



Attitude of Kerala Youth towards Tourists

Dr. E. Murali

Associate Professor

Sri. C. Achutha Menon Government College, Thrissur, Kerala

Email: emuraly@yahoo.co.in

Abstract

Tourism is a curious phenomenon both for tourists and hosts. In tourism, the attitude, concern, participation and sense of responsibility of host matters a lot in creating a favorable environment. If people have a positive attitude towards tourism and tourists, this encourages them to be conscious of preserving the tourism resources of the country. Therefore, it is essential to shape a positive attitude among the host people towards tourism/tourists. The youth population in the host community has more responsibility in this regard for developing sustainable tourism in a destination. This paper analyses the attitude of youth community towards tourists visiting Kerala with descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The results of the study disclose that, irrespective of their gender and residential location, youth are found to be having the attitude of welcoming the presence of tourists in their area. In respect of mentality of providing helps to tourists also youth are found to be having a positive attitude.

Keywords: *Tourism in Kerala, Attitude towards Tourism, Responsible Tourism*

I. Introduction

Today tourism has assumed considerable significance globally. World Tourism Organisation (2014) estimates that international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) grew by five per cent in 2013, reaching a record 1087 Million. Tourism is perhaps the world's biggest business activity. It is likely to remain a significant economic activity through the twenty first century. The world has seen tourism as a challenge to enhance opportunities both to tourists and residents. Tourism plays a crucial part in the economy of many countries. Over 125 nations consider tourism important and for at least one third of them, tourism constitutes leading industry providing employment and foreign exchange. There may be no other international trading activity, which involves economic, social, political and environment elements as tourism.

Tourism is a curious phenomenon both for tourists and hosts. In tourism, besides the economic activities, the attitude, concern, participation and sense of responsibility of hosts and the guests matters a lot in creating a favorable environment

which is tourists, hosts and eco-friendly. In hosting national and international tourists, entire population of the destination is involved in one way or other way. The finest physical facilities are of no importance if the tourists are not welcome or are resented; therefore, even a friendly smile of a resident youth may matters a lot in satisfying the tourists. Tourism loses its edge when the local population with positive attitude towards tourism/tourists is missing. More specifically, a host community having the spirit of welcoming the guests with attitude of being helpful, gracious, friendly, co-operative, and also having the information and proud of about the local tourism products, is very essential for providing better competitiveness for any tourism spot. If people have a positive attitude towards tourism/ tourists, it will encourage them to be conscious of preserving the tourism resources of the country. Therefore, it is essential to shape a positive attitude among the host people towards tourism /tourists. The youth population in the host community has more responsibility in this regard for developing sustainable tourism in a destination.



II. Review of Literature

On reviewing the literature on host community's attitude and perceptions towards tourism, a number of divergent views are seen. Ross and Wall (1999) remarked that the success of tourism depends on a harmonious relationship between residents, resource protection and tourism. Timothy, Jing and Hwa (2007) recognized that there is a strong relationship between residents' socio-economic characteristics and their perceptions of tourism-related issues. Cooke (1982) considered that residents view tourism more favorably when they perceive themselves as being able to influence decisions and outcomes related to development. Mathieson and Wall (1982) evaluated that the emergence of negative attitudes toward tourists among residents might degrade the tourism product offered at a destination, which highlights the importance of considering residents' attitudes toward tourism to the destinations that seek further tourism growth and plan to develop their tourism potential. Haralambopoulos and Pizam (1996) found that the perceived impacts of tourism depend on a variety of circumstances and characteristics associated with the nature of tourism activities, the type of community, and the different groups of residents within a community. Brain, Abhram and Ady (1993) found in his study that youth, especially students of hospitality and tourism perceive solid waste disposal, conditions of employment, employment discriminations, employment theft, false advertisements, venter honesty, sanitation vacillations and AIDS to be the major ethical issues in tourism industry. Johnson, Snepenger, and Akis (1994) considered the residents' attitudes toward tourism as a result of self-image and group-identity feelings rather than a belief that tourism will result in personal benefits and therefore, residents' awareness of social and environmental costs of tourism do not necessarily lead to their opposition

towards the expansion of the industry. Leonard (2008) highlighted that in tourism residents are generally in favor of events that have positive social and economical contributions to the destination. Moreover, they are not ambivalent to some of the negative impacts, but are willing to cope with these negative impacts as long as the perceived benefits exceed the negative impacts. Lai and Nepal (2006) are of the view that only by understanding residents' attitudes towards tourism management principles, planners can devise more efficient and appropriate management strategies to deal with possible conflicts between conservation of local resources and economic development of the area, leading ultimately to more smooth running of tourism resources. Andriotis, (2004) found that communities are not fixed in their perceptions and attitudes towards tourism impacts, nor are individuals within these communities likely to share identical attitudes towards tourism.

III. Statement of the Problem

From the studies reviewed above it is clear that communities or groups or individuals within the communities of a host destination may have different perceptions and attitudes towards tourism. But recognizing the perceptions and attitudes of different stake holders towards tourism/tourists is a significant element for framing efficient and appropriate management strategies to deal with the conservation of local resources and development of the economy of a tourist destination. Kerala, where tourism is a promising sector of the economy in terms of its variety of products, can succeed in long term marketing only when the support of different stake holders of the industry is gained. Therefore, it is required that Kerala tourism has to be managed by considering and caring the interest of guests and the hosts. It is in this context that becomes relevant to conduct a study to examine the general attitude of educated youth, a



prominent segment of resident population, towards the domestic and foreign tourists visiting the State. Moreover, when Kerala is having great natural tourism potentials on the one side and an army of educated unemployed youth on the other side, the identification of general perceptions of the of educated youth about tourism and tourists is very relevant as the youth population represent the target group for harnessing future managers or entrepreneurs for the Kerala tourism industry.

