

Poverty alleviation through Responsible Tourism- A Study with special reference to Kumbaras in Kerala

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Abstract

This paper analysis the role of responsible tourism in uplifting the poor and thereby eradicating poverty. Poverty alleviation is possible by supporting the rural community in using their traditional skill-based works and providing a source of income to them. Kumbaras the backward community in Kerala are facing the problem of poverty. Their traditional occupation of pottery making using clay is at the verge of extinction. Its high time to protect our traditions and ancestral cultures which are rare to see anywhere else in the world. This study tries to analyse the problems faced by kumbaras and the intensity of such problems. Study also analyse the attitude of kumbaras based on three indicators. Results will help to understand the scope for responsible tourism in kumbara colonies and there by framing a mechanism to eradicate their poverty. Study is conducted in three districts of Kerala and results shows that there is wider scope for promoting responsible tourism in collaboration with kumbaras. Results of analysis shows that Lack of proper market outlets and non-availability of clay and other resources are the major problems faced by kumbaras. Socio economic status of kumbaras are also analysed in this study.

Keywords: Kumbara , Responsible tourism , Poverty alleviation.

1. Introduction

Kerala, 'Gods Own Country' is a tourism trend setter in India and is one of the prime tourism destinations point in the world map. Being a reservoir of natural resources, teak plantations, forests, skilled labor, local self-government, entrepreneurial activities, micro enterprises etc Kerala is an ideal place for setting responsible tourism. Responsible tourism is tourism which minimizes negative social, economic and environmental impacts. It generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities. Tourism as such may create negative impact on the environment where we live. But responsible tourism provides opportunities for ecofriendly activities and the participation of local communities play a significant role in this regard. This can be successfully implemented in rural areas. Responsible tourism is concerned with 3 kinds of responsibilities economic, social and environmental known as "triple bottom-line". Kumbaras are well known for pottery making and it's their ancestral occupation. In spite of having their traditional skill and art, kumbaras are still facing financial constraints for their livelihood. The study tries to analyse the scope for responsible tourism in poverty alleviation with special reference to kumbaras.

Significance of the study

Kumbara community in Kerala is a backward community category of people who live their livelihood with pottery making. Pottery making is their ancestral occupation which has been passed on from generation to generation. Kumabara colony is a beautiful place of location to visit and learn the culture of community. But due to several challenges faced by this community majority of them are still below poverty line. Kerala being a place with cultural diversity and having lot of resources, it is the ideal destination for promoting responsible tourism. It is the need of the hour to promote responsible tourism and also to protect the traditional occupations and culture existing among backward communities in Kerala. New generation people from backward communities are switching their job to other sources because of the poor income from traditional occupation. Hence to protect the culture of the state its necessary to take steps to promote responsible tourism and thereby poverty aspects of kumbaras can be alleviated. This study tries to analyse the role of kumbaras in promoting tourism. Study also analyses the problems faced by this community and also attitude of the community towards responsible tourism.

Review of Literature

Paul Winters et.al (2013) in their article "*Assessing the Role of Tourism in Poverty Alleviation: A Research Agenda*" proposes a research agenda for reducing the gap in the literature related to tourism – poverty link . The study argues that the key aspect is at what situation this link is becoming strongest. It also shows best way to analyse the linkage between tourism and poverty is usage of impact evaluation and also accurate diagnosis and evaluation of tourism projects.

Savya V and Pushpam M (2023) in their paper "*Pottery as Traditional Occupation of Kumbaran: Emerging Trends and Concerns*" focuses on the reasons behind the shifting of occupation by kumbara community. The study also analyses the present status and beliefs and attitude of kumbaras. Qualitative methods are adopted to find solution to the problems identified in the study.

Kim Lian Chan et.al (2021) in their article "*Local Community Participation and Responsible Tourism Practices in Ecotourism Destination: A Case of Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah*" explores and analyse the responsible practices and community participation at this tourism destination. The study discusses key issues and challenges faced by local communities. Focus group interview and questionnaire is being used. Results shows that 42% respondents have work related to tourism activities.

Mathew and S Sreejesh , (2017) in the study "*Impact of responsible tourism on destination*

sustainability and quality of life of community in tourism destinations” examines the impact of perceived responsible tourism on quality of life of communities living in the tourism destination. 432 samples were taken from 3 different tourist destinations. Findings shows that there is significant Impact of tourism on sustainability and quality of life of community.

