

Emerging Trends in Kerala's Responsible Tourism.

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Abstract: *Discussing On Environmental Matters, It Implements Revolutionary Studies And Surveys In The Basic Details Of Energy, Water And Waste And Systematically Reveals A Detailed Energy Audit Analysis Among The Partnering Hotels At 4 Destinations. This Is Expected To Enter To Next Levels Of Preparing Customized Prescriptions For Individual Properties With A Conservation Focus. Responsible Tourism Cell In Destinations Move Against The Negative Impacts Affecting The Environment And Promotes Eco-Friendly Products. Within The Initial Phase, It Initiatives In Kerala Become A Replicable Model For The World. There Is A Wide Scope For The Initiative In Tourism Contributing And Benefiting The Local Community While Moving Towards Next Levels With Possible Expansions. The Experiments And Best Stories Of Initial Period Render How Kerala Is Suited In Taking Such A Move Forward.*

Keywords: *Responsible Tourism, Areas, Forms, Prospects and Limitations*

I. Introduction

Across The World Tourism Has Today Become A Vanguard Of Change, Transforming Countries And States Into Buoyant Economies. Kerala Has Emerged As One Of The Prime Tourism Destinations On The National And International Map. Although Tourism Statistics Show That A Large Amount Of Revenue Is Brought Into The State, Factors Like The Rate Of Leakage Of Tourism Receipts And To What Extent The Local Economy Retains The Revenues Generated By Tourism Is Still Not Clear. There Are Several Challenges That The Industry Faces Like Environmental Degradation, Degeneration Of Cultural Heritage And Social Inequalities. Recognizing These Adverse Impacts And The Priority Expressed In The Cape Town Declaration Call For Action "To Create Better Places For People To Live In And For People To Visit." Kerala State Tourism Department Takes Forward The Concept Of Responsibility In Tourism Into Practice. For Giving A Socio Friendly Face In The Field Of Tourism The Kerala State Tourism Department Implemented The Concept Of Responsible Tourism. Being A First Attempt Of Its Kind In India We Started State Level Consultation Workshop On RT Concept And Implementation Framework, BETTER TOGETHER On February 2007 At Kanakakkunnu Palace, Thiruvananthapuram.

The Growth Of Tourism Across The World Has Been Spectacular – In The Last 10 Years, Tourism Industry Recorded A Growth Of Over 10%, Accounting For 10% Of The World's Economic Activity And Is One Of The Main Employment Creating Sectors. UNWTO Is Predicting Over 1500 Million International Arrivals By 2020, Over Double The Present Level. UNEP And UNWTO Have Encouraged Policy Makers To Adopt Strategies, Policies And Tools Of Sustainable Development. In Summary, These Are About Strengthening The Benefits Through Tourism While Minimizing The Costs. There Is Also The Realization That Tourism Can Play A Role In Addressing Poverty, By Bringing Sources Of Income Closer To Some Of The Poorest Communities. Governments Have To Play A Leading Role In The Process Of Sustainability – As The Authority Of Regulation, The Body Responsible For Public Assets And Resources Affected By Tourism, And As Policy Makers.

Kerala Has Recorded Remarkable Levels Of Growth In Tourism Arrivals In Recent Years. Kerala Recorded 6.5 Million Domestic Tourists And 4.28 Foreign Tourists Arrival In The Year 2006, The Average Annual Growth In Domestic Tourists Is More Than 18 % Over The Past Decade. The Annual Growth Rate For Foreign Tourist Arrivals Is Over 20% And Over 5% For Domestic Tourists. Government Has Recognized The Potential Of Tourism To Provide Employment, To Raise Resources And To Become A Prominent Economic Sector In The State's Economy. Improvement In Infrastructure, Better Air Connectivity And Innovative Marketing Has Resulted In The Boom In The Tourism Sector.

According To Kerala Tourism Department, The Culture, Heritage And Customs Of The Trade Will Be Preserved And Popularized Among The Tourists Under The New Venture.

Various Functions Of The Tourism Department Will Be Integrated In Such A Way That The Growth Of Tourism Will Also Contribute Towards Enriching The Lives Of Traditional Workers And Artists.

