

Sustaining Responsible Tourism: The case of Kerala, India.

Jithendran Kokkranikal, University of Greenwich, UK

Angelique Chettiparamb, University of Reading, UK

Introduction

Responsible tourism is a concept that overlaps significantly with concepts of sustainable tourism, ethical tourism, pro-poor tourism and integrated tourism. Sustainable tourism is defined by Middleton, (1998, ix, cited in George and Frey, 2010, 13) as 'achieving a particular combination of numbers and types of visitors, the cumulative effect of whose activities at a given destination together with the actions of the servicing businesses, can continue into the foreseeable future, without damaging the quality of the environment on which the activities are based'. While ethical tourism can be thought of as emphasising the ethical dimension of sustainable tourism, pro-poor tourism can be thought of as emphasising the re-distributive dimensions of sustainable tourism. The concept of integrated tourism brings geography into the equation and emphasises the locality and place based cross-linkages in tourism that allows it to become sustainable. Responsible tourism emphasises the role of businesses in achieving sustainability and can be seen as yet another concept within this genre.

The genesis of the concept is squarely within the corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate social investment (CSI) practices of business concerns (George and Frey, 2010). CSR and CSI practices grew as a response to pressures arising from changing ethical values of consumers and increasing awareness of environmental and social impacts of business operations. A raft of initiatives fall within their scope as for instance ethical sourcing, waste reduction and non-exploitative disposal, equitable employment, honest advertisement, fair pricing, community partnerships, responsible resource management etc. In general, responsible tourism encapsulates the import of such CSR and CSI

practices into the business of tourism. George and Frey, (2010, 12) for instance defines responsible tourism management as 'managing the business in a way that benefits its local community, natural and business environment and itself'. A slightly more expanded definition is used by the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT). They define responsible tourism as 'tourism that promotes responsibility to the environment through its sustainable use, responsibility to involve local communities in the tourism industry; responsibility for the safety and security of visitors and responsible government, employees, employers, unions and local communities' (DEAT, 1996,4 cited in Merwe and Wocke, 2007, 1). Despite its increasing appeal in many countries, there has also been concerns about its viability as a distinct type of tourism. For example, Torres, King and Torres (2013) argue that the market for responsible tourism experiences has been overestimated and suggest that its emergence is more due to the support from governments and tourism industry as part of a sustainable tourism agenda and not because of any perceptible customer demand.

Responsible tourism as a motto has now been officially adopted by many important tourism destinations. The concept has been actively promoted by academic centres of study such as the International Centre for Responsible Tourism¹; International Conferences² and country specific declarations³. Though perhaps not yet a 'movement', the concept is increasingly being pushed by states and city governments on normative grounds. The international appeal of the concept could also be partly explained by the centrality given to the involvement and engagement of the private sector in managing impacts of tourism. Thus, besides offering a normative appeal, 'responsible tourism' also offers a pragmatic appeal in managing tourism in the increasingly neo-liberal world of

¹ <http://www.icrtourism.org>

² such as the five 'International Conferences on Responsible Tourism in Destinations' held at Cape Town, South Africa; Cochin, Kerala, India; Belmopan, Belize, Central America; Muscat, Oman; and Alberta, Canada.

³ such as the Cape Town Declaration, Kerala Declaration, Alberta Declaration, etc)

today. After all, the private sector is the major provider of tourism experiences and services in most destinations worldwide and is a fast growing presence in this sector.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the processes involved in operationalising the concept of 'responsible tourism' within the state of Kerala, India, and analyse some of the projects. Finally, we highlight and emphasise the central role of what we terms as 'hands off' planning realised through empowerment, engagement and proactive facilitation in sustaining responsible tourism.

Data for this paper have been collected from secondary sources and key informant interviews. Secondary sources include Government publications (state and local levels), newspaper reports, and publications of activist groups such as EQUATIONS engaged in lobbying against environmental and social fall outs from tourism. Key informant interviews were conducted with private sector business operators in the aforementioned four tourist destinations and government tourism officials in Kerala. The analysis presented in this paper brings together information from different tourism related secondary sources and key informant interviews organised and evaluated from within a planning/governance related conceptual framework.

The next section describes the context of Kerala including relevant governance structures and tourism history. The second section describes the implementation of responsible tourism in Kerala. The third section introduces conceptual frameworks from planning and discusses the experiences in 'responsible tourism' in Kerala to argue for the importance of 'hands –off' planning. The final section advances key conclusions.

Kerala: An Introduction

Kerala is located on the East coast of the Arabian Sea and has a population of about 33.4 million (provisional figures, 2011 census). It is well known for its scenic beauty and is a popular tourist destination. The state is also known as a forerunner in developmental intervention being host to a number of redistributive programmes such as land reforms, public distribution, etc, all of which has

resulted in relatively broad based social development. As a consequence of this broad based development, Kerala has enjoyed more social equity, high levels of literacy and political activism (Franke and Chasin, 1997).

Kerala has built on its strengths to advance the People's Planning Campaign for bottom-up planning and the Kudumbashree programme for poverty alleviation. Both of these programmes are by now rather well known (Chettiparamb, 2006). The former is a bottom-up planning process involving participatory budgeting and community empowerment launched in 1996 and firmly institutionalised since. Communities are empowered to plan local projects, prioritise the projects against a budget, and partake in implementation and monitoring of the same. Through an annual process, around 25% of plan funds are devolved to the local governments in Kerala, which are used for wide-ranging developmental programmes at the local community level (Chettiparamb and Kokkranikal, 2012). The People's Planning Campaign been by and large successful, particularly in rural areas, where local communities were given the freedom to prioritise diverse kinds of economic, social and infrastructure schemes that suit the specific requirements of their places (Issac and Frank, 2000; Chettiparamb and Kokkranikal, 2012).

