

Revisiting The Factors Affecting Resident Community Support For Tourism Development

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Abstract

The community participation in tourism is considered as one of the major contributing factors towards sustainable tourism development. The present study tries to revisit the factors affecting residents' support for tourism during the pandemic situation. The study first explains the present situation of the tourism industry of Kerala and then explains the influence of perceived impacts (both benefits and costs) and perceived risk on resident community support. The present study helps the authorities to understand the factors affecting resident community support during the pandemic situation of COVID 19. The study result clearly shows that the perceived risk and the perceived costs of tourism negatively influence the community support. The result also verifies a positive relation between the perceived benefits of tourism and the resident community support. The result is based on the primary data collected from the residents of Fort Kochi and generalisation of the result is limited.

Keywords: sustainable tourism development, perceived benefits of tourism, perceived risk, perceived costs of tourism, community support.

Introduction

Tourism is considered as one of the major contributors towards national development and as per the report of Kerala tourism statistics (2019), "Kerala is a leader in India when it comes to the destination management, tourism promotion as well as tourist arrivals". The report also shows that there was a growth of 8.52% on the number foreign tourists arrivals and an increase of 17.19% on Foreign Exchange Earnings in the year 2019 when compared with 2018. All these figures highlight the importance of the tourism industry in the state and in order to reap long term returns from tourism, sustainable development is inevitable. Realising the importance of this, the Kerala government has been making a relentless effort to develop the state as a complete destination. Sustainable development acts as a basis for all these initiatives and the review shows that sustainable tourism development can be better achieved by the participation and support of the local community (Dong-Wan Ko and William P. Stewart 2002, Byrd, E. T., Bosley, H. E., & Dronberger, M. G. 2009; Lee et al. 2010; Yu et al, 2011; Robin Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, H 2011, Medet Yolal et al. 2021). The researchers have paid great attention to this topic of community support and resulted in numerous studies. As the industry is now going through a difficult situation of COVID-19 pandemic, it was considered relevant to revisit the factors affecting community support. The first part of the study explained how the spread of COVID-

19 has affected the tourism industry of Kerala and the second part presented the major factors affecting the resident community support and their relationships.

Objectives of the study

1. To understand the impact of COVID 19 on the tourism industry of Kerala.
2. To assess the relationship between the perceived benefits of tourism and community support for tourism.
3. To assess the relationship between the perceived costs of tourism and community support for tourism.
4. To assess the relationship between the perceived risk and community support for tourism.

Review of Literature

The study was conducted to revisit the factors which influence the community support for tourism development during the pandemic situation.

Community Support for Tourism

Community support on tourism has been studied in detail by a number of scholars around the world and most of these studies explained that the perceived impacts of tourism is the major determinant of community support. The theoretical background for most of these studies is the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Gursoy Dogan., Chi, C. G., & Dyer, P., 2010; Lee, C., Kang, S. K., Long, P., & Reisinger, Y., 2010; Hadinejad, Moyle, Scott, Kralj & Nunkoo, 2019). Ap (1992, p. 668) describes “SET as a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation”. The SET theory when applied to tourism can be explained as the residents’ will support tourism, if the positive outcomes are more than the negative outcomes (Andereck et al., 2005). This was verified in a number of studies conducted earlier (Nunkoo et.al., 2012; Sinclair-Maragh et al., 2016; Çalışkan et. al., 2020). The study of Nunkoo et.al (2012) in their study found that the perceived impacts of tourism(benefits and costs) and the trust in the government authorities have acted as the most important determinant of community support for tourism. The present situation of COVID-19 pandemic raises a question that even if tourism brings benefits to their community, whether they are concerned about their safety or not? That means it is relevant to conduct a study to check whether the perceived risk associated with welcoming the tourists to their community has any role in determining the support for tourism development. Even though a number of studies have been conducted in the area of perceived risk, most of them were from a tourist's perspective. Only a few studies have been conducted from the angle of resident community (D. Joo et al. 2021). Hence it was considered relevant to include one more variable(the perceived risk) apart from the perceived impacts(benefits and costs) of tourism to determine the community support during the pandemic situation. Thus the present research attempted to assess the effect of three variables [namely perceived benefits of tourism, perceived costs of tourism and perceived risk] on resident community support for tourism.