Shahrukh Khalid et.al, (2019) in the study “*Community Empowerment and Sustainable Tourism Development: The Mediating Role of Community Support for Tourism*” examines the realtion between sustainable tourism and community development. Also discussing ways for establishing community support for promoting tourism. Results shows that there is significant relationship between community development and STDs.

Paul V Mathew and Nimmi P M , (2021) in their article “ *Sustainable tourism development: discerning the impact of responsible tourism on community well-being*” , explains the intervening mechanism of community well being that transforms responsibilities of tourism that transforms into life satisfaction. 493 sample were selected survey was conducted. The results shpws that responsible tourism has got impact on the well being of the community people.

Stuart McMinn, (1997), in his article “*The challenge of sustainable tourism*” discuss the actual meaning of the term sustainable tourism. The article also argues about the inherent problems in the definition and measurement of its success. The challenge is to see it in a broader context and also to examine its impact on local community.

Research Gap

Though several studies have been conducted in relation to responsible tourism and impact on local community, literature review shows that specific studies in relation to kumbaras are rare. There is a gap with regard to studies pertaining to how poverty alleviation is possible through responsible tourism measures. Hence this study tries to fill this research gap.

Objectives

1. To identify the problems faced by Kumbaras in Kerala
2. To analyse the attitude of kumbaras towards responsible tourism
3. To develop a model of poverty alleviation through responsible tourism

Research Methodology

This is a descriptive study based on primary data. Data is collected from selected respondents through structured questionnaire. Sample for the study is selected using snow ball sampling method. Since kumbaras are communities living in rural places, sample for the study is identified using reference given by kumbaras. 20 households are identified from 3 different states (Malappuram, Calicut and Palakkad) and hence a total of 60 households constitute the sample size. Structured interview schedule is used for collecting data. Observation method is also followed to draw meaningful inferences. Tools for analysis include descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Hypothesis is tested using T test.

Limitations of the study

1. The study is limited to kumbaras in 3 districts of Kerala .
2. Illiteracy of respondents may have affected the accuracy of their response.
3. Being backward community they feel reluctant to share their views and problems and hence observation method is also followed in the study.

Section 1: Problems Faced by Kumbaras

There are lot of problems faced by the pot making community and in this section the severity of each problem is studied. Different problems that are studied include shortage of soil, shortage of firewood etc...

Table 1.1 Intensity of problems faced by Kumbaras Community

Problem Factors	Number of respondents facing the problem (yes)	Number of respondents not facing the problem (no)	Intensity of problem in Mean Score (5point scale)
Shortage of soil	60	0	4.6
Lack of structured market	56	4	4.4
Degree of exploitation	54	6	4.4
Poverty	48	12	4.3
Shortage of fire wood	52	8	4.1
Alcoholism	52	8	3.8
High cost of pottery making	42	18	3.6
Lack of subsidies from government	23	37	3.2
Membership in association of Kumbaras	46	14	2.3
Lack of Facilities	19	41	2.1
Risk of manual task	11	49	1.8
Ration card services	55	5	1.1

From the above analysis the problems faced by kumbaras can be divided into three categories. a) Major issues: Major issues are shortage of soil, lack of structured market, exploitation by middlemen, Poverty and shortage of firewood. All these have a meanscore above 4. b) Medium issues: Medium issues alcoholism, high cost of pottery making, lack of subsidies, membership issues and lack of facilities. All these have a mean score in between 2 and 4. c) Minor issues: Minor issues addressed are risk of manual task, less access to Ration card services. Thus, all the issues are classified into 3 categories based on their intensity.

Table 1.2 Socio Economic Status of Kumbaras

Factors	Status	No of respondents	Percentage
Average Income level (monthly)	Below 10000	43	72%
	10000-20000	10	16%
	Above 20000	7	12%
House structure	Permanent	15	25%
	Not permanent	45	75%
Education	Degree	4	7%
	Plus two	6	10%
	Below plus two	50	83%
Occupation	Pot making	36	60%

	Pot making and other job	20	33%
	Other job	4	7%
Living Facilities	Normal	6	10%
	Average	12	20%
	Poor	42	70%

Socio economic status of kumbaras reveals that 72% are below poverty line . 75% does not have permanent house structure. Education status is also poor. 60% of kumbaras still depend on pot making. Altogether the socio-economic conditions of kumbaras are not satisfactory. Due to the lack of education many of them are not able to switch over to other jobs. Moreover, they believe their tradition and culture need to be protected.