The Kudumbashree programme is a state sponsored poverty alleviation programme with broader goals of women's empowerment (realised through the working of women's collectives) and local economic development (realised through close integration with local government). The programme as a whole takes self-help as a strategy for poverty alleviation. Its mission is to:

“eradicate absolute poverty in ten years through concerted community action under the leadership of local governments, by facilitating organization of the poor for combining self-help with demand-led convergence of available services and resources to tackle the multiple dimensions and manifestations of poverty, holistically” (Kudumbashree, 2009).

In keeping with many similar programmes world wide the Kudumbashree programme has four general objectives 1) empowerment of women through community based organizations, 2) thrift and credit operations and informal banking, 3) decision making by the poor, 4) micro enterprises and income generations activities (Kudumbashree, n.d, a). The structure that delivers these objectives is closely linked to the local government system (which as mentioned earlier, in Kerala, holds considerable funds and powers). They work with the Grama Panchayats (the lowest tier of a three tier system of local governance in rural areas) and the Municipalities and Corporations (Urban Local Self Governments). Overall coordination is done by the State Poverty Eradication Mission through its District offices. The organisational structure for the programme is depicted in Figure 1. The programme has won many awards and is generally known as an ‘exemplar’ within poverty alleviation policy circles in India (Kudumbashree, n.d, b).

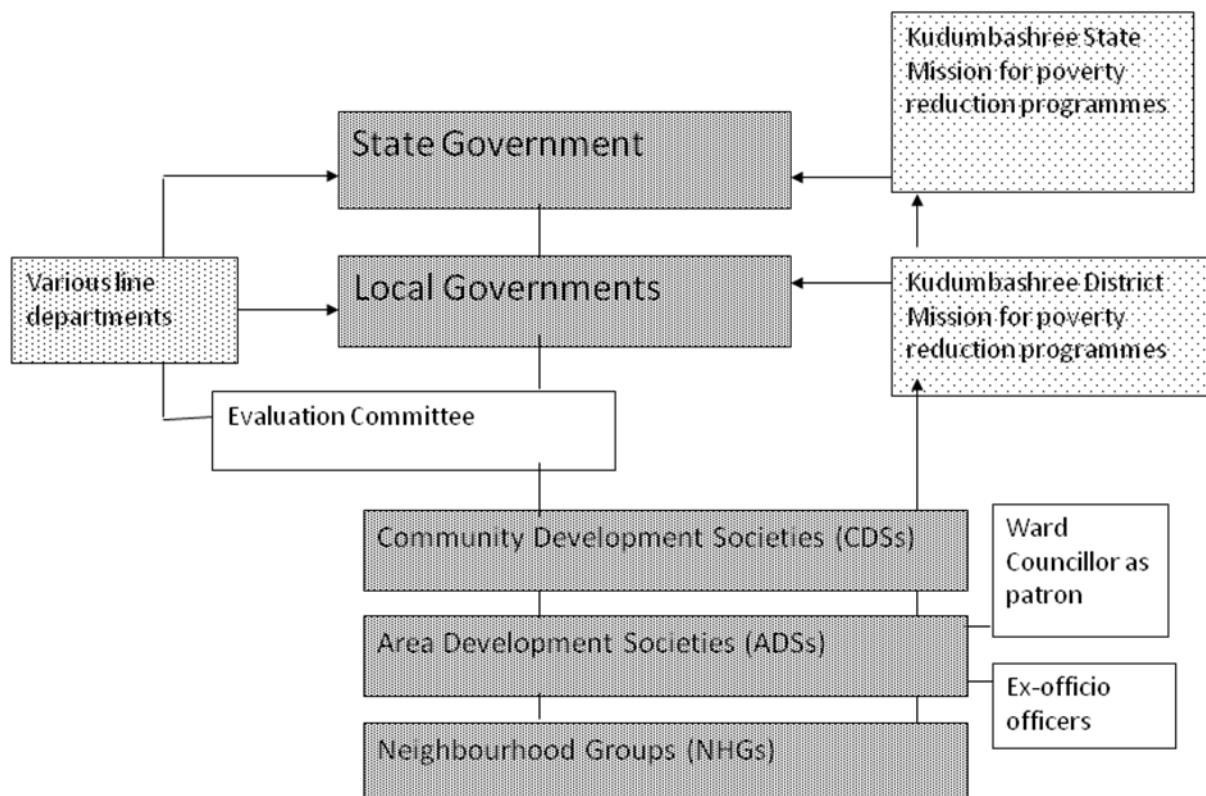


Figure1: Organisational structure of the Kudumbashree Programme.
Source: Author.

Some of the key features of the Kudumbashree programme are as follows:

Development of federated system of community organisation based on representation: A neighbourhood Group (NHG) is made up of 10-20 families (potentially including the poor and non-poor). The NHGs are federated at ward level (by election of office –bearers once in three years) to form Area Development Societies (ADS) which are in turn federated at city/village level to form a Community Development Society (CDS). A multi level system of largely self-governing entities is thus institutionalised.

Bottom-up Planning: Planning for poverty alleviation in the Kudumbashree programme starts from below. Needs identified through dialogue and discussion at the NHG level are shaped into *micro plans*. These micro plans in turn are integrated into *mini plans* at ADS level. At the CDS level, these mini plans are integrated with projects from various government agencies and local government departments into *action plans*.

Convergence: Kudumbashree seeks to promote convergence with local government institutions as well as other programmes relevant to poverty alleviation operating in the area. This is achieved institutionally by the integration and participation of office-bearers from local government departments in the various governance spaces associated with the Kudumbashree.