IV. Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study reported in this paper was to examine the attitude of Kerala youth towards tourists visiting their State. The Specific objectives of this study are:

- (a) To assess the general perceptions of educated youth in Kerala towards tourists.
- (b) To analyse the association between the demographic characteristics (gender and location of residence) of youth and their overall attitude towards tourists.

V. Data and Methodology

As this study was aimed to assess the attitude of Kerala youth towards tourists, the target was focused on college students who enrolled in universities in Kerala. This study adopted a survey method with a sample size of 110 respondents. The survey was conducted during the first half of 2012. Close-ended questionnaire was designed to collect the data and the field work took place in five randomly selected colleges in Ernakulam and Thrissur districts of the State. Respondents selected by using convenience sampling method were asked to specify the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement highlighting their attitude towards tourists using a 5-point Likert type scale, i.e., 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the analysis of collected data. For the analysis, the

computed mean scores in the range 1-3, 3-4 and 4-5 are arbitrarily graded as negative attitude, moderately positive attitude and highly positive attitude respectively. The association between the attitude and the demographic variables are analyzed with the help of Chi-square test.

VI. Results and Discussion

To assess the overall attitude of youth community towards tourists, their perception score on the 'presence of tourists in their area', 'their curiosity for interaction with both domestic and foreign tourists', and their 'mentality in providing helps to domestic and foreign tourists' are summated. The results of the study are presented in two parts. While the first part of the paper analyses the descriptive statistics of perceptions of youth on selected factors, the second part tests whether there is any statistically significant differences in the perceptions of sample respondents with regard to their gender and residential location.

The results of the study disclose that, irrespective of their gender and residential location, respondents are found to be having the attitude of welcoming the presence of tourists in their area as reflected in their opinion scores. While considering the standard scale set for the study, the mean scores in this respect are calculated to be four or more for all the selected demographic groups and therefore, the attitude of youth can be inferred as highly positive in this respect. Regarding curiosity of host for interacting with tourists, the study reveals that, youth have a moderately positive attitude in interacting with both domestic and foreign tourists, irrespective of their gender and residential location except in the case of the opinion among male youth towards domestic tourists, where the opinion has been rated as highly positive, with a mean score of 4.02. While making the group wise analysis, the mean scores among rural and male respondents are found to be higher as compared to their urban and female counterparts respectively. In the case



of mentality of providing helps to domestic and foreign tourists also youth are found to be having a positive attitude. However, their levels of positive attitude, analyzed on the basis of mean score in the scale set for the study, are found different towards two groups of tourists. When youth are found having highly positive attitude towards helping foreign tourists, their level of attitude, in this regard, is found only moderately positive towards domestic tourists. The category

wise analysis of mean scores indicates that, urban and female youth have a comparatively more positive attitude as compared to their respective rural and male counterparts. With regard to the overall attitude of youth towards tourists, the study reveals a moderately positive attitude with a mean score of 3.95. The same trend is seen irrespective of categorization under the study (Table 1).

Table 1: Perception of Youth towards Tourists

Sl.No	Variable	Perception Score and Mean Score				Total N=110
		Gender		Location		
		Female N=64	Male N=46	Rural N=60	Urban N=50	
1	Presence of Tourists in Their Areas	271 (4.23)	185 (4.02)	254 (4.23)	202 (4.04)	456 (4.15)
2	Curiosity for Interacting with Domestic Tourists	243 (3.79)	185 (4.02)	238 (3.97)	190 (3.80)	428 (3.89)
3	Curiosity for Interacting with Foreign Tourists	233 (3.64)	181 (3.91)	227 (3.78)	187 (3.74)	414 (3.76)
4	Mentality to Help Domestic Tourists	259 (4.05)	175 (3.80)	233 (3.88)	201 (4.02)	434 (3.94)
5	Mentality to Help Foreign Tourists	260 (4.06)	182 (3.96)	239 (3.98)	203 (4.06)	442 (4.02)
6	Over all Attitude	1226 (3.96)	908 (3.95)	1191 (3.97)	983 (3.93)	2174

(3.95)Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in Parentheses are Mean Scores

Table 2: Association between Demographic Characteristics (Gender and Location of residence) of Youth and Their Overall Attitude towards Tourists

Profile	Chi-Square Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Inference at 5 % significance level
Gender	14.115	13	0.336	Not Significant
Residential Location	14.810	13	0.319	Not Significant

Source: Compiled Data



Further, the inferential analysis made by using the most versatile inferential tool Chi-Square test reveals that, both the gender and residential location of youth have no statistically significant association with their attitude towards tourists at any level of significance (Table 2).

VII. Conclusion

The attitude of host community towards tourists is very significant factor in attracting tourists to the destination. The supports of all segments of host community would give strength to implement developmental planning in tourism. In a destination where the host community warmly welcomes the presence of tourists, generously offer their helps, supports, and cooperation, and adopt a friendly behavior, the destination would get a competitive edge over others. The present study conducted among the educated youth highlights the fact that the host community in Kerala has a positive attitude towards tourists. Irrespective of gender disparity and urban- rural differentiation, they welcome the visit of tourists to their area. They also have curiosity to meet and interact with tourists. They are willing to help the tourists, if they are contacted. Such a positive attitude of youth towards tourism/tourists is significant for the planning, developing and maintaining of quality tourism in Kerala. Under the shade of this favorable attitude of host community, it is the obligation of the authorities to initiate effective steps to attract more quality tourists to Kerala for the sustainable development of tourism in the State.

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