

**“Be plucky in the expedition of what sets your soul on fire.” A study on the escalating scope of tourism in Kerala with special reference to Kumarakom.**

**Mrs. Regy Joseph Asst. Professor, SJIHMCT Pala**

**regysunil@gmail.com**

### **ABSTRACT:**

Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. Travelling and Tourism has been a central part of Indian Culture and Tradition. Tourism industry is most vivacious tertiary activity and a multibillion industry in India. This paper attempts to probe the prospect of tourism in Kerala, Kumarakom which can help in shaping our society. Tourism in Kerala has seen exponential growth in the recent years. Kerala is one of the most preferred destinations for both overseas and domestic travelers. Tourism is considered as one segment that shall boost growth, contribute foreign exchange, augment employability and result in community development. The most important dimension of tourism is the cultural exchange among various races that visit the country and the cross-cultural interface that shall pave way for universal peace and harmony. There is vast scope tourism in Kerala. The surging tourism growth of Kerala, has brought in a burgeoning demand in accommodation and infrastructure facilities, the lack of which are posing a major hindrance in further enhancing the State's successful growth story. The government should encourage private enterprises to promote tourism in various less popular areas. For developing tourism in such areas, we need to understand the environment, demography, socio-culture, economic and political background of any place for making it an attractive tourist spot. To develop a strategic marketing plan for tourism we have to understand the target customer their needs and wants and how to match it with our tourist spots infrastructure.

**Key words:** Tourism, Indian Culture, Heritage, Travel for Leisure, Eco-Tourism.

### **Introduction**

In a Nation's bid to grow into a global economic force, it cannot ignore the proper utilization of its most precious natural resources. There are oodles of places in Kerala yet to be traveled by the domestic and international tourists. And this study attempts to through light into few of those places and let people know the profusion resources of Kerala the well known God's own country. The revolutionary tide in travel and tourism has opened up novel, and innovative

vistas for living life comfortably and with tremendous ease. In past only the rich were privileged to travel by air and visit the tourist spots across the world. Privatization, globalization and open market system should be given ample credit for providing even the midlayer of the society with an opportunity to enjoy, what the rich used to do. Many competitors are in the market in this field. Now these competitors are vying one another for providing the customers with more and more facilities and the most reasonable fare packages. Seasonal and festival packages are often announced for the customers. The customers in turn are cashing in on these advantages widely. As a result, the whole lifestyle has been changed, the world over. The middle class people of fast developing economies like India are venturing out of their confined localities to know the world closely. Through their visits to foreign countries, assimilation of various cultures takes place. This proves to be a boon to the universal brotherhood. The travel and tourism industry has emerged as one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors globally. The travel and tourism sector holds strategic importance in the Indian economy providing several socio economic benefits. Provision of employment, income and foreign exchange, development or expansion of other industries such as agriculture, construction, handicrafts etc. are some of the important economic benefits provided by the tourism sector. Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism is on a rise on account of increased business travel in Kerala. With the mighty Vembanad Lake in the backdrop, people visit Kumarakom to immerse themselves in the backwaters of Kerala. Annually, over 7 million visitors travel to Kumarakom to experience its natural charm and beauty. You are greeted by lush mangrove forests, paddy fields and massive coconut trees lining up on the shores with the wind dictating their course. National Geographic listed it among the select destinations in the world that one must visit at least once in their lifetime. Its legendary bird sanctuary spread over 14 acres, is a famous haunt of ornithologists and bird watchers. Houseboat rides in traditional Kettuvellams form the apex of a visit here as one gets to soak in the entirety of the place in the majestic Alappuzha backwaters and the Vembanad Lake.

## **Review of literature**

Opinions from different authors are utilized to provide a better theoretical understanding of the scope of tourism, and then the impact it will have on productivity.

