

GREEN MARKETING PRACTICES FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM - THE TOURISTS' PERSPECTIVE AND SATISFACTION

OLIVIA GEORGE

Research Scholar, Reg.no:18134011062050,
Department of Management Studies,
Nesamony Memorial Christian College,
M.S. University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli-627 012,TamilNadu, India
oliviageorgece@gmail.com

Dr. C L JEBA MELVIN

Associate Professor and Head of Research Centre,
Department of Management Studies,
N.M.Christian College, M.S. University,
Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli-627012,
TamilNadu, India
jebamelwyn@gmail.com

Abstract

As a subsequent phase of sustainability, responsible tourism has been emerging as a new trend among tourists to mitigate the harmful environmental effects caused by them. Any sort of tourism may be responsibly applied by being socially and culturally aware and by understanding the effect on tourist spots thereby making it a positive one. Executing proper green marketing strategies in tourist places may be a good way in helping the tourists to be responsible. This paper critically examines the green marketing practices implemented in Kerala's tourist destinations, especially the ecotourism areas. Two tourist destinations in the Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala, Poovar representing backwater tourism and Kovalam representing beach tourism, were selected. A convergent parallel design of data collection, carried out with the respondents(tourists), revealed that the tourists are willing to be more responsible in their leisure journey but the lack of such green practices deter them from being so, thus validating that the green marketing practices significantly affect the responsible behaviour of the tourists. They also feel that simple green practices like waste management, a pollution-free environment and improving local community will make them satisfied as a responsible tourist.

Keywords- Ecotourism, Responsible Tourism, Green Marketing practices, Responsible tourist behaviour, Tourists' satisfaction

1. Introduction

The growing broad consensus on the sustainability of tourism development has given a boost to the debate on the modus operandi of achieving the goal of sustainability. Yet, the average distance travelled by the tourists has been increasing at a faster rate than ever leading to the forecast that the tourism industry will likely cause 40 percent of the global carbon emissions by 2050. As of now, 72 percent of tourism's CO₂ emissions come from transportation, 24 percent from accommodation and 4 percent from local activities. Since the Rio Earth summit in 2012, despite the agreement on Climate Change Convention, no sufficient progress was made towards realizing sustainable tourism. The stakeholders feel that this is because everyone has been expecting others to behave in a sustainable manner. This

thought has led to a way of tourism where every individual involved in tourism is held responsible for the social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts caused by them.

Many theories related to responsible tourism have been in circulation. Despite many developed tourist destinations, Kerala state of the Indian subcontinent has officially launched the world's first state-wide responsible tourist destination in 2017. Responsible tourism is aimed at promoting people-friendly, local community-friendly and eco-friendly initiatives and also boosting rural development, local job opportunities and women empowerment.

It is clear that for a tourist to be responsible, proper initiatives, mainly green practices, are a prime necessity. The State Government of Kerala has been adopting several green policies like waste management, reduce plastic usage and mitigate pollution. The analysis of the literature shows that these practices bring about drastic changes in the economy and environmental sustainability of the destination. However, there arises a question on to what extent these green measures are successful. Are the responsible tourists satisfied with these practices? Do these green practices motivate them to be more responsible? Nevertheless, only a few studies have been done on the responsible behaviour of the tourists while none explaining the green practices that encourage them to be responsible. Hence, this study attempts to bridge the gap prevailing in the previous literature.

2. Engagement with the literature

2.1 Responsible tourism

The concept of responsible tourism has been observed in tourism studies since the early nineties. Smith(1990) defines responsible tourism as a form of tourism that respects the destination's natural, built and cultural environment and the interest of all the parties concerned.

While a hitherto acknowledged definition of responsible tourism was given at the World Summit on Sustainability development held at Capetown in 2002. The declaration recognises that Responsible tourism takes a variety of forms. It is characterized by travel and tourism which minimises negative economic, environmental, and social impacts; generates greater monetary benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry; involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances; makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity; provides happier experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with the local community, and a greater understanding of the local cultural, social and environmental problem; provides access for specially challenged people and is culturally sensitive, stimulates respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

Responsible tourism was actually suggested as an alternative to mass tourism to reduce the negative effects of tourism development. Martinez, Perez, and Rodriguez del Bosque(2013) suggested that responsible tourism practices come from social responsibility and an ethical dimension focusing on the local perspective. Further, Hafiz et al. (2014) identified responsible destination planning and responsible environmental practice as the two dimensions of responsible tourism. Thus, environmental practices, which can also be called a green marketing mix, are inevitable to encourage tourists to be responsible.

