterized by enormous diversity and distinction between urban lifestyle and rural lifestyle. There is tremendous demand for the above kind of tourism settings – both domestic and foreign. Typically, such a setting could be a recreated village environment on the outskirts of an urban area. Some variants of the above model are already existing naturally, like, Chokhi Dhani on the outskirts of Jaipur.
- **Religious Tourism:** As India is home to many religions of the world, its importance as a prominent destination for religious tourism need not be overemphasized. The most important religious tourism destinations include, Bodhi Gaya (Buddhists), Hardwar / Rishikesh, Varanasi, Ujjain etc. (Hindus), Amrithsar (Sikhs), Ajmer (Muslims) etc.
- **Nature Tourism:** Large number of virgin territories available in India provides the country with good scope for nature tourism, particularly if adequate investment is made in special infrastructure, so that it appeals to the relevant special interest groups. The presence of the great Himalayas, deserts, extensive green plains, sea, lakes etc. is the advantage to India in this regard.
- **Ethnic Tourism:** This is another advantage of India to showcase the local culture, customs and heritage. For instance, Surajkund Crafts Mela held at Surajkund (Haryana).
- **Health Tourism:** This type of tourism involves a wide range of services ranging from the 'The Art of Living' to the most authentic and original forms of yoga, meditation and Ayurveda. This should ideally be conducted in the ambience of the ocean or river and the backdrop of lush forests. Of late, many affluent and health conscious foreigners, mostly from the western countries, are growingly being attracted towards this type of tourism.
- **Wild Tourism:** This involves, as the name suggests travel to destinations wherein wild animals, interiors of forests etc. is involved. For instance, Thekkadi (Kerala) offers opportunities to closely observe elephants and other wild animals in their natural surroundings by traveling through boats along the river flowing across such forests.
- **Adventure Tourism:** Adventure tourism is often targeted at special interest groups and it involves travel to remotely inhabited places that are far removed from urban settings. Accordingly, it is often clubbed with nature tourism. Because of the very nature of adventure tourism, it is essential to develop adequate travel and transportation infrastructure to develop this kind of tourism.
- **Medical Tourism:** This kind of tourism is fast picking up in India and its growth potential is huge, primarily because of the relatively low cost of medical facilities in India compared with other nations. India has got a potential to attract 1 million tourists per annum which in turn would translate into USD 5 Billion to the economy.

2.8. Strategies for Development of Ecotourism in India: an Overview.

From the forgoing analysis it may be noted that ecotourism is an environment-friendly, sustainable and nature-based form of tourism that is also meant to benefit indigenous people and local communities. For a country like India with abundant natural resources to support tourism, the scope of ecotourism is tremendous. In spite of the favourable features as above, there are a number of disturbing facts as well. These adverse aspects ecotourism have been pointed out by many writers, like for instance, Deifee, J (1981) [4]. As consideration of such negative factors are necessary for formulation of meaningful eco-friendly strategies for sustainable tourism development, the most important of such negative effects are given below.

- The influx of tourists will increase the need for additional facilities, like, roads, accommodation, power, water, waste disposal facilities etc. This in turn will adversely affect the natural systems and their eco-system. Besides, such evil effects as development of rural slums, noise and air pollution, disturbance of wild life may also follow. Often unhygienic environments arise due to such slums, stagnated water bodies, encroachments, stray cattle etc. which in turn may alienate the tourists.
- Ecotourism may be severely constrained by the physical and social carrying capacities of many areas. Havoc and destructions caused to the hill stations, vandalism of historical monuments, degradation of beeches etc. are just a few examples.
- Reaction of community to tourism in general and eco-tourism in particular may not be that encouraging. Often, ecotourism is associated with unfavourable changes in local prices and employment generation.
- Lack of sufficient information and tourist guides relating to various tourism destinations, accommodation facilities, modes of transport, sanitary, toilet and drainage facilities are some other factors that adversely affect tourism industry.
- The benefits to the local people are often not at all as expected. This is the case particularly in respect of developing countries. As such, local people have either resentment or hostility towards ecotourism and their participation is quite poor. In some cases they resist such initiatives as well.
- As against the expectations, very little of the tourism money directly benefits the local people. It has been observed that outsiders dominate ecotourism, resulting in outside flow of money. World Bank observes that 55% of the dollar spent on tourism in developing countries leaks back to the developed countries.
- Rather difficult and procedural immigration and entry / exit formalities that are existing in India vis-à-vis other nations, is another impediment. Going by international best practices, such formalities have to be fine-tuned made easier.
- Though, of late, there are some improvements, generally the governmental support towards tourism development has been quite poor. Similarly, the governmental resources for tourism development are limited. This, in turn, underlines the need for ensuring active private sector participation. Besides, the high rate of taxation existing in India on tourism activities is another impediment which needs to be standardized.