Local Area Development: The Kudumbashree programme is organised on an area basis and therefore programme components are dove tailed to specific needs determined on a spatial basis. These needs can also be the impetus for change and new programme development. Further, volunteers of the governing body of the bottom-most level of Kudumbashree – the NHG – are charged to discern as well as monitor programme components to ensure health and education; basic needs provision and income generation for its members.

The programme has been particularly successful in empowering women (in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes in social, economic and political spheres), promoting thrift and credit operations and effectively targeting poverty alleviation efforts. Success in micro-enterprises has been varied. While very significant numbers of successful stories are abundant, stories of business failures, and struggles are also abundant (Oommen, 2008)

Tourism in Kerala

Geographically, Kerala has often been described as an 'extended village' (though the villages are comparatively speaking fairly urbanised in terms of infrastructure and service provision) and is blessed with outstanding natural beauty. Almost 50% of the state's population was once dependent on agriculture with the main crops being paddy, coconut, rubber, spices, coffee, tea and tropical fruits (George, 1997). However, in recent years the agriculture sector has been experiencing decline, with farming becoming increasingly unprofitable. Industrial activities in the state are limited, and with a militant trade union movement the state has not been very successful in attracting and maintaining industrial investment (Tharamangalam, 1998). Sustainability-oriented tourism development has been one of the major economic alternatives that emerged for Kerala. This recognition triggered a series of tourism development and promotional activities in the late 1980s.

In terms of natural and cultural assets for tourism, Kerala has a varied portfolio of attractions such as beaches, backwaters, hill stations, festivals, ayurveda (the traditional Indian medical practice), wildlife, traditional cuisines, classical and folk art and dance forms, unique artefacts and a distinctive style of architecture (Kelly and Kokkranikal, 2010). Though a late starter in tourism, the second half of the 1980s saw the Kerala Government introduce a raft of initiatives to tap the tourism potential of the state. First, in 1986, tourism was given an industry status thus making the sector eligible for all public sector incentives and concessions that were extended to other industries. This was followed

by the announcement of significant investment, particularly in tourism infrastructure, and the announcement of a number of performance incentives to the tourism industry. Some of the public sector interventions taken during this time include the establishment of a new tourism training institute in 1988; formation of District Tourism Promotion Councils in... to decentralise tourism efforts and make it more broad based; a year-long campaigning for tourism awareness in 1992 to increase public awareness of tourism related issues; organisation of familiarisation tours for overseas travel trade and media and the development of international airport at Kochi to name a few. Strategically these programmes, projects and interventions served to elevate and proclaim tourism as a high profile sector for private investment.