The Perceived benefits of tourism

The review strongly points out that the residents gave their support as it provides benefits like increase in employment opportunities, helps in more income generation, improves the local economy, raises standard of living, provides revenue, improves the public facilities, attracts more investments and ensures regional development (Yooshik Yoonet.al., 2001, Sirakaya.E.Teye et.al., 2002; Dogan et al., 2004; Andereck, et al., 2005; Dyer et al., 2007; Untong et al., 2010, Nunkoo et al., 2012, P.C.Radhika and Johney Johnson, 2015). The earlier studies conducted show a strong positive relationship between the two variables(the perceived benefits of tourism and community support), but this has to be tested in the present pandemic situation. The study has made an attempt to test whether the risk of COVID 19 influences the strong relationship between perceived benefits of tourism and community support. The hypothesis formulated is stated below.

H1: There is a direct positive relationship between the perceived benefits of tourism and community support for tourism.

The Perceived Costs of tourism

Tourism development has resulted in a number of negative impacts like increase in the areas of real estate cost, cost of living, crime rate and prices of goods & services. The tourism development has also resulted the creation of congestion problems, traffic accidents and the generation of different types of pollution (Gursoy et al., 2004, Andereck, et al., 2005; Dyer et al., 2007, Nunkoo et al., 2011, Látková et al., 2012). Cultural degradation, alcoholism and sexual permissiveness are the other problems cited in the review (Sirakaya. E.Teye et al., 2002, Andereck, et al., 2005, Nunkoo et al., 2011, Nunkoo et al., 2012). Thus the review clearly points out that the resident community support is negatively influenced by the perceived costs of tourism and on this basis, the hypothesis is formulated.

H2: There is a direct negative relationship between the perceived costs of tourism and community support for tourism.

Perceived Risk

The review on perceived risk shows that most of the studies have been conducted from the angle of consumer. The review on tourism literature also indicates that studies have been conducted on the influence of perceived risk on tourists behaviour. Before explaining about the perceived risk, it is relevant to have clarity regarding the term risk. According to Vaughan E.J(1997) the risk is related to the possibility of loss. He also pointed out that if the outcome of an event is uncertain, there will be chances of risk. Vaughan E.J(1997) states that “ uncertainty is simply a psychological reaction to the absence of knowledge about the future”. That means, risk is involved when there exists doubt regarding the possible outcome of an event. But the perception of risk will be different for different persons and it is influenced by different factors. The perceived risk in connection with travel has been defined as “financial, physical, psychological, satisfaction, social, and time risks” (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992, p. 18). While making international travel, the choice of destination is based on the evaluation of perceived risk in terms of all the above mentioned factors. All these factors like financial, psychological, physical etc influence the tourist’s decision on travel purchase. Tourists generally experience more risks compared to the local community at a destination because tourists may have uncertainty about the successful completion of the tour and the residents have more details about that destination. That is why, there is very little research conducted on residents' perceived risk. But the pandemic situation of

COVID 19 has resulted in a doubtful situation for tourism and there is substantial loss in tourist inflow, globally. This situation poses risk in the mind of the resident community (Zenker & Kock, 2020) and the reasons include the uncertainty about the future of tourism, the fear of infections from the tourists, the loss of economic benefits from tourism etc. All these factors will contribute to the perceived risk of the resident community and it will definitely influence their support for tourism. Thus the present study tries to find out the relationship between perceived risk and community support for tourism. The study of Dongoh.et.al(2021) suggests a negative relationship between the perceived risk and the community support. Based on this, the third hypothesis is formulated.

H3: There is a direct negative relationship between the perceived risk and community support for tourism.

