Executive Summary

**UGC Minor Project**

*Submitted by*

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**Ref: MRP (H) - 0446/12-13/KLKEO10/UGC-SWRO, dated 29- 3 - 2013.**

Submitted on – 31-1-2017

**Kerala Tourism – A Study on the Need for New Age Marketing among Facilitators**

# Introduction

Tourism is a people based industry with their performances, prejudices and behavioral patterns. Though tourism is a multifaceted activity, it touches almost all sectors of national life. Now, tourism is well recognized as an engine of growth in the various economies in the world. It has great capacity to generate large-scale employment and added income sources to the skilled and unskilled. Tourism can serve as an effective instrument in integrating the world into a single universe. It inspires massive investment in infrastructure, and helps to improve the living conditions of the local people. Kerala, the southernmost state of the Indian union enjoys a unique position in all walks of life. The land itself is a nature’s gift though very small in area; it has a picturesque variety of landscapes and abundance of plants and habitats. In one way or another Kerala has been fortunate in acquiring international repute from time immemorial. It has been the pivotal center for trade and commerce with other cultural centers of the world.

# Significance of the study

The main purpose of the study is to pinch a thorough look into the policies and practices of tourism marketing of the Government and private agencies with special reference to Kerala. As far as a developing state like Kerala is concerned, tourism industry is an economic bonanza. It contributes much to the economy by way of foreign exchange and has a ventilating effect on its overwhelming balance of payment position. The impact that the tourism industry has made on the employment front is more distinct. Another important contribution of the industry is to the National Income. It can also contribute much to the tax revenue of the Government, to the regional development, exchange of various cultures etc. Apart from its economic importance, its social significance is also much and unquestionable.

# Objectives of the study

1. To examine the policies and programmes of the Central and the State Governments for the development of tourism industry in Kerala.
2. To study the views of tourism marketers / facilitators towards tourism marketing mix in the State.
3. To undertake a SWOT Analysis.
4. To propose a marketing model for tourism Marketing
5. To bring out appropriate marketing strategies for Kerala tourism.

# Database and Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary data collected from various sources. The data collected should be analyzed with the help of appropriate statistical tools. To substantiate the analysis, existing literature on the subject can also be used. Direct personal interviews, informal discussions and personal observations of the researcher can be used to augment this study.

## Insights from stake holders and key personnel

The majority opinion of the sample respondents was that the basic infrastructure in Kerala was not up to the standard. They suggested that neat and good roads, adequate drinking water supplies, clean and odor free wash rooms, proper and adequate sign boards, better public lighting in the streets and the tourism spots, adequate services of tourist guides and life guards, proper solid waste management system, adequate number of facilitation and information centers, proper maintenance of law and order in the tourist centers and also measures for the safety and security of the tourists should be provided for achieving rapid growth in this sector.

Tourism today is the most vibrant tertiary activity and a multi-billion industry in Kerala. Traditionally known largely for its historical and cultural dimensions, tourism today is highlighted for its immense business opportunities. With its lucrative linkages with transport, hotel industry etc., the potential and performance of Kerala’s tourism industry needs to be gauged in terms of its socio-economic magnitudes. The survival of the tourism industry depends decisively on recognizing the relevant trends and allowing for them in good time.

# Strategic Suggestions

Effective implementation of product differentiation can be made in this industry. It is also required to trace out new uses of existing products, through continuous research. A greater number of Value Added products, medical and health tourism products, village and rural tourism products etc. need to be developed and promoted without sacrificing the heritage and culture of Kerala. Effective attempt should be made by the facilitators, to attract more foreign tourists in the coming era by opening a greater number of tour packages and shopping outlets in the major tourism centers. With the intention of implementing Niche marketing, the potential untapped overseas markets are to be identified and the tourists offered packages of a variety of tourism products at different price levels. New blend of various products should be made and packaged.