As A Part Of This, Hotel, Ayurveda Centers, Houseboats, Convention Centers, Tour Operators, Tourist Transport Operators And The Like Will Be Given Approval And Incentives Based On A Set Of Mandatory

Requirements. The State Government Had Recently Announced An Investment Of Rs 1,000 Crore In The Tourism Sector In Kerala. As An Initial Measure, A Tourism Investment Promotion Cell Under The Tourism Directorate Will Commence Operations With Immediate Effect. The Cell Will Make Available All Relevant Information Like Project Clearances And Timely Implementation. This Apart, Basic Infrastructure In Unknown And Lesser Known Destinations Across The State Will Be Immediately Provided. A State-Level Committee To Enable Single Window Clearance For Speedy And Convenient Processing Of Tourism Projects That Exceed Rs 5 Crore Will Also Be Formed.

Responsible Tourism – The Kerala Up Date

Responsible Tourism (RT) - An Innovative And Far-Reaching Concept Of Kerala Tourism Completed Its Phase One Program With Noticeable Milestones. As A Pilot Phase, This Initiative Was Implemented At Four Destinations Viz. Kovalam, Kumarakom, Thekkady And Wayanad. Among These Destinations Kumarakom Evolved As The Success Model For Responsible Tourism And Was Honored By Ministry Of Tourism, Govt Of India For The Best Responsible Tourism Initiative In Kerala.

Kerala Has Emerged As One Of The Prime Tourism Destinations On The National And International Map And Is Considered As The Tourism Trendsetter In The Country. The Availability Of Plenty Of Natural Resources, Skilled Manpower, Supportive Entrepreneurial Community, Strong Local-Self-Governments, Civil Society Organizations, Multitude Of Micro Enterprises, Streams Of Professionals And Academicians, Responsible Media And Responsive Tourism Industry, Provide The State An Ideal Setting To Implement And Practice

The Department Of Tourism, Government Of Kerala Organized A State-Level Consultation On Responsible Tourism In Association With The International Centre For Responsible Tourism - India (ICRT India) And EQUATIONS (Equitable Tourism Options) At Thiruvananthapuram On The 2nd And 3rd Of February, 2007. The Two-Day Workshop Was Attended By A Wide Range Of Stakeholders, Including Representatives From Government, Local-Self-Governments, Tourism Industry, Civil Society Organizations, Academicians, Media And Also Members Of The Legislative Assembly. At The End Of The Workshop, A State-Level Committee Was Constituted, Namely, State Level Responsible Tourism Committee (SLRTC) With Representatives From Various Sectors To Take Forward The Discussions That Emerged During The Workshop And To Move The State Level Responsible Tourism Committee Met On 20th April 2007 And Decided To Take Up The Implementation Of Responsible Tourism Initiative In Phases. Kumarakom, Wayanad, Kovalam, And Thekkady Were Identified For The Implementation Of Responsible Tourism Initiative In The First Phase. The Government Also Selected Great India Tourism Planners And Consultants (GITPAC) Through Competitive Bidding, To Provide Technical Assistance And Co-Ordination For The Initiative In The Selected Centers. The Actual Implementation Process Started In March, 2008.

Responsible Tourism Initiatives At Kumarakom Came Up With Outstanding Results And Emerged As The Model Destination In The Implementation Of Responsible Tourism. In Addition To This, The Programme Bagged Different National And International Recognitions

The Resource Mapping Carried Out Through Household Surveys And Physical Reconnaissance Of The Project Area Identified Large Chunks Of Un-Cultivated Land In The Villages. These Were Left Fallow Either Because Of Low Yield, Low Demand For Agricultural Produces Or Because Of Spiraling Prices Of Non-Agricultural Land Induced By The Development Of Tourism. The RT Cell, However, Was Able To Mobilize Kudumbashree Volunteers To Take Up Paddy Cultivation In 55 Acres Of Land And Gramapanchayat To Introduce Vegetable Cultivation In Another 30 Acres Of Land. In Addition 612 Homestead Farmers Were Motivated To Take Up Vegetable Cultivation To Enhance Vegetable Supplies To Local Hotels. It Greatly Improved The Level Of Supply Of Agricultural Products To Hotel Industry Apart From Securing Additional Income To The Farmers. On The Whole, About One-Third Of The Population In The Panchayat Is Presently Involved In The Production And Sale Of Agricultural Products To Tourism Industry.

