



# Practice of Ecotourism in Kerala's Tourism Destinations: Some Emerging Concerns

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*This paper critically reviews the practice of eco tourism in Kerala by studying three different types of eco tourist destinations; Kumbalangi, Cherai and Munnar. While Kumbalangi is selected to represent backwater tourism, Cherai and Munnar successively represented beach and high range tourism., This paper argues that all three destinations have failed in the areas of environmental sustainability, benefits for local people and more revenue generations, each of which is considered a core concern within eco tourism.*

*Keywords: Ecotourism, Environmental sustainability.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The service sector dominates the Kerala economy with the state leading many other Indian states in terms of per capita GDP and economic productivity. Tourism is one of the fastest growing sub- sectors in which ecotourism, a new form of tourism, has been gaining wide popularity in Kerala over the last two decades. Kerala's unique topographical features such as the Western Ghats region with its tropical forest eco system, provides a natural base for the development of ecotourism. The Western Ghats region of Kerala can be projected as an Ecotourism Zone in the true sense. In fact, it is interesting to note that Thenmala, an ecotourist

destination in Kerala, is the first planned ecotourism destination in India. The Tourism Department of the Government of Kerala which coordinates tourism activity in the state has taken up many steps for promoting ecotourism in the State. Moreover, a separate ecotourism wing has also been created for providing policy support for the development of ecotourism destinations. However, an increase in the amount of government expenditure under the head of ecotourism along with the natural advantage, have enabled the state to practice ecotourism in many tourist destinations. In the view of the poor prospects of the manufacturing sector and the severe threats facing agricultural and traditional sectors coupled with the uncertainties surrounding the expatriate employment in the Gulf, ecotourism is considered as one of the sectors which can drive the Kerala economy to the pinnacle of socio-economic development. The analysis of literatures on ecotourism reveals that the practice of ecotourism is expected to bring in drastic changes especially in the areas of economic benefits to local people, maintenance of environmental sustainability across destinations, and ensuring of more revenue generation. However the question is whether Kerala's ecotourism destinations have been able to generate those expected benefits? If not, what are the impediments coming in the way of attaining those benefits? Nevertheless, a few studies are available on Kerala with regard to these issues of ecotourism. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to bridge the gap existing in the literature.

The paper is structured into four sections. After a brief introduction in the first session, the second section discusses various issues that existed in the literature on ecotourism. Third section deals with data and methodology and the fourth section analyses the primary data collected from the field followed by the final section which sums up evidences based on the data analysis, besides providing some policy suggestions.

## II. ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LITERATURE

The term 'Ecotourism' became a buzzword after 1984 when a Mexican conservationist Ceballos- Lascurian decided to set up a travel agency 'Ecotours' to give tourists a quality experience and boost the local economy. Hereafter, ecotourism came to encompass any form of tourism that was related to nature or made token murmurs towards sustainable development. Plenty of literatures is available on ecotourism. The

available literature on ecotourism reveals that even though umpteen number of definition is available, there is no consensus about the meaning of ecotourism (Goodwin 1996). However, Boo's definition of ecotourism is widely accepted among scholars. He defines ecotourism as "traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of study, admiring and enjoying the scenery and wild plants and animals as well as many cultural manifestations".

There are many issues involved in the practices of ecotourism. Protecting or preserving natural beauty of tourist destinations by using the idea of ecotourism is the major issues highlighted in the literature. Many scholars have argued that ecotourism should require a two – way link between itself and environmental conservation (Valentine, 1993; Cater, 1994). Motivation for environment conservation can be generated due to many reasons in which some are purely profit motive. It is widely argued that lodge owners, who are mostly private owners in the destination have always vested interest in environmental conservation due to their large capital interest in ecotourism (Wesche, 1993).