**(Puri, 2006)** Stated that India boasts of various types of resources which make it a unique tourist destination. No other nation of the world fascinates tourists and travelers as does India. The country is always involved in creating preserving or developing the infrastructure related to the tourism product. One crucial factor which motivate the tourist to visit a hill resort is the desire to experience the

clean environment of the place which stands in marked contrast to the pollution and crowding of the city from where he comes. Sethi opine that these days one finds that driven by the highly lucrative nature of him tourism this industry is developing in many areas at a very rapid rate in the totally haphazard and unplanned manner. (Sethi, 2005)

Talwar says development impacts usually related to infrastructure can be widely felt and can be severe. Technological developments are increasing rapidly. New recreation products, such as all-terrain vehicle and wind surfers, provide new ways for people to satisfy their recreational preferences. New production technologies and material offer recreation and tourism business ways to reduce costs and improve the quality of their products/ services. (Talwar, 2006)

According to Sharma eco tourism has a wide range of activities and to attract tourist, supportive infrastructure is needed as it plays an important role in tourism industry. Infrastructure development is a primary component for the beginning of tourism in any region. The construction and provision of road, railways, airports, electricity, gas suppliers, sanitation and water suppliers and many other things are undertaken to attract and facilitate tourists. (Sharma, 2007)

Chaudhary investigated that understanding tourism markets and their behaviour is the key to attain high levels of tourist satisfaction. The array of tourism markets and their behaviour makes this understanding a necessity as well as challenge. Destination marketers face the tough task of gratifying different expectations and demands of different tourists. India has traditionally been popular among western tourists for its old world charm and it's mystified as the land of rope tricks, magicians and snake charmers. (Chaudhary, 2013)

Bhatia evaluated that from the very early historical period, travel has had a fascination for mankind. Travel in the beginning was mostly a spontaneous and simple affair. People travelled by foot over paths, open fields as also forests. Movement across the landscape was a tough adventure requiring great skills and endurance. There were no travel procedures and formalities as there were no frontiers. As global economy surgers, resulting in improvements in the standard of living and disposable income couples with more leisure time there is going to be great surge in the tourism industry. (A.K.Bhatia, 2011)

Cook believes that another large and growing segment of tourism consumers is mature travelers. The face of the industrialized world's population is changing.

Although it is probably a mistake to lump all mature travelers into a single market, it is important to understand the immense size of this market. Many mature visitors have the time, money and energy to travel and enjoy family, friends, new sights, adventure and active life style. (Cook, 2010)

In the words of Sinha the development of tourism raises substantial policy issues. Two reason for this are that tourism may generate significant externalities and that it is of considerable economic importance as an activity. (Sinha)

Srivastava examined that travel and tourism is world's largest industry in terms of employment and second to all in terms of turnover, tourism industry is emerging as the largest industry in the activity to promote development. It is a mile stone in the field of human resource development also, tourism has also been given status of 'priority sector'. It has also got the status of 'export industry'. Tourism has a lot of potential for social and cultural development. (Srivastava, 2016)

Roday explains when tourist decide to travel to a particular destination, they look forward to a pleasurable experience in terms of safe and comfortable journey, good communication and meals, interesting attractions and leisure activities. These are the expectations or products, which the tourist is willing to spend money for. (Roday, 2013)

Goeldner evaluates that tourism today is one of the world's largest industries. It is made up of many segments, the principal one being transportation, accommodation, food service, shopping, travel management, and activities for tourists, such as history culture adventure sports, recreation and other similar activities. Familiarity with tourism, recreation, business and leisure equips one to pursue a career in a number of tourism related fields. (Goeldner, 2010)

### **Scope of the study**

The tourism industry cannot survive without the customers, because the customers have more choices today and the targeted customers are most valuable for the tourism destinations. Kerala's economy is largely dependent on the tourism industry. Kerala is affluent with its assorted resource, its visitor-friendly traditions, varied life styles and cultural heritage and colourful fairs and festivals. The present study would through light on to the fact that how much of it in reality is known to the travelers and how can we reach out to people of different interest in and around globe.

### **Objective of the study**

- The major objective of the study is to show case the prominence of Kumarakom and to highlight the fact that Kerala is truly and undeniably “God’s own country”
- To assess the opinion of the tourist about the destination.
- Seek out ways to make tourist hearty, healthy and happy.
- To analyze the taste and preferences among the travelers.