Fish Farms And Lotus Cultivation

The Resource Mapping Exercise Identified As Many As Twenty-Six Un-Used Ponds With Reasonable Water Levels Throughout The Year. The RT Cell Took Up The Cleaning Of These Ponds And Promoted Fish Cultivation In Twenty Ponds And Lotus Cultivation In Six Ponds By The Local Community. The Tourism Industry Provided A Ready Market For The Produce Of The Fish Farms And Lotuses. It Thus Had A Positive Impact On Improving The Living Conditions Of The Local Community.

Establishing Linkages With Hotel Industry And Enhancing Demand For Local Produces.

The RT Cell Identified The Items Of Purchase For The Hotel Industry And Initiated A Dialogue To Encourage Them To Resort To Local Purchases To The Maximum Possible. The Apprehensions Of The Industry Regarding Regularity Of Supplies, Quality Of Products And Competitive Prices Were Progressively

Removed By Developing Institutional Mechanisms To Address Those Issues. With The Establishment Of An Assured Market, The Community Was Also Encouraged To Enhance Production And To Adopt Organic Farming Practices.

Development Of Souvenir Industry

Tourists Visiting Any Particular Destination, Usually Like To Carry With Them Small Items Typically Produced In The Place Of Visit, As Mementoes Of Their Visit. Kumarakom Can Now Boast Of Its Own Symbolic Souvenir Item And A Growing Souvenir Industry Largely Due To RT Initiative. A Local Craftsman Who Was Struggling To Survive In Conditions Of Extreme Poverty Was Assisted In Making Models Of Boats And Houseboats, Which Are Typical Tourist Attractions. These Mementoes Are Crafted By Using Screw Pines Which Are Locally Available In Plenty. The Production Of These Souvenirs By The Local Craftsman Attracted The Attention Of The Hotel Industry And Contracted Exclusive Marketing Rights Through Their Outlets. It Has Led To Accelerated Growth Of Souvenir Industry And The Consequent Benefits To The Craftsman, Which Pushed Him Above The Poverty Line During A Short Period.

Community-Based Tourism Products

In Order To Provide A Village Experience To Tourists By Guiding Them Through Real Life Situations In Hinterlands And Thereby Distributing Economic Benefits Of Tourism Directly To The Community, The RT Cell Developed Two Tour Packages At Kumarakom. The First Package Is Titled - Village Life Experience At Kumarakom And The Second - A Day With Farmers. The First Package Is A Half-Day Tour Starting From The RT Cell Location At Attamangalam In The Afternoon. The Guests Are Taken To The Canal Side Through A Small Pathway And Then Board A Boat. The Group Is Accompanied By An Experienced Guide / Interpreter. The Ride Through The Backwaters Takes The Group To Kandankavu Area Of The Village For Exposure To The Bio-Diversity And The Teeming Life Of The People. The Experiences And Interactions In Store For The Tourists Include An *Anganwadi*; A Fish Farm, Demonstration Of Traditional Fish Catching With The Aid Of Bows And Arrows; A Home Garden; Coconut Leaf Weaving By A Housewife; Traditional Craft Activity At A Household Using Screw Pines; A Broom Making Unit; A *Karimeen* Processing Unit; A Plantain Orchard And A Toddy Tapper. The Guests Are Given An Opportunity At Every Site To Interact With The Persons Involved In The Activity And To Try Themselves The Activities.

The Package - *A Day With Farmers* Consists Of Multiple Modes For Giving An Opportunity To The Guests To Experience Village Life In The Midst Of Authentic Cultural And Natural Settings. The Journey, Which Starts From Kavanattikara At About 9.00 A.M., Takes The Guests Through A Variety Of Experiences. The First Stop Is At An 'Antique Shop' Run By An Ebullient Entrepreneur. From There, It Is Cycle Ride Through Some Of The Most Beautiful Stretches Of Kumarakom Covering Rice Fields, Coconut Orchards Etc. During The Ride, The Tourists May Come Across Some Of The Water Birds Like Indian Shag, Cormorants, Pond Herons, Egrets, Whistling Ducks, Cotton Teals, Garganey Teals Etc. The First Leg Of Cycling Ends At A Duck-Rearing Enterprise At Kaipuzhamuttubridge And The Nearby Mercy's Coir Making Center To Know And Participate In Both The Activities.