Planning of ecotourist destinations is another important issue that has been discussed in the literatures. If ecotourism projects are not planned and managed, it can inflict damage to natural environment. In addition, the spread effects will be confined to the immediate community surrounding the tourist destination resulting in islands of affluence in a sea of poverty (Diaz, 1997). On the other hand, researchers on eco tourism have argued that participation of local people is to be ensured in the process of planning. This is because local people are assumed to have greater knowledge in the usage and effective management of the resources through application of traditional and customary practices.

Ecotourism also presents problems for the local community. The local requirements for food, shelter and economic benefits should be given precedence over the conservation and preservation agenda, so as to enlist more local participation. Most often the locals are forcefully evacuated from the protected areas thereby denying them accessibility to resources. This makes the locals vulnerable to illegitimate encroachment for resource extractions. Therefore, the stake holders should take the initiative to redress the problems which are normally faced by the locals. Therefore, ideally, ecotourism must contribute to the maintenance of species and habits either directly through a contribution to conservation and indirectly by providing revenue to the local community sufficient for

local people to sustain themselves, and therefore would protect their wildlife heritage area as a source of income (Vijayakumar, 1997).

There are various aspects, which need attention at operational level for sustainable management of ecotourism. Assessment of carrying capacities, better transportation managements, conservation and adaptations, design and control of developments, marketing effects in tune with the sustainability concept, local community involvement are to get priority while planning eco tourist destinations (Cater, 1994) .

To conclude, we can see a consensus that generated among the scholars for the desperate need for forming more ecotourism destinations even with presence of some isolated harms to the economy, environment and society. Such broad consensus, on region specific problems of ecotourism are important especially when we look at the problems and prospects of Kerala's ecotourism destinations.

### III. METHODOLOGY

We have developed a framework in this paper for analyzing the socio-economic and environmental viability of Kerala's ecotourist destinations. Primary data has been mainly used for the study. Owing to the non – availability of information on the universe, the investigator, selected those areas where tourism activities are concentrated for drawing up the sample size. Thus, three important tourist spots have been identified: viz, 'Kumbalangi', 'Cherai' and 'Munnar'. While Kumbalangy and Cherai are located in Ernakulam district, Munnar is located in Idduki district. Kumbalangy represents backwater tourism, whereas Cherai and Munnar successively represent beach and high range tourism. In the absence of a sampling frame, direct sampling methods could not be adopted for units of the universe and hence, individual tourist is considered as the sample unit, using stratified random sampling method. From a total of 90 sample units, 30 sample units each were selected from three destinations, following simple random sampling method for drawing up the sample from each destination so as to ensure a fair degree of accuracy of the sample size. In order to enlist the primary data, methodological techniques of unobtrusive observation, participant observation; and semi – structured interviews were also made use of. The study has mainly used descriptive statistics such as percentages, ratios etc for analyzing the primary data. The field research component conducted in the study

areas, examined the impacts of tourism and the attitudes and perceptions of tourists, local people, knowledgeable persons etc.

#### IV. PRIMARY DATA ANALYSIS

In accordance with our study objectives, we have segmented the primary data analysis into five sections namely profile of the tourist, information and transport facilities, spending pattern of tourists, environmental sustainability of ecotourism and problems of ecotourism.

##### (a) Profile of the Tourist

Although, a tourist is an important 'actor' in the tourism industry, there are other actors such as tour operators, government officials, and local peoples who often join together for delivering services for tourists. Unlike conventional tourism, ecotourism involves a fair degree of interaction with these actors and these interactions help develop appropriate strategies for the development of tourism industry. Such strategies are assumed to be focused on environmental sustainability, benefits for local people, and also providing better services to tourists.

Our total sample size adds up to 90 tourists - 30 tourists each from three destinations (See Table 1). In the present globalized world, the profile of tourists is as important as their number. Age, sex, occupation and income levels constitute the main elements of the tourist profile. These elements and their mutual interactions usually determine the amount of money spent by tourists both within and outside destinations.