### **Glimpse of kerala**

**Kerala Hill stations:** Munnar, Thekkady, and, Wayanad

**Kerala Beaches:** Kovalam, Varkala, and Fort Cochin

**Kerala Back waters:** Kumarakam, Kollam and Bakal

**Kerala Adventure tourism:** Thenmala, and Wayanad

**Kerala farm tourism:** Vagamon and Kodanad

**Kerala Historical places:** Cochin, Palakkad and Thiruvananthapuram

**Kerala Home stays:** Kollam Thekkady, and Wayanad

**Kerala House boats:** Alappuzha Bakal and Kollam

**Kerala Pilgrimage:** Guruvayoor, and Shabarimala

**Kerala Waterfalls:** Athirapally, Munnar, and Wayanad

**Kerala Wild life:** Munnar, Thekkady, and Wayanad

**Eco Tourism:** Bakal and Thenmala.

**Kerala Ayurveda:** Kovalam, Alappuzha, and Thiruvananthapuram

### **KUMARAKOM**

Kumarakom is very small village of Kerala but it is very popular tourist destination of the world because of its beauty, Backwaters and Houseboats. Tourists can visit plenty of beautiful places in Kumarakom and can enjoy the beauty of the nature. These are the main Attractions Sightseeing options in Kumarakom.

### **Pathiramanal Island**

Pathiramanal is a small island in Muhamma panchayat of Alappuzha district. The name Pathiramanal means 'sands of night'. The scenic beauty of both sides of the lake as well as that of the island is mind blowing. It is home to many rare varieties of migratory birds from different parts of the world.

### **Kumarakom Bird sanctuary**

Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary is situated at Kumarakom in Kottayam taluk of Kottayam district in the Indian state of Kerala, on the banks of Vembanad Lake. Set in the Kerala Backwaters, the bird sanctuary is a favourite haunt of migratory birds.

### **Drift wood museum**

Bay Island Driftwood Museum at Kumarakom displays large collection of superior quality driftwood articles of very high artistic value, prepared through a rare and innovative modern art form.

A Museum displaying a unique collection of superior quality driftwood articles of very high artistic value, prepared through a rare and innovative modern art form, is functioning at the scenic village of Kumarakom in Kottayam. A Visitor would find there a huge collection of root sculptures of various shapes and designs.

### **Vembanad Lake**

Vembanad Lake emits the hues of sapphire and emerald. The sight of emerald green coconut fringes flanked by the sapphire led backwaters is a treat for eyes. With 96 km length and 14 km width, Vembanad Lake is recognized as the longest lake in India and largest water reservoir in Kerala. Moreover, it is the heart of Kerala backwater. People from around the world come here for a boat ride and to spoil themselves in the scenic beauty of the backwaters.

Serene and tranquil backwater of Kumarakom turns into starlit affair during the festival of Onam and snake boat race. During these festivals, the backwater spring back to life as thousands of people gathers to cheer for their favourite Chundan Vallams to chase the title of the fastest. More than just a sports event this grand carnival calls the international as well as domestic crowd to cheer up the participants getting involved into an energetic activity.

Canoes and houseboats are best recommended to transverse the length and breadth of Vembanad Lake. Life at Vembanad Lake runs at very slow pace. Vembanad Lake is the place known for its serenity, peace and the aquatic animals that breed here. Houseboat ride in Vembanad Lake will take tourist to the Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary and small islands where they can see paddy

plantation, hyacinths, traditional style of fishing, and sightseeing experience that is truly exhilarating. Tourists can also spot fascinating yet beautiful avian species that are thriving in the temperate season. For photographers, the lake is nothing less than a bountiful ride that will show them the most pristine form of nature. Surroundings of the lake are too-good-to-be-true.

Kumarakom is the best place in Kerala to visit. 1 or 2 hours in country boat ride through the small canals, a sun set cruise in the Vembanad Lake, Visit the Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary, a visit with a local fisherman in the early morning, etc. are the best options available in Kumarakom, which you will not get in any other destinations in Kerala.