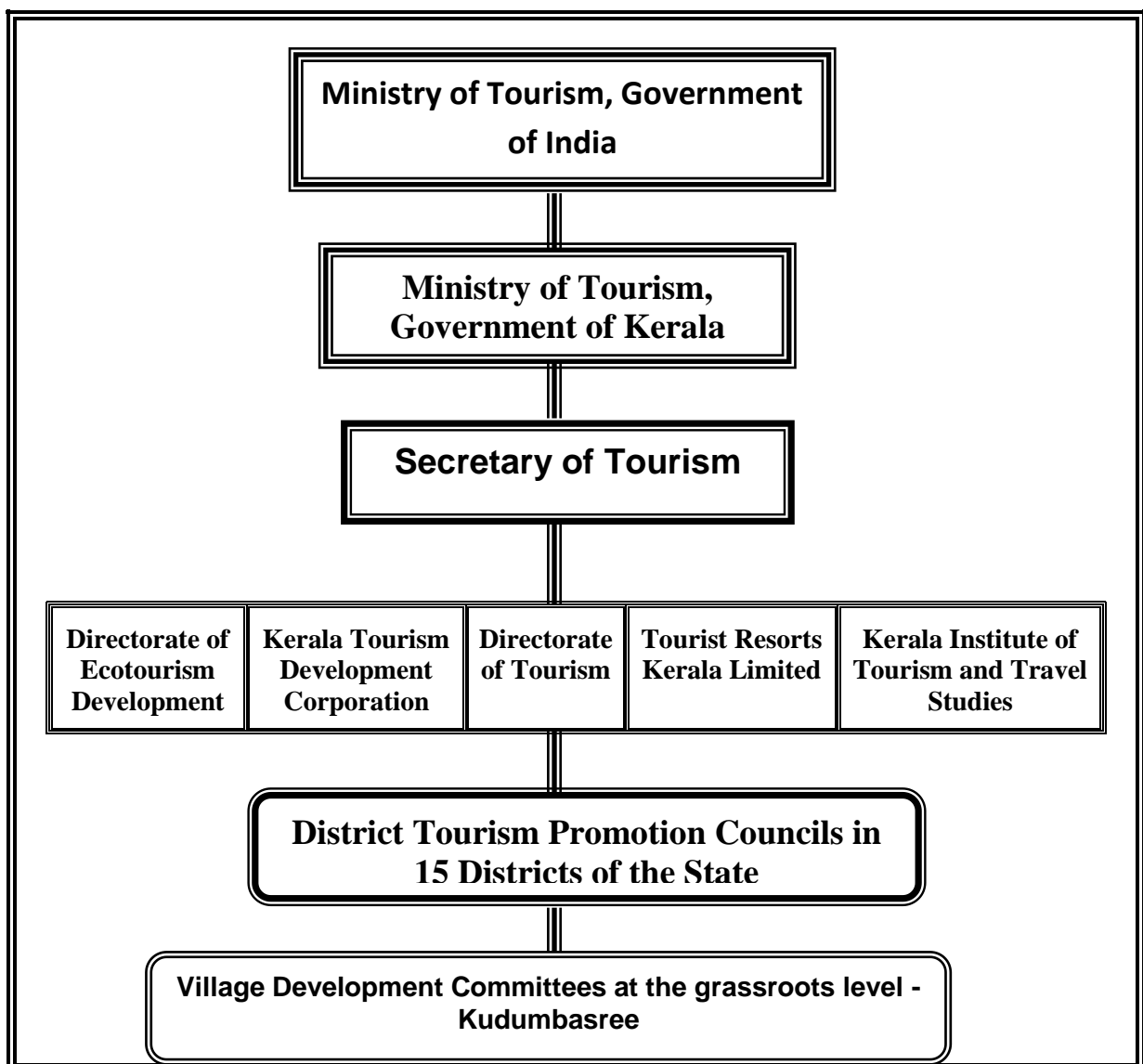


Figure1: Institutional structure for the implementation of tourism in Kerala.

Source: Authors.

The nineties saw Kerala significantly benefitting from private sector investment in tourism. Public-private joint ventures with leading hotel chains in the country such as the Taj Group were launched. The state also participated in major international tourism trade fairs and organised a trade fair of its own in 2000. The period also saw the identification and promotion of a specialised niche market in health (ayurveda) tourism.

The declining fortune of Kashmir as a major tourist destination in the 1990s also helped Kerala (Kokkranikal and Morrison, 2002). Kerala could present itself as an attractive and viable alternate tourist location thus attracting national government budgetary support. As a result of all the factors above, Kerala tourism is now widely acclaimed as one of the successful marketing stories in Indian tourism (Chakravarty, 2001). The state has won the national award for the 'best performing state in the tourism sector' several times and has been hailed as 'the undisputed tourism hotspot of India' (Charkavarti, 2001). Tourism statistics of Kerala from the mid-80s onwards has seen a quadrupling of arrivals, an indication of the impact of concerted development and marketing efforts.

Kerala has not been free from some of the environmental and socio-cultural problems attributed to tourism however (Kokkranikal, 1993). Kovalam, a major beach resort destination, has become a case study of negative impacts of tourism, with problems such as littering and pollution; drug trafficking; commercial sex activities involving men, women, and children (White, 2007); displacement of local inhabitants; and competition between tourism industry and locals for resources and infrastructure. Indigenous cultural attractions such as Kathakali (a form of dance drama), theyyam (a religious festival celebrated in north Kerala temples), and other similar temple festivals in the state have been

packaged as tourist products, leading to concerns about commodification of traditional cultures. Pristine and beautiful natural attractions (e.g. Athirapilli waterfalls in Trichur) have been subject to adverse environmental impacts. Resentment has thus grown amongst the general public with increasing concerns about the pressure exerted by tourists, on the already over-stretched infrastructure and resources in the state (Kokkranikal, 1993). With the development of new destinations and consequent increase in marketing activities, the number of tourists to the state is only likely to increase.

The above pressures and public discontent has now induced the Government to adopt the concept of 'responsible tourism' as a way forward. The implementation of the concept in Kerala has however taken on a character and tone that is specific to Kerala and its development history. In the next section we detail this particular initiative in Kerala.

Responsible tourism in Kerala

An initiative to implement responsible tourism began in the state with a state level consultation on organised by the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala in association with the International Centre for Responsible Tourism and EQUATIONS (a non-government activist organisation and 'hard' campaigner on tourism related issues) in 2007. Discussions were held in sub-groups consisting of 1) Local self governments and civil society organisations; 2) Tourism industry and 3) State Government Departments and organisation, which led to the identification of a series of economic, socio-cultural and environmental issues. These were documented and included in a framework for the implementation of responsible tourism. Also a 'State Level Responsible Tourism Committee (SLRTC) was formed with 40 representatives from different groups of stakeholders (Chettiparamb and Kokkranikal, 2012).

The SLRTC meeting identified four destinations to pilot responsible tourism initiatives. These destinations were chosen for their importance as tourism destinations, differing on tourist volumes

and the ecological sensitivity of the destination. These were Kovalam (a coastal destination), Kumarakom (a backwaters destination), Wayanad (hill resort destination) and Thekkady (a wildlife reserve with contained settlements). Further three state level multi-stakeholder Working Groups were constituted for steering economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects of tourism management in the state. Three Implementation Cells in each destination supported each of the above three working groups. Further, multi-stakeholder Destination Level Coordination Committees and local working groups were to be formed for each destination to coordinate local action. The state level committees worked on preparation of guidelines for responsible tourism at destinations, and local committees worked on the specificities of implementing the guidelines in locations. Please see figure 2 for the organisational structure for responsible tourism.