PART – III, KERALA TOURISM: AN ANALYSIS OF FEATURES, STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

3.1. Kerala Tourism: Salient Features

Kerala is one of the most sought after tourism destinations in the whole world. Kerala, the God's own country, is a global super brand and is recognized as a pioneer and trendsetter in the country. Naturally, Kerala tourism has bagged many awards, both national and international for its excellence in tourism initiatives. These include, inter alia, the following:

I. International Awards:

- One of the three finalists at the WTTC (World Tourism Travel Council) 'Tourism for Tomorrow' awards in the destination category, 2006.
- Das Golden Stadttor award for the Print campaign, 2007
- Das Golden Stadttor Award for Best Commercial, 2006

II. International Awards – PATA (Pacific Asia Travel Association) Awards:

- Grand award for Environment, 2006
- Gold award for Ecotourism, 2006
- Gold award for Publication, 2006
- Gold Award for E-Newsletter, 2005
- Honourable Mention for Culture, 2005
- Gold Award for Culture, 2004
- Gold Award for Ecotourism, 2004
- Gold Award for CD-ROM, 2004 and 2003

- Gold Award for Marketing, 2003
- Grand Award for Heritage, 2002

III. National Awards – Govt. of India.

- Most Innovative Use of Information Technology, 2005-06
- Best Performing Tourism State, 2005
- Best Maintained Tourist-friendly Monument, 2005
- Best Publishing, 2005
- Best Marketed and Promoted State, 2004.
- Best Maintained Tourist-friendly Monument, 2004
- Best Innovative Tourism Project, 2004
- Best Promotion Literature, 2004
- Best Publishing, 2004
- Best Performing State for 2003, 2001, 2000 and 1999 - Award for Excellence in Tourism. (For rapid growth, development and advancement in the tourism sector)
- Best Tourism Award from Govt of India in 2007; followed by two more awards (i) Best Tourism Village (Aranmula) and (ii) Best Tourism Website, www.keralatourism.org

3.2. Strengths of Kerala Tourism

Kerala tourism has got the following major strengths:

1. Excellent geographical features, extremely serene environments that attract tourists the world over – lakes, hillocks, vast coastal areas, network of 44 rivers, waterfalls, lush green paddy fields, sprawling plantations, exotic wildlife etc. Well known destination for medical tourism; both ‘Ayurvedic’centres and world class health care (modern medicine) at cheap rates. Above all, the world famous brand, ‘God’s own Country’also.
2. Recognitions and awards, both from National and International agencies. Six times winner of Best Tourism state from Govt. of India.
3. Consistent increase in the number of tourist arrivals, both domestic and foreign.
4. In respect of foreign tourist arrivals, Kerala in one among the best 10 states in India.
5. One of the highest growth rates in tourist arrivals. The number of tourist arrived in Kerala in 2006 is 4.28 lakhs in 2006 as against 3.46 in 2005. (13.14 % increase)
6. About 10% share of Kerala in Indian tourism.

