

Beach Tourism and Community Development: A Case Study of Cherai in Ernakulam District

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ABSTRACT

In Kerala, tourism is progressing as one of the development vehicle which offers distinctive opportunities for promoting local economies. Tourism industry has made enormous contributions in the socio-economic spheres of the state during the last few decades. Economic impacts of tourism in any locality are generally caused from the growth of domestic and foreign tourist arrivals and its resultant contributions. The impact covers both positive and negative aspects. This study is an attempt to analyse the economic impact of beach tourism to the host community of Cherai, a famous beach tourist destination of Kerala.

Keywords: Beach Tourism, Community Development, Economic impact, Cherai beach.

i) Introduction

Kerala, the 'God's Own Country', officially announced tourism as an industry in 1986. The State is growing as an amazing tourist destination. Kerala has been gifted with its geographical diversity and natural beauty. In every year, millions of tourists, both domestic and foreign, come to Kerala to visit and enjoy its serene beaches, backwaters, lush Hills, mountains, forest, waterfalls and climate. Beach tourism, Health tourism, Backwater tourism, Hills tourism, Pilgrim tourism, and Cultural tourism are the major divisions of the tourism industry in Kerala. In Kerala, beaches are identified as one of the major tourist spots. They are the prime attraction to capture the tourist arrivals, which involves the utilization of coastal environment.

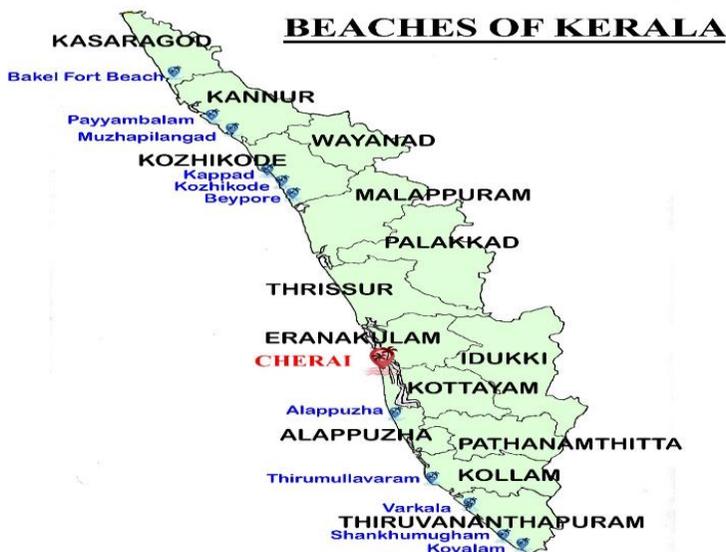
There were 1.09 million foreign and 14.9 million domestic tourist visits were recorded in Kerala during 2017 and achieved 5.2 per cent and 11.4 per cent growth in their number during the same year (Economic Review, 2016). Tourists are mostly attracted by beaches in the state. There are 40 major and minor beaches along the coastal area of Kerala and 14 of them belong to the south region, 8 to the central and 18 to the northern region. Cherai beach, situated in the central region of the state and has been declared as one of the beach destinations by the Government of Kerala (as per order number G.O (Rt.) No. 873/07/TSM) is selected for this study. Cherai Beach attracts thousands of foreign and domestic tourists in every year. The flow of tourists to Cherai has influenced the social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects to the residents of this locality. The analysis of the economic impact of beach tourism to the host community of Cherai in Kerala is the main objective of the study.

ii) Data and Methodology

The study is based on primary and secondary data. Secondary data has been used to discuss the trend of tourist arrivals to Cherai. Primary survey was conducted among 125 households from three wards of Cherai actively engaged in tourism activities, using structured questionnaire. The responses were measured by a five-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 - Strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, one-way 't' test and graphs are used to analyse the data.

iii) Description of the Study Area

Cherai is one of the famous beach tourist spots in Kerala, situated in Ernakulam district. The beach destination comes under Pallippuram Gramapanchayath. The Beach tourism activities are mainly concentrated in Munampam Kadappuram (Ward 1), Rektheswary (Ward 14) and Kadappuram (Ward 23) of Pallippuram Gramapanchayath. The local communities from these wards are selected for the survey.



iv) Beach Tourism and Community Development: A Brief Discussion

The impact of tourism in a locality is brought about by the interaction of host and guest. The economic impacts of tourism can be analysed both positively and negatively. The positive aspects of this impact on community development are highlighted in various studies. The presence of travellers brings economic benefits to the residents' income and wealth (Frenchtling, 1994). The tourism industry offers a variety of jobs which converts an unskilled to a highly specialised one (Bhatia, 1996). Tourism is an essential component for community development and poverty alleviation (Ashe, 2005).