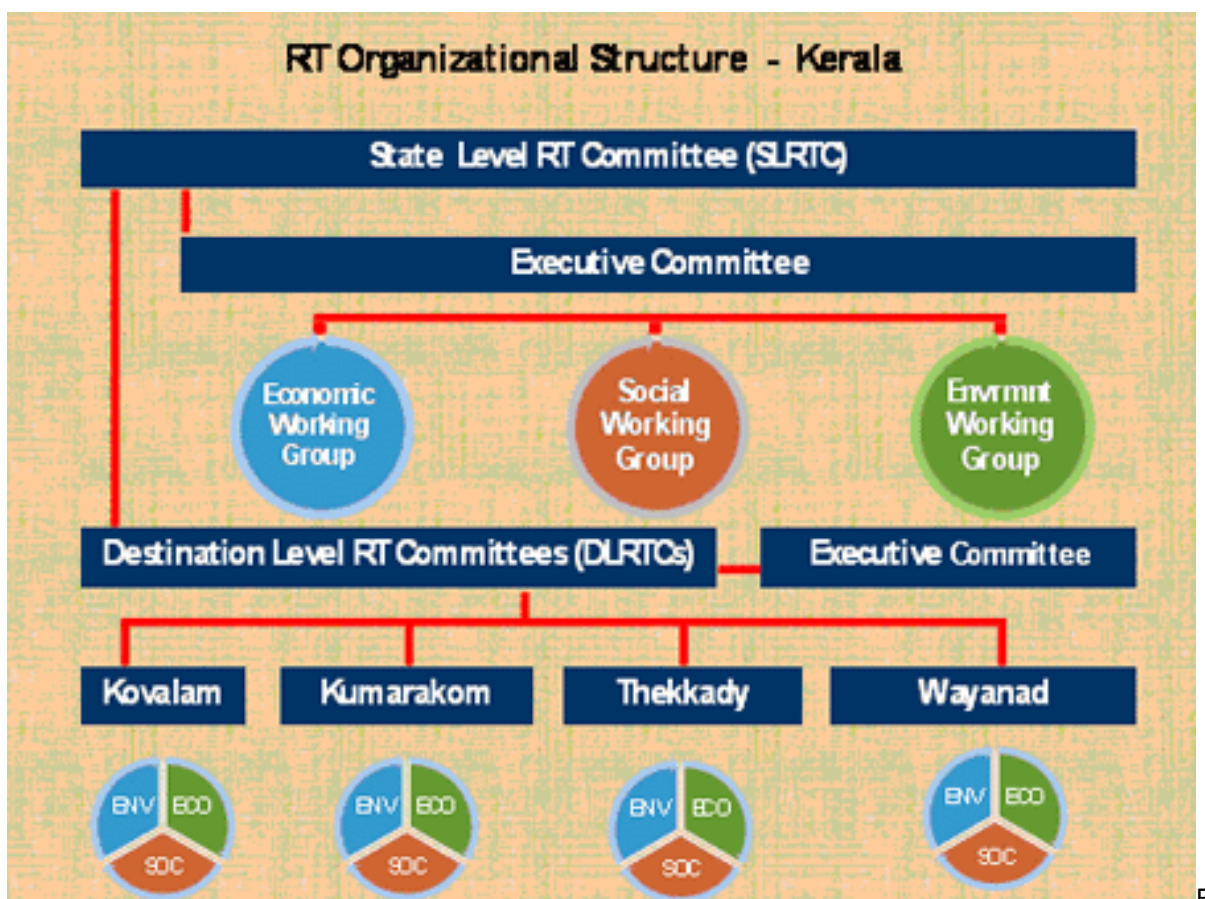


Figure: 2: Organisational layout for the implementation of Responsible Tourism in Kerala (adapted from <http://www.keralatourism.org/rt-impactsocial.php> (accessed 22nd October, 2011)

Destination management committees (DMCs) constituted at destinations have representatives from state government departments, local self governments, tourism industry, NGOs, civil society organizations, academia and media. Additionally, organizations and individuals professing expertise in a range of subject areas of relevance to the management of tourism were also members. The local self governments came forward to lead and facilitate local destination level planning, implementation and monitoring.

A major impetus for the responsible tourism initiative came with the incorporation of Kudumbashree and the State Poverty Eradication Mission as partners. As mentioned earlier, eradication of poverty through facilitation and development of entrepreneurial skills amongst women while contributing to local economic development through programme 'convergence' is a strong mandate of the Kudumbashree programme. The federated Kudumbashree units are also by and large, a politically and socially forceful presence in all local government endeavours throughout the state.

Responsible tourism held a major opportunity to the Kudumbashree programmes to create a new market for their goods and services. A symbiotic link between responsible tourism and Kudumbashree programmes soon emerged, engendering local entrepreneurship development and thereby poverty alleviation. A major drawback of the Kudumbashree programme was its inability to market their goods and services and responsible tourism programme opened up a market to the Kudumbashree units operating in the four destinations (Venu, 2008).

Supply and demand though co-existing locally had not, until then, automatically found each other in the destinations. The tourism sector had identified a series of issues in the workshop conducted at the start of the launch of responsible tourism. This was further detailed through a demand survey of

issues in local food procurement amongst hotels in the four destinations conducted by the Kerala Institute of Tourism and Travel Studies. It emerged that hoteliers though in principle willing to procure food locally, had a number of concerns that would have to be addressed if local procurement was to become a reality (Chettiparamd and Kokkranikal, 2012). These were:

- Produce requirements were in practice not steady (and averaged) throughout the year and supply chains would need to cater to this variability. Sudden spurts in demand were not uncommon and timeliness of supply would be needed.
- Acceptable prices had to be negotiated. In some instance, local procurement could be more expensive with prices lower outside the locality. Therefore supply chains to hotels could end up procuring non-local food produce.
- Quality control of food produce was of prime importance.
- Local food producers often were very small entities and hoteliers could not engage in one to one transactions with each producer (Venu, 2008).

The Kudumbashree units now had to devise a strategy to address these concerns of hoteliers. The local governments took a lead on facilitating strategy formulation and other coordination mechanisms between the Kudumbashree and the hoteliers leading to the execution of a formal agreement between the two parties. Some of the key elements of such a strategy involved

- Selected ranges of food produce to be targeted at first.
- Food production beyond tourism to be targeted by including the local population both in order to ensure spare production for hotels at all times and to ensure enough demand for excess capacity in supply (especially given that only selected food produces were targeted).

- Dedicated brokering units facilitated by the local government to be set up to address timeliness, quality control, fair price guarantees and access to resources (finance, land and skills).