Even in the surge of environmental harms, sustainability is still a feature that comes after the main and classical features of a destination(Bernini, Urbinati, & Vici, 2015). While Zgolli and Zaiem(2018) studied the impact of the concern with sustainable tourism on the responsible behaviour of the tourists and found it to be positively associated which in turn affected their choice of destination. Hence, to ensure the attainment of sustainability, so that the destinations and the local community are preserved, it is vital to implement sustainable marketing practices since it is the main dimension in the responsible behaviour of the tourists.

2.2 Green marketing mix of Tourism

(a) Green tourism product

The green products/services in tourism are intangible. It can only be experienced by tourists. This includes the transportation, amenities at the destination, food and beverages, accommodation, support to local communities and indigenous products sold at the destinations. Eco-friendly amenities like a clean environment, proper waste management, pollution-free and plastic-free destinations, public biotoiletries, drinking facilities to avoid plastic packages are some of the green services. Transportation to the destination can also be made eco-friendly by using electric-powered vehicles, carpooling and by encouraging walking and cycling. The negative effects of air transport can be reduced by carbon offset options. The food provided can be organic and grown locally which supports the local community. The accommodation can be in natural areas or made of natural products like wood. It should have recycling and reuse policies, energy-saving lightings and solar/wind-powered energy consumption. Encouraging the reuse of towels or linens can also be an eco-friendly option.

(b) Green tourism price

Green pricing in the tourism sector means the combination of monetary and non-monetary prices. The monetary prices include the entrance fee, donations for environmental causes, offering discounts or offers for eco-friendly activities of the tourists, etc. While non-monetary prices include the time taken to reach the destination, risks during the journey, and future benefits.

Green tourism place

This part of tourism's green marketing mix includes the channels of distribution like tourism and travel agents, governmental websites of tourism or any place where the tour packages are sold. E-tickets can be provided to tourists. It is the

responsibility of the travel agents to provide proper awareness and education on the optimized use of natural resources and to leave the flora and fauna of the destination undisturbed.

(c) Green tourism promotion

Promoting the tour package is the main element of the marketing mix. It includes digital advertising, using social media and emails to promote tourism. Word of Mouth is also a green way of communication mix for promotion. In order to improve the brand image of the destination, green practices should also be implemented. Eco-friendly activities can be carried out at the destination and promoted to improve the reach of the destination

2.3 Tourists' satisfaction

Extensive studies have been done on the impact of tourism marketing mix elements on the tourists' satisfaction. All the service marketing mix elements, except the promotion, have a positive association with the tourists' satisfaction (Rahman, Islam, Sharkar, Sultana, & Talukder, 2019). This was contradicted by Magatef (2015) in his studies revealing that product along with promotion has the strongest effect on the satisfaction of tourists. These studies point out a fact that the satisfaction of the tourists depends on the destination and to what extent the promoted packages are complied with. The demographics like gender, age, nationality, etc. also determine the association between the marketing mix elements and satisfaction. However, Meng, Tepanon, and Uysal (2008) argue that the tourist satisfaction of a destination is a function of attribute importance, performance, and travel motivation. This satisfaction forms the key indicator in the destination's real performance and competitiveness (Mihalic, 2013). Further, Mihalic reveals that the environmental resources of the destination are not efficiently used resulting in tourists' discontent. For efficient and sustainable use of resources, appropriate green marketing practices should be instigated.

3. Research Methodology

The study is both quantitative and qualitative in nature implementing a convergent parallel mixed method. A questionnaire was distributed to the tourists arriving at two of the tourist destinations in Kerala, Poovar and Kovalam, where responsible tourism has been initiated. The sample size for the present study is 80 tourists, 40 from each destination representing both domestic and international responsible tourists. The responsible tourists were purposively selected by the researcher after observing their green characteristics. The data were analysed using SPSS 20.0. The items of the green marketing mix were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree where 3 denotes a neutral opinion. The green marketing mix for tourism included the 4P's like green product/service, green price, green place and green promotion.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

In accordance with the study objectives, the data analysis has been segmented into three sections namely the profile of the responsible tourists, green marketing practices at the responsible tourism destination, and the satisfaction of the tourists on the destination.