Tourism plays an important role in improving the economic life of local people by providing income, employment and development. The relation between tourism and local economy can be strengthened through increasing visitor expenditure by establishing tour circuits that offer shopping opportunities for local industries and by reducing leakages with the better use of local agricultural, construction and minor industries. Tourism is promoted at the local level in hotels, restaurants, resorts, cottages, home stays, transport operator, parks, travel agents and entertainments. Thus the host community support is highly imperative for ensuring the sustainable development of the tourism industry. The negative effect of tourism to the host community is trivial. The benefits and costs reach almost everyone in the destination. The various components of positive and negative impact are represented in Table 1.

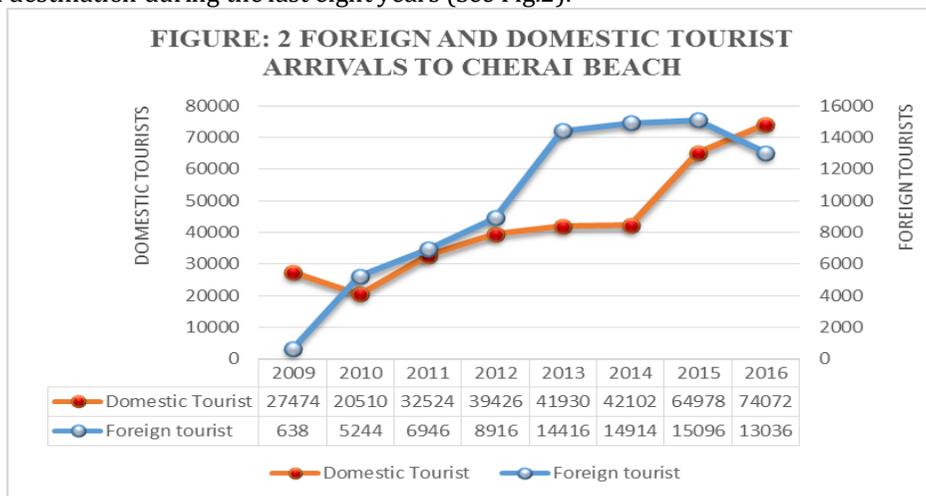
Table: 1 Positive and Negative Economic Impact Indicators of Tourism Development

Positive Impact Indicators	Negative Impact Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increase income of host community ❖ Generate Employment Opportunity ❖ Make job opportunity for female labour ❖ Increase the benefits of local business ❖ Increase standard of living ❖ Improves infrastructure facilities ❖ Appreciates Land Value ❖ Encourage local people to invest in the tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Rise the general price of goods and service ❖ High cost of living in the locality ❖ High land pricing ❖ Generate unemployment issues during the off season ❖ Difficulties to find out other job during the off season ❖ Shortage of essential goods and service in the area ❖ shortage of labours during the off season

v) Beach Tourism and Community Development in Cherai: Survey Analysis

Cherai, the "Princess of the Arabian Sea", is the astonishing and latest developed holiday destination with 15 Km long beach provides golden, sandy, clean and shallow beach to the tourists. It tempts the tourist for swimming and sunbathing. The presence of Dolphin, calm backwaters, the coconut grove, and 'Poyil', a big island lake, separates the ocean by narrow sandbar makes it a unique destination. The tourists are also

well attracted by facilities like accommodation, shopping, boating, yoga, fishing, bathing, swimming, canoeing and rafting. There has been an increasing trend in the arrival of foreign and domestic tourists to Cherai beach destination during the last eight years (See Fig.2).



Sources: Compiled from different issues of tourism statistics

In the present study, primary survey was carried out to analyse the economic impact of beach tourism to the host community of Cherai. Its impact on income, employment, demand of female labour, standard of living, infrastructure, Land Value and local investment in tourism were taken for granted.

vi) Profile of the Sample Respondent

125 sample respondents were randomly selected from Pallippuram Gramapanchayath wards residing at Cherai beach destination in Ward numbers; one, two and three. The profile of the respondents is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: General Profile of the Sample Respondent in Cherai

Category		Number	%
Age	Up to 40	26	20.80
	41-50	41	32.80
	51-60	31	24.80
	61-70	15	12.00
	Above 71	12	9.60
Total		125	100.0
Sex	Male	120	96.00
	Female	5	4.00
Total		125	100.0
Religion	Hindu	38	30.40
	Christian	66	52.80
	Muslim	21	16.80
Total		125	100.0
Duration of Living in the area	Up to 40	28	22.40
	41-50	38	30.40
	51-60	30	24.00
	Above 60	29	23.20
Total		125	100.0
House Ownership	Owned	101	80.80
	Rental	24	19.20
Total		125	100.0