Attracting tourists, with a fair profile, is always a challenging factor in tourism industry. A mass inflow of wealthy tourists do not suffice to solve various problems associated with the tourism industry especially over the last two decades. For overcoming problems in the tourism industry, there is a desperate need for designing comprehensive strategies that encourage tourists to spend more time and money in a destination.

Of the total sample, a majority of tourists are professionals (34%) (See Table 2). However, across the three destinations, the inflow of professionals is observed significantly higher in case of beach tourism (47%) as compared to backwater (27%) and high range tourism (30%). Other occupational categories such as government servants, business and

other private services account for 13%, 24% and 20% respectively. It is interesting to observe that the presence of retired servants is drastically low in relation to other occupational categories.

**TABLE 1.** Sample Composition.

	Number of Samples
Backwater Tourism	30 (33.3)
Beach Tourism	30 (33.3)
High range tourism	30 (33.3)
Total	90 (100)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

**TABLE 2.** Occupation of Tourist.

	Backwater Tourism	Beach Tourism	High range tourism	Total
Govt Service	13 (4)	0 (0)	27 (8)	13 (12)
Business	33 (10)	20 (6)	20 (6)	24 (22)
Professionals	27 (8)	47 (14)	30 (9)	34 (31)
Private services	20 (6)	27 (8)	13 (4)	20 (18)
Retired Govt Servants	7 (2)	7 (2)	10 (3)	8 (7)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

**TABLE 3.** Age of the Tourist.

	Backwater Tourism	Beach Tourism	High range tourism	Total
20-40	27 (8)	80 (24)	33 (10)	47 (42)
40-50	53 (16)	20 (6)	40 (12)	38 (34)
50-60	13 (4)	0 (0)	17 (5)	10 (9)
60 and above	7 (2)	0 (0)	10 (3)	6 (5)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

Coming to age and sex, most of the tourists are males in the age group between twenty and fifty years; the proportion is far low for tourists who are above 50 years . Even with respect to the high range destination, the inflow of retired people is found to be very low. However, we expect a fair inflow of aged tourists in other destinations.

Monthly income is another important factor in a tourist's profile as it influences the activities including the amount of spending and duration of stay in destinations. High income level of tourists often appeared as a strong appealing factor for high spending, however, it might get conditioned by the factors we have mentioned in the earlier paragraphs. Quite often, people are observed reluctant to reveal the correct amount of monthly income they get from various sources. For understanding and comparing the income levels of tourists, we have classified monthly income of tourists into various classes by keeping equal distances in view. On the basis of the informations given by tourists, it has been found that most of the tourists belong to lower income classes, say Rs 0-10,000, 10,000-20,000 (See Table 3). Across all ecotourists destinations, tourists with incomes above Rs 20,000 are found very low, which shows the inability of our ecotourist destinations to attract high income group people. Destination wise, high income group tourists such as those belong to the class of Rs 10,000-20,000 happen to be mostly backwater tourists. In fact, around 60% of the tourists in the backwater areas belong to the monthly income class of Rs 10,000-20,000.

Interviews scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays reveal, rather surprisingly that the number of tourists even on holidays were on the lower side. Our participatory discussions with tour operators and other key informants in each destination also reinforce the fact that in all destinations, the flow of tourists has always been far less than their carrying capacity.

**TABLE 4.** Sex.

	Backwater Tourism	Beach Tourism	High range tourism	Total
Male	87 (26)	93 (28)	73 (22)	84 (76)
Female	13 (4)	7 (2)	27 (8)	16 (14)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

**TABLE 5.** Monthly Income of the Tourist.

	Backwater	Beach	High range	Total
0 - 10000	13 (4)	67 (20)	40 (12)	40 (36)
10000 - 20000	60 (18)	27 (8)	40 (12)	42 (38)
20000 - 30000	13 (4)	7 (2)	10 (3)	10 (9)
30000 and above	13 (4)	0 (0)	10 (3)	8 (7)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

#### (a) Information and Transport Facilities

Better information and transportation facilities remain as inducing factors for tourists, particularly the information on cleanliness and scenic natural beauty of the destination. We have categorized sources of information into news papers and magazines, friends and relatives, travel agents, internet and others, for getting an idea about the most influencing factor among the various sources of information. Data from the destination reveals that most of the tourists still depend on the information from friends and relatives while making the decision to travel.