The Above Packages Are Popular Among Tourists And The Hotel Industry Is Promoting These As Add-On Experiences. The Members Of The Community Participating In The Package By Showing / Demonstrating Their Activities Receive Fixed Amounts From The Package-Price Realized. There Is Also Close Interaction Between The Community And The Visitors Through These Packages.

Promotion Of Local Art Forms And Culture

Kumarakom Has A Rich Cultural Heritage With Many Art Forms And Cultural Troupes. A Professional Sinkarimelam Group Of Children And Women Was Formed Under The Banner Of Responsible Tourism And It Became The First Such Cultural Group In Kerala. Yet Another Cultural Group Formed Is The Suvarna Cultural Group. Performance Of These Groups Are Organised In Hotels And Other Places To Enrich The Experience Of Tourists.

Promotion Of Cultural Tourism And Ethnic Cuisine

The People Of Kumarakom Celebrate Several Fairs And Festivals, Some Of Which Are Of Regional And Local Importance. These Events Form Part Of Their Social Life And Reflect Their Cultural Identity. The Colour And Splendor With Which These Festivals Are Celebrated Is A Source Of Great Amazement And Attraction. The Potential Tourists To Kumarakom Are, However, Not Aware Of Such Festivals And The Exact Dates Of Celebrations. In Order To Remove This Information Gap The RT Cell Prepared A Calendar Of Such Festivals And Made It Available To Tourism Industry Partners For The Promotion Of Such Events As Added Tourist Attractions.

Social Awareness And Tourist Management

The Local Community Has Been Made Aware Of Adverse Impacts Of Tourism Including Child Labour, Exploitation, Prostitution, Etc. And The Importance Of Tourist Management To Avoid Such Ill-Effects. The Community Has Thus Taken A Lead Role In Identifying And Preventing Such Instances, So As To Create An Image Of Clean Tourism.

Protection Of Environment

The Environmental Initiative Of Responsible Tourism Succeeded In Declaring The Bird Sanctuary As A Plastic-Free Zone, Promoting Bicycle Journey Around Hotels And Resorts, Promotion Of Organic Farming, Mangrove Protection And Control Of Backwater Pollution With The Help Of The Community. A Survey Of Plastic Use By Sales Outlets In The Area Was Conducted And Promoted The Manufacture And Use Of Eco-Friendly Carry Bags By The Establishments. Due To The Intervention Of Destination Cell, The Bird Sanctuary At Kumarakom Was Declared As A Plastic-Free Zone. In Addition To This, A Massive Mangrove Regeneration Campaign Was Organized By The Destination Team.

Energy Saving Measures

A Survey Of Energy And Water Use As Well As The Generation And Disposal Of Waste By The Hotels Was Undertaken To Assess The Extent Of Green Practices By The Industry. A Separate Survey On Energy Consumption Of Streetlights Made The Panchayat To Replace A Large Number Of Bulbs.

Wayanad

In Wayanad The Dept. Of Tourism Started Responsible Tourism Initiative In January 2008. It Mainly Focused In Three Thematic Areas Of Responsible Tourism Viz. Economic, Social And Environmental. The Local Products, Which Are Made By Kudumbashree Units, Local Farmers And Artisans, Were Distributed To The Hotel Industry As A Part Of Economic Responsibility. This Helped To Reduce The Gulf Between Community And Industry As Well As Improved Their Cohesion. In Addition To This, It Provided Them A Chance To Associate With Responsible Tourism Activities Through Participatory Approach. The Local-Self-Government, District Kudumbashree Mission, Ngos, Social Workers And The Tourism Industry Etc. Worked Together To Take Forward The Economic, Social And Environmental Aspects Of Destination. It Was The Whole District When The Destination Was Selected For Pilot Intervention. Later, Considering The Complexities Of Vast Operational Area, Pilot Economic Responsibility Tasks Has Been Suggested To Limit Within Vythiri Cluster, Encompassing A Region Including Vythiri, Kalpetta, Pozhuthana And Meppadipanchayaths. Samrudhi Group Is Positioned Here And Kudumbashree Is Associating With The Move. The Process Has Got A Good Beginning By Sourcing Available Products And The Supply Is Expected To Be Stabilized By The Next Tourism Season.