Section 2 : Attitude of kumbaras towards their traditional occupation of pot making and towards responsible tourism

This section analyses the attitude of Kumbaras with regard to their readiness to engage in pot making activities and also their attitude towards responsible tourism. By critically evaluating their attitude, scope for responsible tourism can be understood. The variables used are readiness to conduct workshops, readiness to teach their children this art, linkage between pottery making and tourist arrival etc. The attitude and scope for responsible tourism is analysed based on three indicators. Mean score of indicators and variables of 60 respondents are given below:

Table 2.1 Meanscore of Variables

Indicator 1 : Attitude towards present status of Kumbaras	
Variables	Mean score
Awareness on responsible tourism	2.4 Less Aware
Awareness on new technologies in pot making	2.5 Less Aware
Frequently engaged in Pot making	2.7 Disagree
Feel this job as a low status one	2.05 Disagree
Able to find markets for products	1.1 Strongly disagree
Youngsters shifting to other jobs	3.7 Agree
Association Meetings are conducted to promote the art	3.6 Agree

Present status of kumbaras is unsatisfactory in general and they are disappointed on the fact that the young generation is forced to find other jobs for their livelihood. Kumbaras are also concerned that if this situation persist sooner their traditional occupation will come to an end. The major factor of concern is that they are not able to find proper outlets for their products. Street vending and door to door vending is not possible these days due to several stringent rules and not profitable also. Hypothesis testing of difference in mean scores also found out that there is no significant difference in the present status of kumbaras in 3 districts (Calicut, Nilambur and Palakkad).

Table 2.2 Mean score of Variables

Indicator 2 : Future expected behaviour of Kumbaras	
Variables	Mean score
Ready to teach next generation the art of pot making	2.7 neutral
If properly carried out this can be a source of income	4.3 Strongly agree
Market outlets in different areas will promote business	4.7 Strongly agree
If soil and firewood is supplied ready to make pots	4.4 Strongly agree
Interested to do the job in future	4 Agree
Ready to share the earnings from linkage between tourism and kumbaras	3.9 Agree

Future expected behaviour of Kumbaras is highly positive in nature and they are ready to cooperate with government and other agencies to promote their traditional occupation in future. They are ready to face the challenges and risk involved in pot making. Many of them consider the job as a low status one, mainly because they are unable to earn an income from this job. The residents of the kumbarhan colony less agree to the idea of teaching the next generation this art as they feel it will ruin their lives too.

Table 2.3 Mean score of Variables

Indicator 3 : Attitude towards Tourism	
Variables	Mean score
Ready to conduct workshops for tourists	4.45 Highly agree
Tourist agencies should have tie up with kumbaras	3.6 Agree
Ready to share the earnings from linkage between tourism and kumbaras	3.8 Agree
Ready to welcome foreigners to the colony	4.4 Highly agree
Ready to explain their culture and tradition to tourists	3.4 Agree