Among the various sources of information, around 60% of the tourists relay on the information from 'friends and relatives' before deciding to travel. From our participatory observations with tourists, we have found these 'friends and relatives' are basically the past tourists in the same destination or having some connection with the tourists who had visited the same destination before. Apparently, very few have used the most modern information sources such as internet, news papers and magazines. However, only 17% of tourists use internet as a major source of information (See Table 6); this is fairly surprising because in the present context of globalization people are generally expected to depend on internet for any information quarries. Influence of friends and relatives as a major source of information for travel basically shows the lack of effectiveness of government promotion strategies. This is in spite of the fact that the government has been spending an enormous amount of money for the promotion of ecotourism over the last few years through news papers, magazines and even internet. In fact, one were to consider the respective share of news paper, magazines and internet as

major source of information, then one could argue that the government through its promotion programs, has achieved some progress with regard to the dissemination of information.

Tour organization is another important activity of the industry that needs to be discussed in detail for getting a better idea about tourist flows. In our sample, most of the tourists come either as part of a family tour or individually. In fact, 'family' and 'individual' together account 90 percent of the total organised tour (See Table 7). The influence of other categories such as tours organized by private agencies is found to be low. Many of the tourists have reported that they are totally unaware of organized tour packages to ecotourism destinations except those tourists in the backwater area where the influence of tour operators has been found very high. Unlike the other two destinations, around 20% of the tourists in the backwater area travel as part of organized tour packages.

**TABLE 6.** Sources of Information.

	Back-water	Beach	High range	Total
News Papers and Magazines	0 (0)	13 (4)	0 (0)	4 (4)
Friends and relatives	67 (20)	67 (20)	47 (14)	60 (55)
Travel agents	13 (4)	7 (2)	10 (3)	10 (9)
Internet	20 (6)	13 (4)	17 (5)	17 (15)
Others	0 (0)	0 (0)	27 (8)	9 (8)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

**TABLE 7.** Tour Organization.

	Backwater	Beach	High range	Total
Individually	13 (4)	53 (16)	43 (13)	37 (33)
Organized tour package	20 (6)	7 (2)	0 (0)	9 (8)
Family tour	67 (20)	40 (12)	57 (17)	54 (49)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

**TABLE 8.** Principal Resident Status of Tourists.

	Backwater	Beach	High range	Total
Same district	47 (14)	53 (16)	17 (5)	39 (35)
Different district in the home state	20 (6)	40 (12)	50 (15)	37 (33)
Different state	13 (4)	7 (2)	17 (5)	12 (11)
Foreign	20 (6)	0 (0)	17 (5)	12 (11)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

**TABLE 9.** Satisfaction Regarding the Travel Facilities.

	Backwater	Beach	High range	Total
Yes	87 (26)	10 (30)	90 (27)	92 (83)
No	13 (4)	0 (0)	10 (3)	8 (7)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

**TABLE 10.** Mode of Transport Used by the Tourist.

	Backwater	Beach	High range	Total
Motor Cycle	20 (6)	27 (8)	7 (2)	18 (16)
Normal car	73 (22)	47 (14)	57 (17)	59 (53)
Bus	0 (0)	13 (4)	27 (8)	13 (12)
Shared Cabin	7 (2)	13 (4)	7 (2)	9 (8)
Others	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (1)	1 (2)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

Coming to the discussion of transport facilities, we have found most of the tourists coming from the home state (Kerala); Home state means the state to which the destination belongs. From a different perspective, a majority of the tourists enjoy the residential status of same district; same district indicates the districts to which each ecotourist destination

belongs. In our case, both Cherai and Kumbalangi belong to the same home district i.e. both are located in Ernakulam district. However, Munnar belong to Idukki District. The flow of tourists from different states and from abroad is found low across all three destinations. Lack of proper information could be the reason for the low number of tourist from outside the state (Kerala). Therefore, the state should spend more on those activities which might help to pass more information on to the tourists, especially those who stay in different parts of the country and abroad.