The range of specific projects that were adopted is perhaps best illustrated through the experiences in the destinations. The responsible tourism initiatives and projects in two out of four destinations have been relatively successful and are thus fairly widely documented. Initiatives in these two destinations are summarised below. Accounts of the two less successful responsible tourism initiatives are more hard to find and though anecdotal speculative accounts for their failure exists, these need to be researched further for conclusive findings. Information for the accounts below is drawn from the government website of the Department of Tourism.

Kumarakom: This was the most successful of the four locations in which the pilot project was implemented. An agricultural calendar in response to timeliness of demand of food produce by hotels was prepared by the local responsible tourism cell (RT cell). Kudumbashree units of 5 members were then constituted for the cultivation of food produces chosen. 180 such groups involving 900 women were formed with land for cultivation earmarked and fertilizers and seeds supplied by the local government. Fallow land for cultivation was found through a household survey and physical reconnaissance survey. It is reported that paddy cultivation in 55 acres of and vegetable cultivation in 30 acres resulted. Further, 612 homestead farmers were motivated to take up vegetable cultivation. Organic farming practices were encouraged. The resource mapping exercise also identified 26 un-used ponds, 20 of which were restored as fish farms and 6 were restored for lotus cultivation. Initially (in 2008) 11 produces from the units were supplied to the hotels, which in 2010 has grown to 45 produces. It is estimated that around one third of the population of the village is involved in the production and sale of agricultural produce.

Other initiatives that were started under the responsible tourism initiative is the development of microenterprises in souvenir units and the formation of art and culture groups by women and children in a number of traditional art forms. The RT cell also developed calendars of local festivals and celebrations that could be used for marketing and promotion by industry partners. Other ancillary initiatives include the development of tour packages of village life and experiences, enhanced environmental protection through promotion of eco-bags instead of plastic bags, mangrove regeneration and control of backwater pollution. Energy saving initiatives through the development of local green certification and use of energy efficient street lighting is under way. Further, a grass root level community generated multifaceted resource mapping (containing information on different kinds of resources including that of art and culture), and a destination labour directory has been completed to help with planning.

Michot (2010) lists following achievement of the Kumarakom responsible tourism initiative:

- “Significant increase in local agricultural production
- Creation of a cultivation calendar
- Creation of systems for steady prices to avoid inflation and market fluctuations
- Creation of 10 Karshakasamity (farmers groups), with a total of 460 people
- Creation of 20 Kudumbashree units, with a total of 250 women
- Creation of 5 Micro Enterprises focused on women
 - 1 women fish processing unit
 - 1 women chicken processing unit
 - 1 women Chappathy (local bread) processing unit
 - 2 coconut supply units” (p.10)

The responsible tourism initiative has also led to the involvement of 760 women in the cultivation of local produce, 35 in retail activities, 30 in art and cultural groups, and 45 in the village tours, significantly contributing to the overall social agenda for women's empowerment (Michot, 2010).

Wayanad: The dispersed tourism settlement of Wayanad proved to be difficult to coordinate and manage. This quickly led to the decision to focus responsible tourism initiatives to the more limited area of Vythiri in Wayanad. The experience in supply of local food produces to hotels more or less follow the same pattern as Kumarakom. The RT initiative started with 12 items supplied to 2 units which later expanded to 43 products to 10 units. Further in Wayanad, two ethnic food corners showcasing tribal and indigenous food were opened. Festival calendars, destination resource directories, labour directories, development of souvenir markets, village tours, energy efficiency in street lighting, etc follow the same pattern as that of Kumarakom. As in Kumarakom, energy management practices of industry partners were studied and mass awareness of plastic pollution including cleaning initiatives were organised. Further, in Wayanad, major social issues related to tourism were studied by the RT cell to help with planning as were the unique sacred groves in the District. A Visitor Management Plan was also prepared for one of the busiest attractions in Wayanad - the Edakkal caves.

Thekkady: Projects that were started at Thekkady included the opening of a snack bar by tribal communities, design of a village life experience pack operated by the tribal community and a solid waste initiative. A Destination level Directory including festival calendar, information on local cuisines, ethnic life and culture was prepared. An awareness campaign, 'Clean Kumily, Green Kumily' was also organised to improve the overall cleanliness of the area...

Kovalam: Initiatives at Kovalam included a zero-tolerance campaign against child sex abuse planned after an appraisal of the situation on the ground including the sources and causes of the problem. A full day tour, 'Beyond Beach' and a half day village experience tour 'Lake and Life' were introduced.

A local labour directory was prepared to boost local employment in the tourism sector. Further, a Karthika festival of lights was organised, and a destination development plan was prepared to manage some of the environmental problems in Kovalam.

It is clear from the above account that though some activities were organised in all four destinations, the uptake of the same was very variable. Responsible tourism activities at Kumarakom are generally acknowledged as a success, with useful and productive cross-sectoral synergies forged leading to a considerable enhancement of local economic productivity. On the other hand, initiatives at Kovalam are generally regarded as a non-starter. Of the remaining two destinations, Wayanad has been more of a success than Thekkady. A systematically conducted empirical research will be needed to conclusively unpack the reasons for this variability. However, in the next section, we advance four possible explanations that might account for the differences. Besides information collected on the cases discussed, this explanation also draws upon theoretical understandings from both the tourism and planning literature.

Potential limiting factors to resilience of tourist destinations

It is widely acknowledged that while tourism development has the potential to spur local economic development, often this development is accompanied by unwelcome social impacts on the destination. It is important then to enquire if localities can be resilient in harnessing the economic potential of tourism while dealing with the negative impacts and what might be the limitations to such an approach. In particular we are interested in how planning can intervene in and contribute to the resilience of tourism destinations. Resilience is defined as the 'ability to experience positive economic success that is socially inclusive, works within environmental limits and which can ride global economic punches' (Bristow, 2010, 153 citing Ashby *et al* 2009). Below we suggest four

factors that could explain the variations in success of responsible tourism in the locations discussed above.