### **Research Methodology**

Research Methodology is the process of systematic investigation of any management problem it deals with research design, data collection method, sampling plan, sampling method. Research means a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic. Research is a careful investigation or inquiry especially through search for new facts in any branch of knowledge. The methodology may include publication research, interviews, surveys and other research techniques, and could include both present and historical information.

**Primary data:** It is the data, which is collected for once, own research purpose. The primary data was collected through questionnaire and informal discussion and it is interpreted. The questions were framed to gain maximum first-hand knowledge from tourist of selected destination, which were analyzed in order to arrive at suitable conclusion.

**Secondary data:** Secondary data refers to the information or facts already collected. Such data are collected with the objectives of understanding the past status of any variable data collected and reported by some source is accessed and used for the objectives of the study. The secondary data were collected from: Magazine, Books, Journals, Records maintained by HR department, and websites

### **Research plan:**

Data source : Primary Data & Secondary Data

Research approach : Survey

Research Instrument : Questionnaire

Method of contact : Personal

Sample size : 101 Respondents

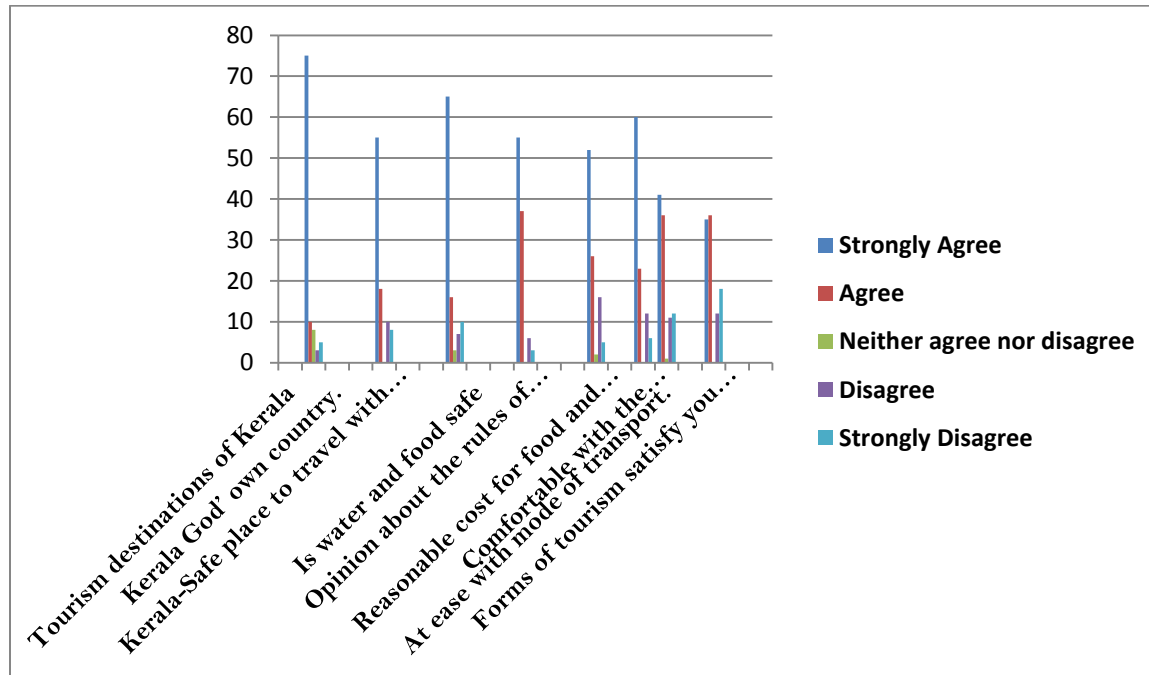
The questionnaire was designed to poll the opinions from the tourists. The 25 item questionnaire is categorized into 8 sub scales. In this study, a self-administered questionnaire has been used for collecting data from the tourists. The questionnaire also contained a question about visitor’s perspective and some personal questions to reach some contextual sense of the answers collected such as name, age, designation, etc. The above opinions were measured by requesting respondents to indicate, on a five-point Likert-type scale, anchored on to strongly agree, to agree, to neither agree nor disagree, to disagree and to strongly disagree.