Almost all the tourists are satisfied with the kind of transportation facilities available for reaching the destination. About 59 percent of the tourists use a normal car for reaching the destination (See Table 10). Very few tourists, particularly those who visit the beach have complained to us that there are no sufficient transportation facilities available for reaching the destination. Our participatory observations of the tourists reveal that these tourists mainly belong to low income groups and that their preference is basically towards using the public transport mainly because it is comparatively cheaper.

#### (a) Spending by Tourists

Ecotourism destinations might become economically sustainable only if they can attract a large number of tourists. Large flows of tourists generally ensure more revenues to the destinations. In the earlier section, we have seen that the destinations have successfully attracted a large number of high income group tourists. However, when we analyze their spending patterns it become clear that the destinations have failed miserably to induce them spend more in the destinations. For understanding their spending pattern, we have categorized the entire spending range of each tourist into different classes i.e. Rs 500-1000, 1,000-2,000, 2,000-3,000 and 3,000 and above. Among these various spending classes, around 38% of tourist spending fall under the class of Rs 500-1,000 class (lower bound) whereas upper bound classes such as Rs 1,000-2,000, 2,000-3,000 account for 28% and 12% respectively (See Table 9).

It is very interesting to note that only 12% of the tourists spend more than three thousand rupees, which reflects the poor capability of ecotourism destinations to induce tourists to spend more. Apart from

beach tourists, it could be argued that they spend relatively more in the other destinations mainly with the expectation that they stay for a longer time in the destinations. Contrary to our expectations, for most of the backwater tourists (40%) spending is found concentrated in the lower income class (500-1000) which reinforces the evidence of tourism leakages which we come across in ecotourism literature (See Table 11). Nevertheless, tourists coming under high range tourism spend between Rs 2000 and 3000. However, the amount of spending in respect of the high range destination is found relatively higher than backwater and beach tourist destinations.

For understanding the nature of spending both within and outside the destinations, the average spending has been calculated for various categories such as for accommodation at sites, remuneration to guides, food and drinks in / outside the destinations, transportation facilities, for buying handicrafts and other items etc. Average spending is calculated by dividing the total spending by the total number of tourists. Across all spending categories, the average spending stands high for high range tourism as compared to beach and backwater tourism (See Table 12). However, the average spending of backwater tourists is found higher in relation to beach tourism.

Accommodation at site, and transport facilities are the higher spending categories. Average spending for 'accommodation at site' stands at Rs 1655 under High range tourists, whereas for transport and service, they spend Rs 1090 (See Table 13). Based on table 13, it could be argued that the benefit for local people from ecotourism destinations is low in the case backwater tourism as oppose to high range and beach tourism. This can be explained in the following ways. Among various spending categories such as food and drinks, spending on handicrafts and other items is found to benefit local people who stay near to the destination. This is because there are lots of instances in which we have found the presence of local people selling those goods and services. Remuneration to guides also can be partially included in this category. This may be due to the fact that the most of the guides who service in the destination do not usually belong to the local community. As opposed to beach and backwater tourism, the benefit for the local community from tourism is found to be more for high range tourism where the average spending across the categories seems to be very high.