Methodology of the study

The study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data for the study was collected from Fort Kochi, which is one of the major destinations in Ernakulam district, Kerala. The Kerala tourism statistics (2019) highlights that Ernakulam district ranks the top position both in the district wise foreign tourist arrival (5.22 lakhs) as well as domestic tourist arrival(40.6 lakhs). Among the different destinations in Ernakulam district, Fort Kochi is one of the major tourist destinations which received 11% of total foreign tourists share in the year 2019(Kerala tourism statistics, 2019). Thus it was considered relevant to conduct study at Fort Kochi and the random sampling method was used to collect data from 100 respondents. The data was collected from the community members of Fortkochi and the operational definition of resident community selected for study is “*local residents who were employed in tourism related business as well as those who were not, with the focus on those who were 15 years of age or older and are those who live and support social and economic activities in tourist destinations and are also affected by tourism development in their communities.*” The data was collected using a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained two sections, Section A was about demographic details of the resident community and section B included statements about the impacts of tourism(benefits and costs), community support for tourism and also about the perceived risk of tourism. The perceived benefits of tourism consisted of 15 items, the perceived cost of tourism with 14 items, the perceived risk consisted of 4 items and the community support consisted of 5 items. The section B contained questions in a five point Likert scale which measured the level of agreement with the statements, where 5 represent ‘strongly agree’, 4 represent ‘Agree’, 3 represent ‘neither agree nor disagree’, 2 for ‘Disagree’ and 1 represent ‘strongly disagree’. The data was collected during 10th March 2021 to 15th April 2021. The section B also included an open ended question-“ Whether you support tourism during this pandemic and what are your suggestions to develop tourism during this present situation?”. The secondary data was collected from e- resources, journals, books, government reports, newspaper articles etc.

The impact of COVID 19 on Kerala Tourism

The impact of COVID 19 on the tourism industry was analysed using the secondary data collected from the government reports published. As per the report of the state planning board, the tourism industry is severely affected by the strike of COVID-19. The report states that “*The Covid-19 pandemic had brought business of all tourism stakeholders to a standstill affecting the livelihood of all*

entrepreneurs as well as employees of the industry". The report points out that the state is facing unprecedented loss due to COVID-19. In order to assess the loss, the state government has adopted two methodologies. First methodology is by finding out the estimated loss by taking the difference between the projected tourists arrival of 2020 with the actual tourist arrival in 2020. The findings gave a shocking result of 61% decline in foreign tourist arrival and 75% decline in domestic tourist arrival than the estimate. The report also highlights that *"The total loss in the sector from January to September 2020 is ₹24971 crore. Out of this ₹20,303 is the loss in direct earnings and ₹4,668 is the loss in indirect earnings. The loss in earnings from decline in foreign tourist arrivals is estimated to be ₹5, 274 crore and from domestic tourist arrivals is ₹ 19, 697 crore"*. The second methodology is by finding out the difference between the number of estimated figures of 2020 and actual figures of tourist arrivals in 2019. The result shows that there is 57% decline in foreign tourists arrival and 70% in domestic tourist arrival. The report also highlights that *"the total loss in the sector from January to September 2020 is ₹ 20,115 crore. Out of this, ₹16,178 crore are the losses in direct earnings and ₹3,937 crore are the losses in indirect earnings. The loss in earnings from decline in foreign tourist arrivals is ₹4, 403 crore and from domestic tourist arrivals is ₹15, 712 crore. The loss in earnings in tourism is in the range of ₹20,000 crore to ₹25,000 crore over the nine months of 2020"* (Report of State Planning Board, 2020). The report clearly states that the tourism industry has been going through a very difficult situation. After the first wave, the tourism industry started to slowly pick up by opening destinations to domestic tourists during the end of 2020. This resulted in traffic congestion in famous tourist destinations in Kerala, for example there were huge vehicle queues in 'Munnar'(Kerala) during the Christmas time(2020) resulting in 5 to 6 hours of traffic congestion. But this hope did not last for a long time and India has been severely affected by the second wave of COVID19. The article in newspaper 'The Hindu' reports that *"Since April 3, India has been consistently recording the highest number of daily cases globally, surpassing the U.S. and Brazil on an average. The second wave of COVID-19 in India appears to be ascending faster than the first wave that peaked in mid-September last year. It is crucial to note that the number of COVID-19 tests being conducted daily during the second wave is much higher than the first."*(Radhakrishnan Vignesh, 2021).