Ethnic Food Corners

This Was One Of The Model Initiatives From Wayanad. RT Cell Started Two Ethnic Food Corners Near Edakkal Caves And In The Premises Of The Pookot Lake. This Shop Near Edakkal Caves Was Operated By Tribal Community In Wayanad And In Pookot Lake By Kudumbasree. The Ethnic Food Corner At Edakkal, Which Offered Tribal, Ethnic And Indigenous Snacks, Generated An Income Of Rs. 1.25 Lakhs Within A Month. Now, 20 Kudumbashree Units, 20 Farmers And 10 Handicraft Makers Are Supplying Their Products Through Samrudhi Shop.

Social Responsibility Was One Of The Core Areas In The Implementation Process. To Make The Interventions More Creative, RT Cell Prepared A Festival Calendar In Connection With Pilgrim Centers, Fairs And Festivals, Found Out Major Social Issues Related To Tourism, And Made Studies Regarding Safety Issues, Ethnic Food And Local Cuisine, Infrastructure Gap Assessment, Preparation Of Code Of Conduct, Identification Of Community-Based Tourism Products, Development Of Wayanad Souvenirs, Destination Directory, Resource Mapping, Social Survey, Core Destination Survey And Labour Directory. For All These Segments, The Cell Developed Detailed Reports And Plans.

Destination Resource Directory

A Destination Directory Has Been Prepared By RT Cell Wayanad Containing All Major Components And Resources Of Wayanad District. A Thorough And Detailed Study Was Conducted By RT Cell For Preparing This Directory. This Was Conducted By A Comprehensive And Grassroots-Level Resource Mapping In The Destination. This Directory Covered Details Like Natural, Cultural, Historical, Geographical, Community Etc.

Souvenir Development

Souvenirs Stimulate The Development Of Local Artisans, Handcrafters And Spice Farmers, Which Gave A New Facet To The Destination. RT Cell Has Developed Three Types Of Souvenirs Like Spice Kits, Etching Of Edakkal Caves And Coffee Stump Products. Now All These Souvenirs Are Getting Sold Through The Samrudhi Shop.

Village Life Experience At Wayanad

To Enjoy The Unexplored Village Life Of Wayanad, Two Packages Were Introduced By RT Cell. And These Were Named - *Road To The Fragranthill* & *Journey To The Soul Of Nature*. *Road To The Fragranthill* Was Developed In Sugandhagiri In Pozhuthanagramapanchayath. It Reveals The Traditional Art Of Living By Showcasing Locally Available Resources Like Bamboo, Clay And Theruva Grass.

Journey To The Soul Of Nature Is At Karimkutti, Kottatharagramapanchayath. This Package Offers The Royal Culture Of Kurichias, The Warriors Of Pazhassi Raja. In The Joint Family System Here, We Can See The Uniqueness Of Their Lifestyle, Traditions, Rituals, Customs And Indigenous Agricultural And Medicinal Practices. Another Attraction Of This Package Is Silkworm Production Centre, Which Showcases The Different Stages Of Silk Production And Plantations Like Coffee, Areca Nut, Coconut, Plantain, Ginger, Turmeric, Pepper, Nutmeg Etc. Another Major Attraction Is A Fish Pond, Which Offers An Interesting Experience In Traditional Fish Catching.

Environmental Responsibility

Like Other Key Responsibility Areas, Environmental Responsibility Tasks Have Been Strengthened By RT Cell In Wayanad. Clean Soochipara Program, Control Plastic Pollution In Pookot Lake, Environment Survey, Street Light Survey And Study On Sacred Groves Are Some Of The Key Interventions By The Cell.

Study on Sacred Groves

Sacred Groves Are Patches Of Natural Vegetation Surviving In The Man-Modified Landscapes. They Deserve Preservation, Because Of Its Unique Character And Bio-Diversity Enrichment. In This Background, A Study Was Conducted, Which Covered All The Sacred Groves In The Intervention Area.

Kovalam

The Workshop At Kovalam Was Held On 8th May 2000. All The Stakeholders Including Tourism Industry Partners (Hoteliers, Restaurant Operators, Tour Operators, Travel Agents, Home-Stay Operators, Souvenir Shop Owners, Various Agencies Offering Tourism Products Etc.), Representatives From Local-Self-Governments, People's Representatives, Ngos / Csos, Government Officials, Academicians, Media Etc. Were Invited For The Workshop.