**TABLE 11.** Total Amount Spend by the Tourist in the Destination.

	Backwater	Beach	High range	Total
500 – 1000	40 (12)	67 (20)	7 (2)	38 (34)
1000 – 2000	27 (8)	20 (6)	37 (11)	28 (25)
2000 - 3000	20 (6)	7 (2)	40 (12)	22 (20)
3000 and above	13 (4)	7 (2)	17 (5)	12 (11)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

**TABLE 12.** Average Spending (Rupees).

	High Range	Back water	Beach	Total
Accommodation at the site	1655	947	67	966
Remuneration to Guides	155	67	20	88
Foods and Drinks Inside the Tourist Destination	793	580	443	624
Foods and Drinks Outside the Tourist Destination	618	27	380	369
For Transport Services	1090	200	323	593
For Buying Handicraft and other related items	380	0	123	189
Others	93	233	40	119

Source: Primary Survey

**TABLE 13.** Hours Spend by the Tourist in the Destination.

	Backwater	Beach	High range	Total
0-2 Hour	13 (4)	13 (4)	0 (0)	9 (8)
2-5 Hour	27 (8)	67 (20)	6 (2)	33 (30)
5-24 Hour	47 (14)	20 (6)	47 (14)	38 (34)
More than one day	13 (4)	0 (0)	47 (14)	20 (18)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

## (d) Satisfaction of Tourists from Ecotourism Destinations

Satisfaction of tourists needs to be taken care of because it has long term economic effects on destinations. In the earlier section we have seen that most of the tourists still depend upon the information from past tourists while making decisions on traveling to a particular destination. Suppose, tourists are not satisfied with a particular destination, it would not only influence their future decisions about travelling to same destination but also influence others' decisions to travel to the same destination. The level of satisfaction can be measured or understood from the following questions included in our questionnaire schedule. The questions like, what is the level of your satisfaction, would assess the level of satisfaction directly from them. On the other hand, a question such as how long do you intend to stay in a particular destination also assesses the satisfaction level but the way of measurement, is indirect. This is because the question indirectly measures their satisfaction level by simply observing their stay duration. If a tourist prefers to stay for a longer time in a destination, it indicates a higher level of satisfaction. However, the results of both the questions contradict each other. This is because we can see a higher level of satisfaction from the direct measurement. But indirect measurement reveals mixed results. In respect of indirect measurement, satisfaction is not found so high for beach and backwater tourism. Interestingly around 60% of backwater tourists have revealed that they do not like to stay for a longer time in a particular destination which shows the presence of displeased tourists in back water tourism (See Table13)

**TABLE 14.** Preferences of the Tourist to Stay More than One Day in the Destination.

	Backwater	Beach	High range	Total
Yes	40 (12)	7 (2)	80 (24)	42 (38)
No	60 (18)	93 (28)	20 (6)	58 (52)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

**TABLE 15.** Frequency of the Visits.

Number of Times	Backwater	Beach	High range	Total
1	18	8	12	38
2	8	2	5	15
3	2	4	3	9
4	2	0	3	5
6	0	2	0	2
7	0	0	2	2
8	0	2	2	4
10	0	8	3	11
11	0	2	0	2
20	0	2	0	2
Total	30	30	30	90

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

Frequent visits to a particular destination show the level of satisfaction. From table 15, it is observed that most of the tourists are basically first timers. However, visits by past tourists are higher only with respect to beach and high range tourism but not so in the case of backwater tourism (See Table 15). Therefore, this evidence also reinforces our earlier observation about the presence of a large number of unsatisfied tourists in backwater tourism.

#### (e) Environmental Sustainability of Ecotourism Destinations

The sustainability of environment is one of the main objectives of ecotourism. Zero waste management could be an ideal strategy for each ecotourist destination. Non generation of waste is the central theme of zero waste management. In a deeper sense, zero waste management means that the wastes generated in a destination are degradable in nature. However, it is observed that zero waste management has never been adopted in any destination where the presence of non-degradable wastes is significantly higher in all destinations. It has been observed by us and even by tourists in the destinations that there is a clear absence of proper waste management system in the tourist destinations. Despite this, we

have also observed that most of the tourists show a great concern for environment and cleanliness in all the destinations (See Table 16).