4.1 Profile of the responsible tourists

Responsible tourism is a form of tourism where every individual like tourists, tour agents, Governmental organizations and NGOs involved in tourism needs to act responsibly. This study aims to look out only at the perspectives of a tourist. A tourism destination will usually be flooded with tourists but the number of tourists behaving responsibly towards the environment will be fewer. The demographic profile of such responsible tourists is being developed to have a clear idea of the subjects under study and to design comprehensive strategies to encourage the responsible behaviour of the tourists.

Table 1. Sample Composition

Type of Destination	Sample size
Backwater Tourism	40(50%)
Beach Tourism	40(50%)
	80(100%)

Table 2. Gender of the Responsible tourists

	Male	Female	Total
Backwater Tourism	24(60%)	16(40%)	40(50%)
Beach Tourism	19(47.5%)	21(52.5%)	40(50%)
	43(53.75%)	37(46.25%)	80(100%)

Table 3. Age of the Responsible tourists

	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Total
Backwater Tourism	14(35%)	21(52.5%)	3(7.5%)	2(5%)	40
Beach Tourism	20(50%)	10(25%)	6(15%)	4(10%)	40
	34(42.5%)	31(38.75%)	9(11.25%)	6(7.5%)	80(100%)

Table 4. Occupation of the Responsible tourists

	Busines s	Govt. Service	Profess- ionals	Non- Profes s ionals	Retired	Unem ployed	Total
Backwater Tourism	5 (12.5%)	6 (15%)	27 (67.5%)	1 (2.5%)	2 (5%)	0	40
Beach Tourism	12(30%)	3(7.5%)	10(25%)	4(10%)	7(17.5%)	4(10%)	40
	17 (21.25%)	9 (11.25%)	37 (46.25%)	5 (6.25%)	9 (11.25%)	4 (5%)	80 (100%)

Table 5. Monthly Income of the Responsible tourists

	10,000 and below	11,000- 20,000	21,000- 30,000	31,000- 40,000	41,000- 50,000	Above 50,000	Total
Backwater Tourism	14(35%)	16(40%)	6(15%)	2(5%)	2(5%)	0	40
Beach Tourism	19(47.5%)	18(45%)	1(2.5%)	2(5%)	0	0	40
	33 (41.25%)	34 (42.5%)	7 (8.75%)	4 (5%)	2 (2.5%)	0	80 (100%)

Table 6. Residential status of the Responsible tourists

	Home district	Home state	Other state	Foreign country	Total
Backwater Tourism	22(55%)	9(22.5%)	3(7.5%)	6(15%)	40
Beach Tourism	15(37.5%)	2(5%)	5(12.5%)	18(45%)	40
	37 (46.25%)	11 (13.75%)	8 (10%)	24 (30%)	80 (100%)

Of the total sample, backwater tourism attracts more male(60%), professional(67.5%) responsible tourists of agebetween 31 and 40(52.5%) living in the same district(as of the destination) with an income less than 20,000(75%). While beach tourism attracts the young female(52.5%) responsible tourists living abroad(45%) who are either self-employed or professional employees(55%) of age 21-30(50%) with an income below 20,000(92.5%).

Table 3 shows that both backwater and beach tourism are unable to attract older people who are either in search of relaxation or healthy holidays. Also, an important interpretation is that people with higher income do not prefer these destinations as much as the middle-income income groups prefer them (Table 5). It is being

construed that the expectations of such group of people are much higher than the others which are obviously not fulfilled at these destinations.

4.2 Green marketing practices at the destination

The variables for green marketing mix elements included in the study was formulated using the 4P's (Product/services, Price, Place and Promotion)of the marketing mix of the tourism sector. The green product/services were again segmented into the environment of destination, amenities at the destination, transportation, food and beverages, accommodation and support to the local community.