Prices should be revised frequently to face the competition and attract more tourists. Differential pricing strategy permits the tourists to select according to their pocket. Internal transport system in the State should be improved to tourist destinations and initiative should be taken to introduce a greater number of train services to Kerala from various parts of India especially from East and North-East India. B2B and B2C initiatives are proposed to provide a platform for the tourism suppliers and buyers to discuss in collaboration and on what they can do for each other to gain synergy among them.

Promote Kerala through *multiplexes* *at* *major* *shopping malls and departmental stores* in the target markets either as window displays or doing up an entire floor or a part of it with Kerala products and artifacts. Make tie ups with Major T.V. Satellite channels, in Malayalam, in other Indian languages and also in foreign languages. New special programmes about Kerala tourism should be prepared and telecasted, supported by contests and prizes to the viewers.

Kerala tourism facilitators will go for online promotion of the state in china and the U S to increase the flow of tourists. The initiative is part of the marketing strategy to penetrate new tourism markets across the world. Host a greater number of international and national conventions, fairs, sports meets, games events and festivals in Kerala. More advertisement must be propounded through the electronic media rather than through the print media. Continuous evaluation of effectiveness of advertisement should also be made. For this purpose any of the methods like coupon response, recall tests, recognition tests and sales tests can be used.

In order to provide awareness campaigns, the facilitators can seek support from the state and central Government, informal organizations working in the society, viz. residential associations, arts and sports clubs, cultural associations, Lions Club, Rotary Club etc. In association with the above bodies, it can give classes to the local people about the economic and social benefits of tourism, greater employment opportunities, the need to respect the tourists etc.

The facilitators should give more pressure on the Government to introduce more chartered flights from major target markets. Now Kerala has only a small number of direct flights from our major source markets, viz. Singapore, Malaysia, Kualalumpur etc. to Kerala. Therefore it is necessary to promote direct flights from important target markets to Kerala in association with a number of public and private air line agencies. In Singapore ‘Air Asia’, performs this function. As a result, a large number of outbound tourists from Kerala spend their vacation in Malaysia.

The facilitators should also take steps to chalk out a tourism friendly open sky civil aviation policy. It will help to land more airlines at competitive fairs and this may lead to increase the flow of tourists to Kerala. If the landing procedures are liberalized, many airlines will be interested in operating to this state. Tourism should be declared as an essential service sector. It is also important to see that proper follow-up actions are setup to check whether the things are going on as per the rules.

## Strategic Model for New Age Marketing in Kerala Tourism

Based on the research findings, the researcher has tried to propose a *marketing model* for Kerala tourism. As a result of the in-depth analysis of various aspects, a model has been framed and is represented in the chapter 4, figure 4. The model makes it clear that, an autonomous body under the control and supervision of the Government of Kerala with the name as “*Kerala Tourism Promotion Board” (KTPB)* is to be formulated. The Board can be established with representatives from various stakeholders and participants in the Kerala tourism Industry. The major participants include Government departments, viz. Department of Tourism, Department of Forest Development, Culture Department, Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB), Irrigation Department, Public Works Department (PWD), Archaeological Department, Handicrafts Department, Public Works Department (PWD); and some other organizations, viz. Destination Management Councils (DMCs), District Tourism Promotion Councils (DTPCs), Hotels and Resorts facilitators, Major tour operators, travel agents and tourist transport operators. These players can form part of a General Council of KTPB. This will provide a better facility to facilitators in the state.

The KTPB should prepare and submit periodical reports to the general council to evaluate the progress in this sector. Based on the outputs evolved at the time of evaluation and discussion, novel strategies are to be formulated and should be revised the existing strategies, if required. It should also take necessary steps to rectify the malfunctions which are prevailing in this sector, for better results.

# Conclusion

Tourism as a service industry is international in character both in terms of demand and supply, especially in democratic societies where free movement is a part of human rights. It differs from other service industries in the sense that the visitors may prove to move thousands of miles to avail of the service. The facilitators should contribute to tourism by planning broad strategies on development, the tourists and the environment. The Marketing strategies adopted by the Government authorities and private players should be result oriented and more professional.