Backwater destination seems to be an exception compared to the other two destinations with regard to the placement of waste bins. Approximately 93% of backwater tourists reported the placement of waste bins in appropriate places, but with respect to the other two destinations, around half of the people have responded about wrong placing of waste bins. It has been observed that the local authority has been entrusted with the task of moving waste to segregated places which are far away from the destinations. However, waste management has not been effective in all the destinations due to the prevalence of inefficiency in the local administration. We found most of the waste bins over filled because of the incorrect timing of waste collection. This is one of the common problems faced by both the beach and high range destinations. It is interesting to observe that some of the tourists have complained that they cannot easily move about in the destinations especially in high range due to the foul smell from waste bins.

**TABLE 16.** Concern of the Tourist about Environment Quality.

	Backwater	Beach	High range	Total
Yes	100 (30)	100 (30)	90 (27)	97 (87)
No	0 (0)	0 (0)	10 (3)	3 (3)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

**Table 17.** Appropriate Waste Disposal Arrangement (or Waste Bins) in Different Places.

	Backwater	Beach	High range	Total
Yes	93 (28)	53 (16)	23 (7)	57 (51)
No	7 (2)	47 (14)	77 (23)	43 (39)
Total	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (30)	100 (90)

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

Ironically, there are no separate arrangements made in our destinations for collecting degradable and non-degradable wastes. Ideally, there should be some arrangement for collecting these wastes separately. The problem of waste management would not have arisen, if there had been no generation of plastic and other non degradable wastes. Tourists basically generate these non-degradable wastes, which are the remains of products consumed by tourists in the destinations. In all destinations, most of the shops sell products which are not so eco friendly in nature. Half of the waste management problem could have been solved if authorities had allowed only eco friendly products to be used in the destinations. Our conversations with tourist also reinforced this opinion because most of the people especially those coming from different parts of the state are likely to buy indigenous items. If the government allows only indigenous products inside the destinations, it will not only solve the problem of waste management, but also might benefit the local people which is one the main objectives of eco tourism.

(f) Problems of Ecotourists Destinations

All the three eco tourist destinations have some common problems. We have categorized these problems on the basis of some common themes such as anti- social activities, corruption mainly for getting facilities in government apartments, unhygienic conditions, untrained man power, poor accommodation facilities and level of attention.

**TABLE 18.** Problems of Eco Tourist Destination.

	Back water	Beach	High range	Total
Anti social	11	16	23	50
Hostile treatment	0	2	7	9
Corruption	9	18	9	36
unhygienic condition	5	13	22	40
Untrained manpower	2	7	9	18
Poor accommodation facilities	5	13	11	29
Expensive accommodation facilities	23	16	23	62

**TABLE 18. (Continued)**

	Back water	Beach	High range	Total
Lack of attention	4	9	7	20
Hostile treatment	2	13	7	22
others( please specify)	2	2	0	4

Table notes: Figures are in percentages and values in parenthesis indicate frequencies

Source: Primary Survey

Of these common problems, most of the people have noticed the presence of anti-social activities, poor and expensive accommodation facilities which are major concerns in the destinations requiring immediate attention. The problem of expensive accommodation is more with high range tourism; because of this problem, many tourists are found to have reduced a number of days for staying inside the destinations. This will of course reduce their spending, keeping it always less than their potential spending.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Simultaneous achievement in the sphere of social, economic and environment sustainability are key ideas behind the concept of ecotourism. The practices of ecotourism in Kerala's tourist destination have generated a lot of hope among state, environmentalist and social scientist. However our analysis shows that the ecotourism has failed in a number of key areas in which ecotourism is expected to improve. Environment conservation, creation of benefits for local people and revenue generation have each failed though the intensity of failure is different among the three observed sites.