Relative 'maturity' of tourist destination

Butler's (1980) Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) traces the evolution of a tourist destination from its inception onwards. Accordingly, beginning with the 'discovery' stage a destination goes through 'involvement', 'development', 'consolidation', 'stagnation' and 'decline', which may be followed by 'rejuvenation' or 'further decline'. In general destinations experience healthy growth up to the consolidation stage. However, destinations in stagnation and decline stages often see a reversal in this growth leading to deterioration of the offer to tourists, negative impacts from tourism, loss of economic competitiveness and community antagonism to tourism. Butler's (1980) TALC is mirrored in the Irritation Index developed by Doxey (1975), who traced changes in community attitudes towards tourism at destinations in four stages, viz. 'euphoria', 'apathy', 'annoyance', and 'antagonism'. Tourist destinations typically would see the development of a full-fledged tourism industry in the development and consolidation stages, leading to the establishment of various types of supply chains (including illegal chains). In the saturation and decline stages, communities show annoyance and antagonism. Typically, the local economy will also have been transformed completely during these stages with most agrarian or rural economies turning into a tourism economy. Destinations that are in earlier stages of development may not have a critical mass of tourism businesses while those in the post saturation stages will have an oversupply. Thus responsible tourism initiatives that seek to develop local supply chains may find it difficult not only to break the prevailing supply chain relationships but also to prepare a hostile and relatively gentrified destination community with a fast disappearing agrarian economy to form an effective supply chain to service the tourism industry. Destinations that are in stages between involvement

and development can however find an enthusiastic host community and a healthy tourism industry reciprocating the enthusiasm shown by the host community.

Also, destinations that have benefitted from a planned approach to their development will have a supply of tourism businesses that are more attuned to the demand conditions, while unplanned destinations will have wider, but not necessarily healthy, array of tourism businesses and ownership patterns, ranging from illegal shacks and self-employed vendors to luxurious resorts. Also, unplanned destinations often have an oversupply of tourism businesses. A significant number of businesses also may not be engaged in legal business concerns thus rendering their participation in community and government led businesses participation problematic.

The difficulties encountered at Kovalam is a good example of a destination that is in the post saturation stage (Jacob...). Tourism became the dominant economic activity in Kovalam, ever since the mass arrival of hippies in the 1970s. The absence of any systematic tourism planning has led to a trajectory of growth, not all of which are desirable (Department of Tourism, 2011). This has led to a disconnect and considerable hostility between industry providers and local populations with little faith and considerable hostility to any venture steeped in a CSR agenda (<http://www.tourism-watch.de/en/node/1394>). The relative 'maturity' of the tourism industry can also explain the prioritisation of the zero tolerance campaign against child sex abuse rather than re-forging of food supply chains taken up under the responsible tourism initiative.

On the other hand, tourism became a significant economic sector in Kumarakom in the early 1990s. The potential for broad based economic leveraging has not yet been forged in the community (Kerala Tourism Watch, 2011). Kumarakom therefore has a host community willing and able to work together with the tourism industry in a mutually beneficial way, making the re-configuration of

comparatively less entrenched supply chains a distinct possibility under responsible tourism efforts. Further, tourism in Kumarakom was developed with the knowledge of adverse experiences in tourism development elsewhere in the state (such as Kovalam) and at a time when concepts such as sustainability and ethical tourism were becoming increasingly popular. In Kumarakom, therefore the demand for reconfigured supply chains could be significant both from the supply and demand side.

Place characteristics

Place characteristics play a major role in determining the nature and structure of a community, its economy, capabilities and attitudes. In this paper we discuss two features of places - the relative urbanisation and the nature of community – as being potentially influential on structuring local economic possibilities. It is generally agreed that an urbanised community would have a relatively diversified and developed economy in the service sector. Urban dwellers typically have access to a wide range of livelihood opportunities and primary sector activities such as agriculture may not occupy a prominent position. Community interaction also tends to be less direct, with group feelings and opportunities for mutual cooperation less prevalent than in rural communities. Rural communities on the other hand tend to have an agrarian economy, follow primary group behaviour and interaction, and work together to solve social and economic problems (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). Tribal societies are still more different in that social relationships are primarily based on family and kinship ties. They reside mainly in forests and hills, and follow a subsistence economy. There is little desire or incentive to amass wealth or resources for the future and they are generally preoccupied with meeting day to day survival needs. Moreover, there has been a history of exploitation of tribals by outsiders with many instances of land grabbing and sexual abuse by settlers and feudal landlords making them very suspicious of government programmes to bring development to their communities.

Kovalam has until recently been an urban suburb of Thiruvananthapuram city (the capital of Kerala) with the characteristics of an urban Indian society. Consequently since 2010, it has become an electoral ward of the Corporation of Thiruvananthapuram with urban status. This then means that there are little opportunities for primary sector engagement and consequent localisation of supply chains within the locality. Anecdotal evidence indicates that though attempts were made to reconfigure the supply chain to local produce, a regular and reliable supply of farm products could not be orchestrated. The urbanised character, could have made it difficult to stimulate enough volunteerism and dialogue which are so essential for such broad based community initiatives. Kumarakom on the other hand, is largely a rural society with an agrarian economy. With a declining agriculture sector, the opportunities to form a Kudumbashree supply chain for the tourism sector was welcome initiative for the people of Kumarakom. Further, being a rural society, their sense of kinship, group feeling and mutual cooperation facilitated the social dynamics necessary for the responsible tourism projects. Thekkady and Wayanad are places with a substantial tribal population. As discussed earlier, tribal societies follow a subsistence economy and their world view has no place for wealth creation or entrepreneurship. An absence of local entrepreneurship is not very conducive to developing the local economic resilience of locations thus potentially leading to very little local uptake of the projects. Commodification of tribal life and culture through activities such as meetings with the tribal chief observing tribal handicrafts-making are generally not well received. The structure of land holdings in Thekkady and Wayanad are also significantly different. Large tracts of land are reserved forests in both locations, but in Thekkady, the tourism spot is next to a heavily protected Tiger Reserve, which has major restrictions on human activities thus rendering accessibility to tribal communities all the more difficult here. Land holdings that are free from restrictions, are mainly large and held by generally affluent planters more interested in the cultivation of cash crops and spices that can generate more income. Therefore land available to the economically marginal groups is limited and more so in Thekkady than in Wayanad. The presence of