3.3. Weaknesses of Kerala Tourism

1. The share of Kerala in Indian tourism is wavering at about 10%, not increasing over the years. In 2003, it was 10.81% which declined to 8.85% in 2005 and slightly improved to 9.67% in 2006.
2. Not among the best ten states in India in tourist arrivals (domestic), though one among the best ten in foreign tourist arrival and that too eight.
3. Gross underutilization of the excellent tourism potentialities of the state, hence there is an urgent need for scaling up of tourism initiatives for optimal results.
4. Kerala lags behind all the three south Indian states in tourist arrivals, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
5. Under-utilization of immense tourism potential, like the classic tourist attractions like House Boats, Tree Houses,

3.4. Factors Influencing Ecotourism – Some Empirical Evidence from Kumabalangy

An empirical study (personal interview, random sampling) of the factors affecting ecotourism at Kumabalangy revealed poor environment (garbage, plastic etc.) as the main factor. (Table VII)

Table VII: Opinion of the Tourists regarding Negative Factors of Tourism

Opinions	Tourists		Local Residents		Total	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Poor infrastructure facilities	16	20	4	20	20	20.00
Lack of cleanliness and safety	12	15	4	20	17	16.00
Poor Disposal of Plastic/ other Garbage	44	55	10	50	54	54.00
Other factors (publicity, advertising etc)	8	10	2	10	10	10.00
Total	80	100	20	100	100	100.00

(Source: Field Survey)



From Table VIII it may be noted that maintaining the cleanliness of the environment through proper garbage disposal and also avoiding the use of plastics and such other wastes is utmost importance in ensuring the satisfaction of the customers, as 70 percent (54 plus 16) of the issues could be solved as above. Next in importance is ensuring adequate infrastructure facilities, and another 20 per cent problems can be tackled accordingly. (Table VIII)

PART – IV, ECO-FRIENDLY STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA

4.1. Proper Garbage Disposal and Ensuring Cleanliness of the Environment

This aspect is vitally important as already noted during the empirical study. Besides, this aspect is essential for ensuring long-term sustainability of any eco-tourism initiative.

4.2. Better Infrastructure and Capacity Building amongst the Local Community

Better infrastructure facilities, like, road lines, air ports, accommodation facilities, drainage and sanitation facilities etc. need to be created with immediately for faster tourism development. India has to go a long way in this regard. Apart from infrastructure creation as above, a holistic and integrated approach would call for considerable amount of capacity building amongst the local community to manage and operate the tourism sector.

4.3 Private Sector Participation through PPP (Public-Private Partnership) Model

Participation of private sector appears to be essential in the Kerala tourism because of the resource constraints of the Government. The Government may play the roles of both an enabler and regulator. Firstly, as an enabler / facilitator – who provides the licenses to private agencies who fulfill the norms laid by the government and also agrees to comply with prefixed norms of service quality, use of natural resources, pollution control norms etc. Secondly, as a regulator the government ensures strict adherence to the pollution control, use of resources, service quality etc. by the private agencies and takes remedial / corrective action in case of defaults.

4.4. Easier Entry/Immigration Facilities are Vital.

The norms prevailing in India being rather procedural, the same need to be overhauled based on international best practices. That is to say, either a (i) Visa-Free situation, or (ii) Visa-on-Arrival situation need to be ensured, in order to attract more foreign tourism.

4.5. Enhanced Level of Services and Utilities to the Tourists.

Bette services need to be provided to the international tourists, who include inter alia, readily accessible information kiosks, information guides / bulletins, clean public utilities (sanitation, drainage etc.), hassle-free arrivals, improved hygienic conditions in tourism sites and surroundings, clean air ports and railway stations and so on.

4.6. Thrust on Responsible Tourism and Eco-tourism

Added thrust on responsible tourism appears to be quite desirable in Kerala because of the peculiar socio-economic scenario in Kerala. Complete co-operation from the various stake holders is a must for sustainability in the long run. Particularly important is the need for promotion of ecotourism in Kerala, as it ensures “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people”.