Zero Tolerance Campaign

This Was A Campaign Against Child Sex Abuse In Kovalam Under The Banner Of Responsible Tourism. This Was Planned Only After Looking Into The Real Situation, Sources And Causes Of This Social Evil. This Issue Was Raised As One Of The Crucial Problems In Kovalam. In Order To Address This Issue And Take Necessary Precautions, The RT Cell Gained Support From N.G.Os And Concerned Institutions. 'Be A Guard Of Angel' Was The Theme Of This Campaign. The Poster, Leaflets And Door Hangers Etc. Were Placed At All Properties In Kovalam. RT Cell Made A Strict Follow Up In This Movement And Ensured That All The Properties Placed These Materials In Proper Places.

A Model - Karthika Festival

Karthika Festival Was One Of The Successful Efforts By The RT Cell In Kovalam. It Was The Apparent Evidence Of The Participation Of All Stakeholders And It Grabbed Wide Media Coverage. The Governance Of Local-Self-Government, Active Participation Of Kudumsree And Community Members And Better Efforts Of Industry Were Evident From This Event.

This Program Was Organized By The Leadership Of RT Cell And Well Supported By Kudumbasree. Industry Supported This Initiative By Providing Sponsorship. Every Lamp Lit Represented The Industrial Partners, Which Added Colour To The Festival Of Lights. These Lamps Were Placed In Well-Cut Parts Of The Stem Of Plantain. It Gave A New Outlook And Energy To The Members Of Kudumsree. This One-Day Event Helped In A Business For An Amount Of Rs. 29,000 To The Group.

Labor Directory

To Boost Local Employment In Tourism Sector, RT Cell Collected Details Of Labors In Various Sectors At Kovalam. It Anticipated Ensuring The Availability Of Experts And Professionals In Various Fields As Per The Needs.

Village Life Experience Packages

Beyond The Beach - Full Day Tour And Lake And Life, A Half-Day Tour Are The Two Village Life Experience (VLE) Packages In Kovalam. VLE Packages Are Crafted And Executed By The Kerala Tourism Department As Part Of Its Most Innovative And Far-Reaching Concept Of Responsible Tourism (RT). Branded As Village Life Experience Packages, This Aims At Creating New Dimensions To The Existing Tourism Practices, And Aims At A 'Meaningful And Mutually Beneficial Tourism' Where The Visitor And The Host Community Are Assured Of A Close Interaction. The Village Life Experience Packages Were First Conceptualized In Kovalam As Part Of The Social Responsibility Initiatives. As The Name Indicates, Village Life Experience Packages Are Intended To Guide The Tourists Through The Less-Traveller But The Most Attractive Hinterlands Of Villages And Thus Aim At Distributing The Benefits Generated From Tourism To The Advantage Of The Community.

Thekkady

The Workshop At Thekkady Was Held On 23rd June 2007 At The Periyar House. All The Stakeholders Including Tourism Industry Partners (Hoteliers, Restaurant Operators, Tour Operators, Travel Agents, Home-Stay Operators, Souvenir Shop Owners, Various Agencies Offering Tourism Products Etc.), Representatives From Local-Self-Governments, People's Representatives, Ngos / Csos, Government Officials, Academicians, Media Etc. Were Invited To The Workshop.

Kerala Cafe At Thekkady

This Is A Snack Parlor Operated By The Tribal Communities In Thekkady. A Group Of Five Women Got Placed In Club Mahindra Resort In Thekkady Under The Initiative Of RT Destination Cell. The Group Started A Kerala Tea Shop, Which Prepared And Provided Traditional Kerala Snacks To The Guests. The Working Hour Of The Shop Is From 3.00 P.M. To 6.00 Pm.

Village Life Experience Package

As Part Of The Social Responsibility, The RT Cell Launched Village Life Experience Package In Thekkady. This Package Is Fully Operated By A Tribal Community In Thekkady. It Helps The Tourist To Know More About The Village Life In The Destination And It Also Offers The Tourist To Experience The Traditional Lifestyle Of The Tribes In The Destination. This Package Has Thirteen Activities.