This part of the questionnaire consisted of 29 items classified into four factors viz.green product/experience (22 items), green price (2 items), green place (3 items) and green promotion (3 items). Since the Likert scale belongs to the ordinal data type, the central tendency is measured using the median or mode. Here, the sampling was purposive and hence the mode value of the Likert scale responses are calculated to find the most commonly agreed or disagreed marketing mix elements that either encourage or discourage the responsible behaviour of the tourists respectively.

Table 7. Green Marketing mix elements at the Destination

Green Marketing Mix elements	Response (Mode value)
Green product/experience	
Appropriate waste disposal bins at an adequate distance	Agree(4)
Waste bins that are properly emptied without delay	Agree(4)
Waste disposal bins classified based on recyclability	Disagree(2)
Pollution-free destination	Strongly Agree(5)
Plastic-free destination	Strongly Agree(5)
Availability of drinking water facilities to avoid plastic water bottles	Agree(4)
Eco-friendly public bio-toiletries in the destination	Neutral(3)
Well maintained public toilets	Agree(4)
Well satisfying transport facilities to the destination	Strongly Agree(5)
Car-pooling/Public transport facilities	Agree(4)
Eco friendly(Electric/CNG buses) vehicles	Disagree(2)
Bicycling/Travel by foot practices	Agree(4)
Air travel to the destination with a carbon offset option	Disagree(2)

Restaurants providing organic food	Neutral(3)
Restaurants and hotels having water recycling units/water reuse	Agree(4)
Hotels having energy saving bulbs	Agree(4)
Hotels generating energy from solar panels/wind farms	Agree(4)
Hotels having plastic recycling/reuse policies	Agree(4)
Hotels encouraging the reuse of linen and towels	Neutral(3)
Buildings made of eco-friendly materials for accommodation	Agree(4)
The destination supporting local communities through employment	Strongly Agree(5)
More indigenous products are being sold at the destination	Agree(4)
Green price	
Discounts or free coupons for the green practice of the tourists	Agree(4)
Donations to environmental causes	Strongly Agree(5)
Green place	
Travel agents provide e-tickets	Strongly Agree(5)
The destination providers educating on proper use and management of natural resources	Agree(4)
Eco-label certified destination providers are available	Neutral(3)
Green promotion	
Tourism packages are promoted through e-mails by destination providers	Agree(4)
Tourism is promoted through social media	Neutral(3)
Advertisements promoting tourist destinations focus on eco-friendly activities	Strongly Agree(5)

It is observed that the responsible behaviour of the tourists might be encouraged through many of the green practices that are yet to be implemented at the destination. They feel that the lack of many such green practices tends to suppress their responsible behaviour towards the environment. Proper waste management systems, eco-friendly toilets, a clean environment, eco-friendly transportation and accommodations policies, etc. have a greater impact on such behaviour of tourists. Discounts for environmental practices and donations for real environmental causes also seems to encourage them. Not only the tourists, but it is also the responsibility of the travel agents to spread awareness on the proper use of natural resources. Online promotion is a major green practice that needs to be implemented to attract responsible tourists towards the destination.

4.3 Satisfaction of the tourists on the destination

The satisfaction of the tourists on the destination is measured by the time spent at the destination, intention to revisit and the number of times they have visited the destination. If a tourist loves to stay back at the destination and spend more time there, it indicates a higher level of satisfaction and vice versa.

Table 8. Frequency of the visits

	First time	2-5	6-10	Above 10	Total
Backwater tourism	19	17	4	0	40
Beach tourism	14	20	5	1	40
Total	33	37	9	1	80

Most of the responsible tourists are not first-time visitors to the destination. However, a wide amount of visits by past tourists are also not observed. This reinforces the fact that the tourists are not much satisfied with backwater tourism. However, the promotion by the Tourism Department of Kerala seems to be effective in attracting responsible tourists towards these destinations.

Table 9. Preference to stay for more than a day at the destination

	Yes	No	Total
Backwater tourism	18	22	40
Beach tourism	9	31	40
Total	27	53	80

Most of the responsible tourists show no intention to stay back for another day indicating the absence of satisfied tourists in both the tourism especially the beach tourism.