4.7. Special thrust on Medical Tourism, especially Ayurvedic Tourism

Given the excellent healthcare system in Kerala – one of the best in the entire country and also quite comparable with many advanced nations of the world, concerted efforts to promote medical tourism is quite advisable. The main attraction is very low charges for medical treatment of world class quality that is available here. Another focus area should be ‘Ayurvedic’ tourism. This niche segment has special relevance in this state which is world reputed for its ayurvedic centres.

4.8. Complete Co-operation and Support from Local Populace.

Last, but the not the least, full co-operation and support from the local population need to be ensured. For this their representation in all policy making forums is absolutely essential. Needless to mention tourism policies sans local support would not be sustainable in the long run. Moreover resentment or hostility of the localities may alienate the tourists also.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Of late, there has been increased thrust on tourism development in India and so also in Kerala. While tourism has got excellent prospects for promotion of rapid economic development of India, particularly in a resourceful state like Kerala, it may be stated that the sustainability aspect of tourism has not often been given adequate consideration in designing tourism policies of government.. This in turn results in excessive burden the nature beyond its carrying capacity adversely affecting



its ecological balance. Besides, often there are instances wherein the interests of tourists alone are protected in a bid to garner maximum tourism earnings, unmindful of the consequences of the same on the local people. All these point to the growing relevance of the need for adoption of ecotourism in its true letter and spirit, rather than simply from the point of view of compliance with regulatory stipulations or norms. This in turn necessitates a concerted action from the part of all concerned, for the cause of sustainable tourism development. Besides, in view of the resource constraints of the government in respect of developing countries like in India private sector participation seems imminent, thus underlining the need for a PPP approach towards a holistic, integrated and sustainable tourism development. Above all, the full potential of tourism of India in general and Kerala in particular is yet to be fully tapped, though there are some favourable developments over the last few years.

REFERENCES

1. Brundtland G.H. (1987), The Brundtland Report, World Commission on Environment and Development, Oxford University Press.
2. Bhardwaj, D.S, Kandari, O.P et. al. (1998), Domestic Tourism in India, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi., First Edition.
3. Chatak, G.R. (2007), Sustainable Tourism Codes and Guidelines, Cyber-Tech Publications, Daryaganj, New Delhi, First Edition.
4. Deiffie, J (1981), "Who will watch the bird watchers?", Wild Life Review, Vol X, No. 7, pp. 23-24.
5. Economic Review 2006, State Planning Board, Government of Kerala, March 2007.
6. Kabia, Sunil K. (2005), Tourism Industry, Reference Press, New Delhi, First Edition.
7. Kabia, Sunil K. (2005), Tourism and Environment, Mohit Publications, New Delhi, First Edition.
8. Lane, B. (1991), "Sustainable Tourism, a new culture for the Interpreter", Interpretation Journal, Vol. 49.
9. Nigam, Satish C. (2006), Ecotourism and Sustainable Development, Rajat Publications, New Delhi, First Edition.
10. Pender, Lesley and Sharpley, Richard (Eds), The Management of Tourism, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2005.
11. Rajan, J. (2005), "Eco-tourism Development: International Covenants", in Sarngadharan, M & Raju, G. (Eds.) (2005), Tourism and Sustainable Economic Development: Indian and Global Perspectives, New Century Publications, New Delhi.
12. Sarngadharan, M & Raju, G. (Eds.) (2005), Tourism and Sustainable Economic Development: Indian and Global Perspectives, New Century Publications, New Delhi.
13. Sinha, P.C, (2006), Global Tourism, Sustainable Tourism & Ecotourism: Code of Ethics, Charter, Guidelines, Resolutions, SBS Publishers & Distributors Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
14. Sundaram, I.S., "Tourism: India Awakens to 'Incredible' Opportunities", Business and Economic Facts for You, Dec. 2007, Vol. 28, No.3, pp.7-10.
15. Verma, Jagdish (2007), Dynamics of Indian Tourism Issues and Challenges, Cyber-Tech Publications, Daryaganj, New Delhi, First Edition.