Even for the short term existence of ecotourist destinations, economic sustainability is a must especially in the absence of any monetary assistances from governmental and other non-governmental agencies. For achieving economic sustainability, each destination has to earn a minimum amount and that must at least cover the amount of working capital required for each destination. Often economic sustainability is difficult to achieve particularly when there is low capacity utilization in the destination. Our analysis shows clearly the level of capacity utilization in each destination is far lower than the

optimum level. Lack of tourists is reported as the main factor responsible for lower capacity utilization and thereby generation of lower revenue - both direct and indirect.

In the present globalized world, the profile of the tourist is as important as their number. age, sex, occupation, income level etc are important elements in the tourist profile usually determining the nature of spending by the tourists both inside and outside the tourist destination. The available evidence shows that each of the three destinations has successfully attracted large numbers of tourist with various qualities in their profile. However, the amount of spending by the tourists including both inside and outside destinations is incredibly lower in relation to their 'high profiles.' Irrespective of the difference in destination, most of the tourists spending came down to the lower bound spending class (500 – 1000), shows the inability of our ecotourist destination to induce them to spend more. Therefore the amount of tourism leakage in the ecotourist destination is found to be very high. Among the three destinations studied tourism leakage is found very low in high range tourism. This is because average spending by the tourist in high range tourism stands very high in all spending categories in relation to beach and backwater tourism. However, average spending of backwater tourist stands relatively higher in relation to beach tourism in all the spending categories. Unfortunately, benefit of local people from ecotourism is found to be low in all destinations. Beach and backwater tourism are less beneficial to local people compared to high range tourism. This generalization is derived from our analysis of spending categories by the tourists in and outside the destinations.

Mutual interaction among various players in tourism industry is a key idea behind ecotourism. This helps to develop a comprehensive strategy that is supposed to attain economic, social and environmental sustainability. However, such healthy interactions among actors were not observed in any of the three destinations. Particularly, the knowledge from local people is not properly utilized for designing and managing ecotourism destinations and this could be one reason for the non-achievement of some prime objectives in ecotourism.

Globalization and the subsequent improvement in the infrastructure development, mainly due large state spending have improved the transportation facilities to the ecotourism destination. Nevertheless, the effects of globalization on passing of information to tourist regarding the ecotourism destination are found very low. It is surprising to see even in

the globalised period the 'friend and relative' is influencing source of communication as getting information regarding the destination. Such a result shows the ineffectiveness of government promotion programme for passing information to tourist with regard to ecotourist destinations. The satisfaction level of the tourist is also too low in ecotourism destinations which is a cause for concern since this is an important inducing factor for future flows of tourist into destinations. Improving the satisfaction level is particularly important especially when the section of 'friends and relatives' stand as a major source of information and communication in the industry.

Environment sustainability is one of the main objectives of ecotourism. 'Zero waste management' seems to be ideal strategy that can successfully adopt in eco tourism destination. However, it has been observed that such waste management strategies have never been adopted in any of the three destinations and the presence of non-degradable wastes are very high in all three destinations. Therefore, due to the lack of planning, environment sustainability of ecotourism destination is the major threat that is facing all the destinations.

There are some commonalities among the problems for the three destinations. Anti-social activities, unhygienic condition, expensive accommodation facilities are the main problems in the destinations.

#### Policy Recommendations

Much has been done and much is yet to be done. In addition to improving state spending, three further important policy recommendations are desperately needed to solve the problem which we have identified in the study.

1. To set up coordination committees in the destination level, for managing and designing strategies. The committee should include the nominees from all actors in tourism industry such as those from government, tour operators, local businesses and local peoples. The committee should meet at least twice in a month and must review the performance of the destination in terms of social, economic and environmental spheres.
2. More investment needs to be diverted for improving information and communication in which it has a great role in attracting

tourists. Moreover, state level tourist information cell needs to be set up for passing information to the tourists.

3. Non- generation of waste or 'zero waste' management should be the slogan of waste management programs in the destination. We should allow only indigenous products inside the destination. This serves two purposes: to enhance the benefits for poor people and waste disposal.

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