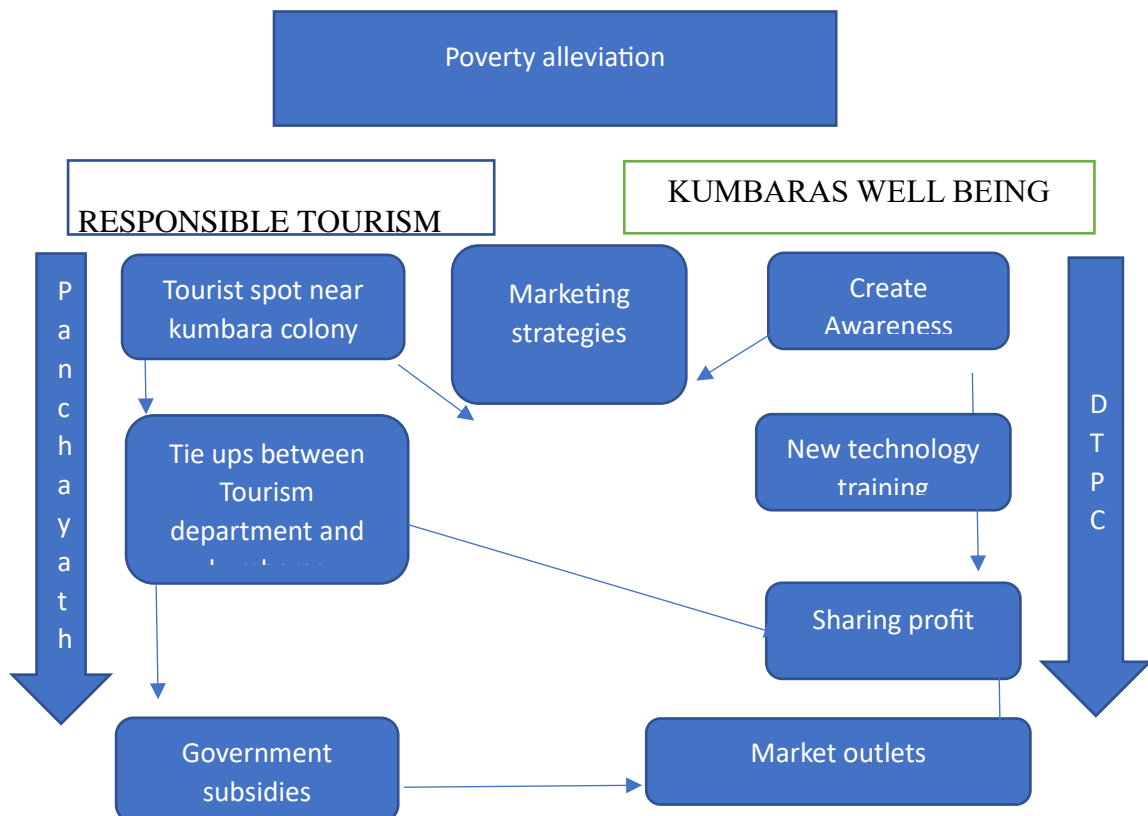
From the above table the following conclusions can be made. The community is ready to conduct workshops for visitors provided that necessary assistance is given by government. They are also ready to accept tourism. Kumbaras are of the belief that they can have good earnings from this. Collaborative activities between government and kumbaras will enhance responsible tourism measures.

Section 3: Discussions and a Working model

From observation, it was found that Socio economic status of selected respondents are below average. Majority of them live in a small house with two rooms. In some areas kumbaras don't even have a permanent house structure. Their source of income is pottery making and

many of them sell it individually like hawkers and peddlers. They sell their products on roadside during festivals and carnivals without a structured form of market. They are of the opinion that whenever foreigners visit their place, they get money from them. But that is also seasonal and not regular. There is great potential for the kumbharam colony to promote tourism as there is a large foreign arrival to the place. Foreigners usually arrive at this place to see this magnificent art. Most of the time they try to engage themselves in this activity. Hence this is a positive sign to bring about responsible tourism in the area. Although technology has improved so much there is very few people in the community who know about it. They still depend on newspaper and most of them do not generally engage in any such promotional activities. More promotional methods should be familiarized to them if they need to increase their income. Until and unless the government and the local bodies take some initiative to uplift this community it will face extinction within a few years. Government needs to pay more attention to this particular aspect. They are aware about products other than pots that can be made from clay but are scared to experiment these as they feel they will incur a huge loss. Hence, they confine themselves to make pots and vessels. By creating confidence among the community and by supporting them in conducting workshops and pot making exhibitions they can be equipped with skill to work in future. Obviously, the problem of poverty can be reduced by using these type strategies. Measures of responsible tourism will enhance both the government income and also help to reduce poverty of a backward community. Problems faced by kumbaras are also need to be addressed. Following model is developed based on the above study

CHART : 1.1 Working Model for Promoting Kumbaras



Conclusion

The study shows that majority (72%) of kumbaras are below poverty line and their socio-economic status is also below average. Study also found out that majority of them are ready to continue with their traditional job of pot making. Majority of them are ready to conduct workshops for tourists. They are also ready to welcome tourist activities in their area. At this juncture, there is wider scope for implementing responsible tourism activities among kumbaras and thereby alleviate their poverty. The whole mechanism can be operated through panchayaths and District tourism promotion councils. Poverty eradication is integral for the sustainable development of the country. The positive attitude of rural community towards responsible tourism is a good sign. Capacity building programmes and training sessions will increase their confidence. Moreover they should be brought under a structured channel through which they can find market for their products. Responsible tourism promotion is two way beneficial to the state as it protects the traditional culture of different communities in Kerala and also lead to an increase in the tourism activities in the state.

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