**Data Analysis:** Data analysis is represented by bar diagram.

**Table showing the opinion of the tourist about the tourism destinations of Kerala**

<b>Tourism destinations of Kerala</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Kerala God’ own country.	75	10	8	3	5
Kerala-Safe place to travel with friends and family.	55	18	0	10	8
Is water and food safe	65	16	3	7	10
Opinion about the rules of visitors in Kerala	55	37	0	6	3
Reasonable cost for food and accommodation.	52	26	2	16	5
Comfortable with the Languages spoken in Kerala	60	23	0	12	6
At ease with mode of transport.	41	36	1	11	12
Forms of tourism satisfy	35	36	0	12	18

you according to your preferences.					
------------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--



**Findings.**

The purpose of this presentation is to find out the scope of tourism in Kerala with special reference to Kumarakom. 101 tourists were interviewed personally and all of them had different things to tell. Generally, tourists had lot of passion in talking about destinations in Kerala. At the same time, they also gave few suggestions for improvement. About 75% of the respondents agree that Kerala gives the experience of God' own country and 5% strongly disagree to this fact due to various reasons and it differs from person to person and place to place. Again 55% has the opinion that Kerala is a safe place to travel with friends and family and to this point, 8% of the respondents strongly disagree. Then 65% strongly agree that food and water is safe in the destinations and to this point, 10% have very different opinion. Another main question asked was the rules and regulations of different places and to this 55% very positively responded and only 3% had very different opinion. Then they were commenting about the cost of food and accommodation in the tourism destinations to that 55% are very glad and 5% totally disagree to this. Then they were asked about the language spoken through that question they proved that Kerala is God' own country for language is not a barrier for anything if you have love in the heart. Another major finding was that a good number of them are not happy with the transport system of Kerala. Again

a good number of the respondents were not satisfied with the forms of tourism that are available in various tourism destinations of Kerala.

### **Conclusion**

Tourism, in my opinion, is a perfect vehicle for inclusive growth of society as it showcases the heritage of the nation and positively contributes to the development of local communities and poverty alleviation. Incredible India's promise of enthralling and engaging tourists will continue to capture the hearts of millions as the tourism industry of the country puts its best foot forward.

The travel and tourism industry has emerged as one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors globally. Its contribution to the global Gross Domestic Product and employment has increased significantly. The Kerala tourism industry has emerged as one of the key drivers of growth among the services sector in Kerala. Tourism in Kerala is a sunrise industry, an employment generator, a significant source of foreign exchange for the place and an economic activity that helps local and host communities. Kerala is a tourism product, which is unparalleled in its beauty, uniqueness, rich culture, and history has been aggressively pursuing the promotion of tourism both internationally as well as in the domestic market. With increasing tourist inflows over the past few years, it is a significant contributor to Kerala's economy as well. Rising income levels and changing lifestyles, offerings and policy and regulatory support by the government are playing a pivotal role in shaping the travel and tourism sector in Kerala. Kumarakom is the most preferred option by the visitors when it comes to the backwater houseboat tourism in Kerala. It offers wide variety of flora, exotic sightseeing, boating and fishing experience.

### **References**

- A.K.Bhatia. (2011). *The business of tourism*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.
- Chaudhary, M. (2013). *Tourism marketing*. New Delhi: Oxford.
- Cook, R. A. (2010). *Tourism the business of travel*. Pearson.
- Goeldner, C. R. (2010). *Tourism principles, practices and philosophies*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Puri, m. (2006). Travel and Tourism. In G. Chand. New Delhi.
- Roady, S. (2013). *Tourism Oprations and Management*. New delhi: Oxford.
- Sethi, P. (2005). Heritage tourism. Anmol Publications.
- Sharma, J. (2007). *Tourism and development*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.
- Sinha, P. (n.d.). *Tourism Research Policy and Regulation*. Anmol Publications.

Srivastava, M. (2016). *National and state tourism marketing*. Bilaspur: kanishka publishers.

Talwar, P. (2006). *Travel and Tourism Management*. ISHA Books.