1. Traditional Flower Garland Making
2. Weaving Of Panampu / Muram
3. Fishnet Stitching
4. Bamboo Curtain Making
5. Weaving Of Kanadipaya
6. Traditional Kovil (Temple) Visit
7. Traditional Tribal Food Making
8. Bamboo Handicraft Unit Visit
9. Garden Visit
10. Bee-Keeping Unit Visit
11. Tribal Anganvadi / Nursery School Visit
12. Demonstration And Playing Of Paliyakoothu Musical Instruments
13. Paliyakudimariyamankovil Visit. The Traditional Paliyakoothu Is Also Included In The Package As An Optional Activity.

Positive Outcomes of Responsible Tourism

Responsible Tourism Paved The Way For The Overall Environmental Developments In The Native Areas Of Kumarakom. Road Survey And Street Light Survey Were Done And By The Sudden Action By The Government Helps To Solve The Problems. Another Revolutionary Change Happened As A Part Of RT Programme Is The Controlling And Clearing Of Plastic Wastes. Strict Rules Are Implemented To Clear Out Plastic Bags In These Areas. Using Of Paper And Cloth Bags Is Promoted With The Help Of Samrudhi Activity Group. Zero Waste Kumarakom, A Program Implemented To Make Kumarakom Waste Free Is On Its Primary Process.

II. Encouraging Trends

A. Positive Approach On Waste Lands

The Main Highlight Of The Responsible Tourism Is The Conversion Of Useless Lands In Agriculture Paradise. 56 Acres Of Waste Land Is Developed Into Vegetable And Medicinal Plant Cultivating Areas. This Successful Revenue Making Programme Is Continuing And Spreading To Other Areas Of Kumarakom.

B. Caring Of Kandalkadu

Special Attention Is Given To The Nature Product, Mangrove (Kandalkadu) In Kumarakom. To Care The Mangrove 'Kandalammachi', A Native Of The Area Is Used And By Her Initiative Kandal Seeds Were Supplied To Every Houses.

C. Fish Farming

A Survey Was Conducted On The Waste Ponds In The Area. Based On The Study And Research Fish Farming And Lotus Cultivation Were Done In These Waste Ponds. Fish Are Used As Food And Lotus Is Given To Welcome Tourists To The Destination In A Formal Style. Now It Becomes A Great Asset For The Villagers And They Used To Spread It To Many Areas.

D. Bicycle Tourism

Cycling Is Introduced In The Tour Packages. The Thrilling Experience Of Cycling In The Packages Attracts Tourist And The Demand Increases. Hotel And Resort Groups Are Providing Cycles For Rent And It Also Become A Smooth Going Business.

E. Importance Of Bird Sanctuary

Knowing The Wide Opportunities Of Tourism In Connection With Bird Sanctuary Effective Measures Are Taken As A Part Of Responsible Tourism. A Study On The Bird Life, Survey On The Bird Count, and Additional Information On The Birds, Visitor Management And Other Arrangements For Bird Watching Were Effectively Manipulated.

Team Effort and A Successful Venture

In The Meantime The Energy Management Of The Hotels And Resorts, Waste Management In The Area Were Cleared Out By Time Making The Area More Nature Friendly. A Fully Involved Work From The Tourism

Industry Partners (Hoteliers, Restaurant Operators, Tour Operators, Travel Agents, Home-Stay Operators, Souvenir Shop Owners, Various Agencies Offering Tourism Products Etc), Representatives From Local Self-Governments, People's Representatives, Ngos / Csos, Government Officials, Academicians, Media Etc. Gained The Success Within Two Years. Kumarakom Was The First Tourist Centre In The State That Realized The Responsible Tourism Concept And Now By Telling The Success Story To The World, The Place Becomes An Icon In The Tourism Sector.

III. Recommendations For Action

Education And Learning

Education Is Required At All Levels, Initial, Secondary, Community And Professional - Continuing Professional Development Education Is More Likely To Have An Immediate Impact On The Sustainable Management Of Tourism In Destinations.

Tourism And The Ideas Of Responsible Tourism Should Be Included In The Primary Curriculum To Foster Social Inclusion, Discourage Dependency And Enable People To Engage In The Management Of Tourism Impacts.