a critical mass of producers to guarantee a tourism supply chain is therefore questionable in these locations and especially so in Thekkady.

Capacity of local governments

The lead for the planning and implementation of local government initiatives have come from local actors – mainly volunteers – acting for and under the goodwill of the local government. The responsible tourism cell constituted at local level liaises with Kudumbashree members (an established organisation of gendered collective action and a history of pro-poor small and medium business entrepreneurship of women) and industry partners to match demand and supply in quantity, quality and timeliness. This broad based, multifaceted pro-active facilitative intervention requires local knowledge, dialogue and local leadership. It also requires a creative local level convergence of funds from a variety of sources, programmes and sectors which can only be garnered under the auspices of an empowered and active local government. In Kerala, especially in the rural areas, such engagement and innovation have been generally forthcoming under the various initiatives forged under the People's Planning Campaign. This has resulted in rather high levels of local social capital especially in the spheres of local level activism, community mobilisation, inter sectoral and inter-departmental dialogue, resource mobilisation and project based convergence of resources, labour and expertise. However, there can be great variability in levels of social capital formation. In general, rural areas have shown more engagement with such local level initiatives and some sectors such as education and infrastructure provision have benefited more from such engagement. Within this overall pattern, local government capacity related factors such as local level politics, leadership, ability to attract volunteers, efficiency in bureaucratic processing etc can vary with consequent impacts on local government efficacy for designing and implementing innovative projects.

Initiatives taken by the Kumarakom Panchayath (the local government) are detailed by the website of Kerala Tourism Watch (an organisation that pools together civil society activists and local communities that protest against exploitation arising from tourism related activities). According to this website, fall outs from unsustainable tourism were creating local level problems with little benefits and these were increasingly voiced at Kudumba Yogams (family meetings). This led to the Panchayat in 1997 agreeing to conduct periodic surveys that could lead to the formulation of a democratically forged tourism development plan. Accordingly GIS mapping, socio-economic surveys, assets mapping, attitudinal surveys and surveys of problems and issues in tourism was done in 2000. These were then compiled into a Status Report on Kumarakom in July 2002.

The need for regulation of tourism soon became apparent from these surveys. Accordingly a technical session was conducted in order to explore the powers and functions of the panchayaths under the devolved regime of local self governance. A people's Charter and Draft Guidelines on Sustainable Tourism for Kumarakom followed. This Charter proposed regulations on new constructions and utilisation of common resources, insisted on direct and indirect local employment and enhancement of local well being. A 'functional' committee on tourism was constituted under the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act to plan, implement and monitor tourism development was also constituted. The Chairperson (leader of elected council) and Secretary (overall bureaucratic chief) were the President and the Secretary of the functional committee. Other members included all Panchayath elected representatives, local tourism experts, local environmentalists, local economists, local NGOs, the District Town Planning Officer and representatives of the tourism industry. This was followed by the creation of a sustainable tourism forum outside the functional committee framework. Part of the work of the forum was to lobby on issues and decisions made by the Panchayath. Thus the forum protested against the panchayats move to reclaim the backwaters for providing parking space to the tourists and lobbied for the declaration of the bird sanctuary as a

community reserve. They have been able to halt the former and initiate action on the latter. Also political parties have lobbied on a range of issues such as local job reservations, closing down of illegal massage parlours and increased environmental awareness.

As discussed earlier, the social characteristics of Kovalam, is different from that of Kumarakom. Kovalam is now a new ward within urban Thiruvananthapuram Corporation with little self governing powers. Protests of political and official marginalisation within the Corporation apparatus have already been advanced from Kovalam and the fact that two different political parties lead the present Corporation and the former Panchayat does not help matters. (<http://ibnlive.in.com/news/new-corporation-wards-yet-to-feel-welcomed/158150-60-123.html>).

In Wayanad and Thekkady are remote locations with a sparse population. (Give population, area and density figures here). Further a substantial part of this population is tribal (give exact figures here).

Conclusions

Sin (2010) argues that the drive for responsible tourism originated from tourist's demand for ethical and authentic holiday experiences and that campaign materials on responsible tourism encourage critical and reflexive thinking on part of the consumer, who then would put pressure on the tourism industry to be more responsible tourism practices. Sin (2010) then goes on to suggest that the impetus for responsible tourism comes from ethical sensitivities of the consumers from the developed world and provides a care discourse to explain responsible tourism. We argue that this discourse of care and suggestions of exogenous origins for responsible tourism is in itself rather patronising. What is de-emphasised in this view are the rights and interests of local residents at

tourism destinations and the democratic ways and means that may or may not be available to them to demand and enforce responsible tourism. The case studies discussed here problematise Sin's rather simplistic understanding of the factors that lead to the uptake of responsible tourism. An engagement with the whys and hows of successful responsible tourism operations at destinations suggest instead a rights based discourse of environmental awareness and justice.

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