Education	Lower primary	27	21.60
	Upper Primary	22	17.60
	High School	53	42.40
	Higher Secondary	12	9.60
	Graduate	1	0.80
	Professional	10	8.00
Total		125	100.0
Occupation	Private Employee	6	4.80
	Self-Employee	8	6.40
	Coolie	7	5.60
	Business	30	24.00
	Not Employed	4	3.20
	Fishing	59	47.20
	Retired	2	1.60
	Abroad	9	7.20
Total		125	100

Sources: Sample Survey

It is seen that majority of the respondents (32.80%) comes under the 41-50 age group and a small portion (9.60%) belongs to the ages above 71. At Cherai, young people are not greatly involved in tourism activities. When males constitute 96 per cent, females found only 4 per cent. A religion wise classification reveals that Christians (52.80 %) are more involved in tourism activities. Their educational profile shows that 39 per cent have only primary education. But when 8 per cent of the respondents were professionally qualified, graduates constitute only less than 1 per cent. Regarding their duration of the stay, most of them are living in Cherai for the last 41-50 years. More than 80 per cent of the respondents are living in own houses and fishing is their main occupation. While 47 per cent of the respondents are engaging in fishing activities, 24 per cent depends on several other businesses for their livelihood.

vii) Economic Impacts of Beach Tourism in Cherai

Table 3 presents the perception of the respondents towards tourism development in Cherai.

Table 3: Economic Impacts of Beach Tourism in Cherai

Positive Economic Impact of Tourism				
Indicators	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Tourism increasing income of host community	3.80	0.91	9.862	0.000
Tourism generates employment opportunities	4.17	0.44	30.015	0.000
Increase in the demand of female labour	3.86	0.87	11.027	0.000
increase the benefits of local business	4.12	0.63	19.879	0.000
Tourism increases standard of living	3.43	0.99	4.856	0.000
Tourism improves infrastructure facilities	3.31	1.12	3.122	0.002
Improves Land Value	4.05	0.69	16.885	0.000
Encouraging local people to invest in the tourism	2.96	1.09	-0.411	0.682
Total	3.71	0.54	14.811	0.000
Negative Economic Impact of Tourism				
Increase in the general price of goods and service	2.85	1.06	29.955	0.000
Increase in the cost of living	2.42	1.04	26.019	0.000
Increase land pricing	3.92	0.95	46.281	0.000

Tourism creates unemployment	3.82	0.96	44.564	0.000
Feel difficulties to find out other job during the off season	3.24	1.01	35.822	0.000
Shortage of essential goods and service in the area	2.46	1.11	24.719	0.000
Tourism has resulted in shortage of labours during the off season	2.39	1.10	24.332	0.000
Total	3.01	0.60	0.279	0.781

Sources: Sample Survey

The criteria for positive economic impacts are increase in income of the host community, generation of employment opportunities, jobs for female labour, benefits for local business, increase in standard of living, improvement of infrastructure facilities, improved land value and promotion of investment by local people in tourist activities. The total mean score of the response about positive economic impact of tourism to the local community is found to be 3.71 with a SD of 0.54. From the result of the one-sample t-test, the significance level is less than 0.05. Hence it can be inferred that tourism has positively impacted the Cherai community.

The total mean score of the response on negative economic impact of tourism to the local community was found to be 3.01 with the SD of 0.60. The result of the one-sample t-test shows that the significance level is greater than 0.05. Hence it is found that the local community neither agree nor disagree with the negative impact statements. But it should be noted that responses on certain aspects of negative impact, the scores are relatively high. For eg., the mean scores for the negative aspects of tourism such as increase in land pricing, create unemployment issues and difficulties in getting other jobs during off season in the local community was found to be 3.92, 3.82 and 3.24 with SD of 0.95, 0.96 and 1.01 respectively. The significance levels of these three variables are also less than 0.05 as per the result of the one-sample t-test. Therefore, it is also argued that people at Cherai have negative perception on tourism with regard to increase in land pricing, unemployment and difficulties to find alternative employment during off seasons.

vii) Conclusion

The study concluded that tourism development initiatives at Cherai had brought about some positive and negative economic impacts to the local community. It had benefited in income creation, female employment generation, better standard of living, higher land value and infrastructure facilities to the host community of Cherai. At the same time, it had caused unemployment issues in this area during off seasons. However, the local communities of Cherai are economically benefited by way of tourism development.

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