Use Education To Build The Transferable Technical Capacity Of All Stakeholders

Train Guides As Interpreters Aware Of Their Responsibilities To Assist The Process Of Responsible Tourism Management And To Maximize The Positive Contribution And Minimize Negative Impacts While Enhancing The Visitor Experience.

Encourage The Development Of New Tourism Experiences Which Facilitate Socially And Economically Positive Host - Guest Encounters.

Undertake Learning Needs Analysis And Capacity Building For Communities, Ngos, The Private Sector And Government Staff

Educate Tourists, The Intermediaries In The Transit Route, And Generating Markets On Local Socio-Cultural, Economic And Environmental Issues In The Market And The Destination; Likewise Educating The Communities On The Cultures Of The Visitors

Research And Resource Materials Need To Be Available In Each Country Pursuing Responsible Tourism

IV. Campaigning And Awareness Rising

Businesses Need To Be Encouraged To Recognize That They Can Do Well By Doing Good .There Is A Business Case To Be Made Focused On A Number Of Issues:

- Cost Savings
- Enlightened Self-Interest In Preserving The Product
- Staff Motivation And Retention
- Responsibility To Stakeholders – In Particular To Employees And Communities
- Changes In The Investment Climate Which Are Moving To Favor Socially Responsible Investments

In Part To Ensure The Maintenance Of Brand Value.

- License To Operate
- Product Enhancement Through Opportunities For Meaningful Socio-Cultural Engagement.

Customer Expectation, There Is Increasing Consumer Demand For “Richer” Engagement With Destinations And The Communities Who Live There And An Expectation That The Industry Will Take Responsibility For Minimizing Its Negative, And Maximizing Its Positive Impacts.

V. Empowerment

Recognize The Importance Of Strengthening The Role Of Local Communities In Decision Making About Tourism Development Through Their Existing Civil Society Structures And Local Governance Processes.

Encourage Local Government Scrutiny Of Joint Ventures, Co-Operatives, And Public Private Sector Partnerships, It May Be Appropriate For Local Government To Assist Communities In Maintaining Some Control Over The Forms Of Tourism Development In Their Area.

Recognize That Communities Are Not Homogenous And That Equity, Power And Gender Issues Need To Be Addressed.

VI. Taking Responsibility For Sustainable Local Social And Economic Development

Responsible Tourism Now Has To Focus On The Economic Participation Of Local People As Direct Owners In The Business Of Tourism Not Just As Beneficiaries Of Charity.

Tourism Has To Contribute To Socio-Economic Development By Supporting The Conservation Of Natural And Cultural Heritage.

Tourism Has To Provide Opportunities For Employment At The Community Level

Government And Tourism Enterprises Can Make A Significant Contribution By Changing Their Procurement Practices And Supporting Local Entrepreneurs To Develop The Quality And Quantity Of Their Goods And Services To Meet Market Demands.

Through Their Supply Chain Tourism Businesses Can Increase Their Linkages To The Local Economy And To Economically Poor Producers.

Mentoring Partnerships Can Assist In Product Development And Marketing Of Micro Enterprise Products.

Provide Opportunities For Tourists To Support Communities In A Meaningful And Dignified Way, With Responsible And Transparent Mechanisms For Handling Donations Of Finance And Resources.

VII. Conclusion

Responsible Tourism Is Regarded As A Behavior. It Is More Than A Form Of Tourism As It Represents An Approach To Engaging With Tourism, Be That As A Tourist, A Business, Locals At A Destination Or Any Other Tourism Stakeholder. It Emphasizes That All Stakeholders Are Responsible For The Kind Of Tourism They Develop Or Engage In. Whilst Different Groups Will See Responsibility In Different Ways, The Shared Understanding Is That Responsible Tourism Should Entail An Improvement In Tourism. Tourism Should Become ‘Better’ As A Result Of The Responsible Tourism Approach.

Within The Notion Of Betterment Resides The Acknowledgement That Conflicting Interests Need To Be Balanced. However, The Objective Is To Create Better Places For People To Live In And To Visit. Importantly, There Is No Blueprint For Responsible Tourism: What Is Deemed Responsible May Differ Depending On Places And Cultures. Responsible Tourism Is An Aspiration That Can Be Realized In Different Ways In Different Originating Markets And In The Diverse Destinations Of The World

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