5. Conclusion and Policy recommendations

In the present globalized world, tourism is a development tool to boost the economy, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions of a country. It is great to see that Kerala has been taking significant actions to launch responsible tourism at many destinations like Kumarakom, Kovalam, and Poovar. However, this study reveals the depressing truth that the measures by the Government to implement responsible

tourism is still at their nascent stage. Examining the environmental dimension of responsible tourism shows that much more activities are to be done on the destination to improve the perspective and satisfaction of the tourists.

Environmental sustainability is one of the major threats facing the tourism industry. Since the tourists are becoming more and more conscious of what they offer to the environment, this is the optimal time to introduce green practices to save the environment. Deferment in implementing such actions cause even the first-timers to return to their home dissatisfiedly, threatening the economy of the tourist destination.

5.1 Policy Recommendations

The major problem identified in this study is the lack of green practices at the destination that act as a stumbling block for the tourists to exhibit their responsible tourist behaviour. Few recommendations are being done to tackle this issue.

1. Waste management at the destination must be seriously taken since it increases the responsible behaviour of the tourists and prompts them to choose the same destination for the next holiday. This policy should include strict rules for the hotels and accommodations quoting the necessity of water and plastics recycling/reuse.
2. More investment should be diverted towards the transportation sector to build CNG/hybrid/electric buses to encourage the reduction of pollution at the destination. Bicycle stands and carpooling facilities should be built. Walk by foot practice should be encouraged with discounts and offers.
3. Supporting the local community is one of the major pillars of responsible tourism. The local community must be allowed to participate in major decision making meetings by the Government. This would encourage them to be efficient actors towards responsible tourism. Their indigenous products and handicrafts should only be allowed to be sold at the destination.
4. Eco-friendly activities must be encouraged at the destination so that the tourists can participate in them and obtain recognition and rewards.
5. Tour and travel agents(destination providers) must be provided with eco-label certification so that the tourists can trust them with their eco-friendly tour package. They must also take part in spreading awareness about the appropriate usage of natural resources.
6. The tourism website of the Government must be updated regularly with attractive offers. Since this is a digital way of promoting tourism and causes no harm, it will be appreciated by nature-lovers.
7. Most importantly, a special committee for the supervision of the green practices at the destination must be appointed. The committee must meet often to discuss the progress and issues in the destination.

6. Bibliography

- [1] Bernini, C., Urbinati, E. and Vici, L. (2015) Visitor expectations and perceptions of sustainability in a mass tourism destination, 3rd International Scientific Conference Tourism in Southern and Eastern Europe 2015. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2637237>
- [2] Hafiz, M., Jamaluddin, M., Zulkifly, M. and Othman, N. (2014) Exploring responsible tourism development facet. Theory and Practice in Hospitality and Tourism Research, p. 173
- [3] International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations (2002) The Cape Town Declaration, Cape Town. Retrieved from <https://responsibletourismpartnership.org/cape-town-declaration-on-responsible-tourism/>
- [4] Magatef, S.G. (2015) The Impact of Tourism Marketing Mix Elements on the Satisfaction of Inbound Tourists to Jordan, International Journal of Business and Social Science, Vol.6, No.7
- [5] Martinez, P., Perez, A. and Bosque, I. R. (2013) Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 365-385
- [6] Meng, F., Tepanon, Y. & Uysal, M. (2008) Measuring tourist satisfaction by attribute and motivation: The case of a nature-based resort, Journal of Vacation Marketing, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 41-56
- [7] Mihalic, T. (2013) Performance of Environmental Resources of a Tourist Destination: Concept and Application, Journal of Travel Research, Vol.52, No.5, pp. 614-630
- [8] Rahman, M., Islam, M., Sharkar, Md., Sultana, R. and Talukder, Md. (2019). Effective factors of Service marketing mix on Tourist satisfaction: A case study. Asian Social Science. Vol.15, p. 1, 10.5539/ass.v15n7p1.
- [9] Smith, V.L. (1990) Alternative/responsible tourism seminar, Annals of Tourism Research, Vol.17, No.3, pp. 479-480
- [10] Zgolli, S. and Zaiem, I. (2018) The responsible behaviour of tourist: The role of personnel factors and public power and effect on the choice of destination, Arab Economic and Business Journal, Vol.13, No.2, pp. 168-178