The hit of second wave COVID 19 has affected the state severely and the future of the tourism industry is uncertain because of the travel restrictions and lockdown in different parts of the world. As per the latest updates on e-visa, the e-tourist visa is still in suspended mode and only conference, medical and medical attendant e-visa has been restored. The vaccination certificate now acts as the new travel document needed to take part in tourism just like a passport or visa. Along with the vaccination certificate, the traveller must follow travel guidelines issued by each country or region. The Kerala government is taking the lead by introducing several initiatives to revive tourism namely opening of 'Drive-in' restaurants, fastening the vaccination drives, bio-bubble etc. The 'bio-bubble model' ensures a protective environment for tourists who will be received by vaccinated service providers such as ground staff at the airports, cab drivers, tour operators, staff at hotels, resorts or home stays, staff of houseboats etc. In this present pandemic situation, only domestic tourism is being fully restored in Kerala, but its economic contribution is limited. Due to the rise in daily cases in Kerala, the government has decided to continue restrictions and partial lockdown in the state in order to flatten the curve of COVID 19 cases. Thus the recovery of the tourism industry needs more time and this has created uncertainty in the minds of all persons who are directly or indirectly involved in this industry.

Data Analysis and results

A total of 100 samples were collected from the resident community of Fort Kochi. The analysis was done using SPSS(ver21). The demographic details of the respondents is presented in the following table1.

Table 1:

Demographic details of Resident Community

	Groups	Percent
Gender	Male	46
	Female	54
	Total	100
Age Groups	Below 20	7
	21-30	17
	31-40	25
	41-50	26
	51-60	14
	Above 60	11
	Total	100
Marital Status	Married	56
	Unmarried	22
	Separated	7
	Widow/Widower	12
	Divorced	3
	Total	100
	Below 10 th	16
	10 -12 th	20
	Graduate	36

Education Qualification	Post graduate	15
	Professional education	13
	Total	100
Years Lived In Present Community	0-10 years	8
	11-20 Years	15
	21-30 Years	22
	31-40 Years	7
	Over 40 years	6
	Native	42
	Total	100
Employed In Tourism Sector	Yes	47
	No	53
	Total	100

Source: Sample Survey

The perceived benefits of tourism consisted of 15 items, the perceived cost of tourism with 14 items, the perceived risk consisted of 4 items and the community support consisted of 5 items. These were examined using Cronbach reliability test. The dimensions in perceived benefits and costs of tourism were identified using an exploratory factor analysis. The exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to detect scale dimensionality. The result of factor analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2:

The result of reliability and EFA

	The total reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)	Total variance explained	The Bartlett's Test of sphericity (sig level)	The KMO measure of sampling adequacy	The Factors & Eigen value
Perceived benefits of	0.934(n=15)	77.459	.000	.865	1.The Economic benefits=8.097 2.The cultural benefits =2.113

tourism					3.The social benefits =1.409
Perceived costs of tourism	0.908(n=14)	76.173	.000	.806	1.The social costs =6.599 2.The cultural costs=2.134 3.The economic and environmental costs =1.931
Perceived Risk			The reliability value= 0.798(n=4)		
The community Support			The reliability value0.765(n=5)		

Source: Sample survey

The table2 shows that the value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy test and Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant for both the perceived benefits of tourism and perceived costs of tourism. The test conducted clearly shows that the KMO value for the perceived benefits of tourism is 0.865 and for the perceived costs of tourism is 0.806, which are high values close to one and thus it is relevant to conduct factor analysis. The table 2 also shows that for both the variables tested, the Bartlett's test value is 0.000 (small value < 0.05) which is significant for conducting factor analysis.

The EFA resulted in 3 factors for the perceived benefits of tourism and for the perceived costs of tourism namely, 'The Economic benefits', 'The cultural benefits', 'The social benefits', 'The social costs', 'The cultural costs' and 'The economic and environmental costs'.

The 3 hypotheses were tested using correlation analysis. The result of correlation analysis (Pearson Correlation value, one-tailed) which tested the relationship between the perceived benefits of tourism and the community support provided a value of 0.299, which shows a positive relationship between the two. The analysis provides a negative correlation between the perceived costs of tourism and the community support with a value of -0.069. The analysis also shows a negative correlation between the perceived risk and the community support with a value of -0.347. The result of correlation analysis clearly supports the hypotheses(H1,H2 and H3) formulated and thus all the null hypotheses were rejected. The study thus found that there is a direct positive relationship between the perceived benefits of tourism and the community support for tourism, a negative relationship between the perceived costs of tourism and the community support for tourism and a negative relationship between the perceived risk and the community support for tourism. The value 0.299 shows a very low positive relation between the perceived benefits of tourism and community support . The reason behind this low value is the present pandemic situation. The community members consider tourism as a vehicle to increase the risk of COVID 19 infections and their perception towards benefits of tourism and support is influenced by this risk perception.

Discussion of the results and Conclusion

The study was conducted to understand the impact of COVID 19 on the tourism industry and also to understand the relationship between the perceived impacts(both benefits and costs) and community

support. The study also checked the relationship between the perceived risk and community support. The study was carried out at Fort Kochi, a seaside area mixed with Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial architecture. The people residing at Fort Kochi mainly depend on tourism by running homestay business, local shops, restaurants etc. The tourism statistics clearly shows that Fort Kochi ranks the second position in terms of total tourist arrival as per the tourism statistics 2019 in the Ernakulam district, Kerala. The people at Fort Kochi mainly depend on foreign tourists and the peak season starts from October and ends in March. But due to COVID 19 pandemic, the destination is in a stand still situation for the last one year. *“The famed heritage streets of Fort Kochi and the beachfront, which used to teem with foreign and domestic tourists in the October-February tourist season, presents a striking contrast now, with street dogs literally outnumbering the few local residents who venture out once in a while.”*(Special Correspondent, 2020). The situation continues as the second wave of COVID 19 hits India badly. The hard time of the second wave has flattened and now the country has been slowly picking up by opening its destinations to tourists. But the full recovery of the tourism industry definitely needs more time and the people involved in the tourism industry are trying to find alternative ways to survive. Due to these uncertainties, the community support for tourism is influenced by the perceived risk involved. Even though residents are aware about the benefits of tourism, they are hesitant to give their support for tourism development during this pandemic situation.

The reviews show that both the costs of tourism and perceived risk have negative relations with community support and the benefit of tourism is positively related with community support. The present study confirmed the result and the null hypotheses were rejected. The result shows a very low positive correlation between perceived benefits and community support. The reason for the low correlation value(0.299) is that the resident community is going through a very uncertain situation because of the COVID 19. They are concerned about the future of tourism and also about the chances of spread of infections if tourists are allowed to visit during this pandemic time. But at the same time, 53% of the respondents(Table 1) are involved in the tourism business(are earning their livelihood from the industry) and are likely to support tourism by taking all COVID protocol measures. This is evident from the response to the ‘open ended’ question asked in section B- “ Whether you support tourism during this pandemic and what are your suggestions to develop tourism during this present situation?”. 78% of the respondents opined that they are willing to support tourism during this pandemic situation. They suggested that they are willing to support the government for developing tourism by following all COVID protocols. The reason for this support is that the residents of Fort Kochi view tourism as their main source of livelihood and they are emotionally attached to tourism. But at the same time, they are concerned about their safety against the ill effects of COVID 19. The COVID 19 pandemic situation has resulted in uncertainty in the tourism industry and has compelled the researcher to include a new variable (the perceived risk) into the determining factors of community support. The study also explains the sub factors of perceived benefits and costs of tourism. The present study helps the authorities to understand the perception of the resident community towards tourism development and also helps to understand the role of perceived risk in determining community support. The perceived risk was mainly studied in the view of consumers(tourists) earlier and now it is recently studied under resident community perspective. The epidemiologists around the world forecast and warn that there are chances of spread of future pandemics like COVID-19 (Contreras, 2020). This poses challenges to residents and this area needs further research. The determining factors of perceived risk have to be

studied in detail which serves as an area for further research. More research has to be conducted in this area by explaining sub factors which determine perceived risk.

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