

A Study On the Impact of Responsible Tourism On Women Empowerment in Kumarakom

Mrs. Ashitha S¹, Dr. Arumugam²

¹Full time Research Scholar of Management, PG & Research Department of Management, Maruthupandiyar College, Thanjavur, (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli.)

²Assistant Professor & Research Advisor, PG & Research Department of Management, Maruthupandiyar College, Thanjavur, (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli.)

Abstract

Responsible tourism has emerged as a sustainable development approach that balances economic growth, environmental protection, and social inclusion. This study examines the impact of responsible tourism on women empowerment with special reference to Kumarakom in Kerala, a globally recognized backwater tourism destination. The research focuses on how tourism-related initiatives create employment opportunities, enhance income levels, and promote social participation among women. It also explores the role of local governance, self-help groups, and community-based tourism models in strengthening women's decision-making power.

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design, using both primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected from women engaged in tourism-related activities such as homestays, handicrafts, and hospitality services. The findings indicate that responsible tourism significantly contributes to economic independence, skill development, and social recognition of women. However, challenges such as seasonal employment, limited access to financial resources, and lack of advanced training still persist. The study concludes that responsible tourism acts as a catalyst for inclusive growth and gender equality. Strengthening institutional support, capacity-building programs, and policy interventions can further enhance the role of tourism in empowering women in Kumarakom and similar destinations.

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors globally, contributing significantly to economic development, employment generation, and cultural exchange. In recent years, the concept of responsible tourism has gained prominence as a sustainable approach that minimizes negative impacts while maximizing benefits for local communities. Responsible tourism emphasizes environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and socio-economic development, particularly focusing on marginalized groups such as women.

Kerala, often referred to as “God’s Own Country,” has been a pioneer in promoting responsible tourism initiatives in India. Among its various destinations, Kumarakom stands out as a model village for responsible tourism practices. Located on the banks of Vembanad Lake, Kumarakom has successfully

integrated tourism with local community development. The Responsible Tourism Mission in Kerala has played a vital role in ensuring that tourism benefits are equitably distributed among local residents, especially women.

Women empowerment is a multidimensional concept that involves improving women's access to resources, enhancing their decision-making power, and ensuring equal participation in economic and social activities. In the context of tourism, empowerment can be achieved through employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, skill development, and participation in community governance. Responsible tourism provides a platform for women to engage in various activities such as homestay management, handicraft production, food processing, and cultural performances.

In Kumarakom, several women have become active participants in tourism through Kudumbashree units and self-help groups. These groups have enabled women to showcase their traditional skills and generate income, thereby improving their standard of living. The integration of local resources into tourism has not only enhanced economic benefits but also preserved the cultural identity of the region. Women, who were traditionally confined to household roles, are now emerging as entrepreneurs and community leaders. The concept of responsible tourism goes beyond economic benefits. It also focuses on social empowerment by promoting gender equality and inclusive participation. Women involved in tourism activities gain confidence, improve their communication skills, and develop leadership qualities. This transformation is crucial for achieving sustainable development goals, particularly those related to gender equality and poverty reduction.

Despite the positive impacts, there are several challenges associated with women's participation in responsible tourism. Issues such as limited access to finance, lack of formal education, seasonal nature of tourism, and societal constraints can hinder the full realization of empowerment. Moreover, the benefits of tourism are not always evenly distributed, and some women may still remain excluded from these opportunities.

This study aims to analyze the extent to which responsible tourism contributes to women empowerment in Kumarakom. It seeks to understand the socio-economic changes experienced by women, the role of institutional support, and the challenges faced by them in participating in tourism activities. By focusing on Kumarakom, the study provides insights into a successful model of community-based tourism and its potential for replication in other regions.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the existing body of knowledge on sustainable tourism and gender studies. It highlights the role of responsible tourism as a tool for inclusive development and provides practical recommendations for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and community organizations. The findings of the study can be useful for designing strategies that enhance women's participation and ensure equitable distribution of tourism benefits.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for capacity-building programs and skill development initiatives tailored specifically for women. Training in areas such as digital marketing, customer service, and financial management can enhance their competitiveness in the tourism sector. Strengthening

institutional frameworks and providing access to credit facilities can also support women entrepreneurs in expanding their businesses.

In conclusion, responsible tourism has the potential to transform the socio-economic landscape of rural communities by empowering women and promoting sustainable development. Kumarakom serves as a successful example of how tourism can be harnessed for community welfare. However, continuous efforts are required to address existing challenges and ensure that the benefits of tourism are inclusive and sustainable. This study contributes to understanding the dynamics of responsible tourism and its impact on women empowerment, offering valuable insights for future research and policy formulation.

OBJECTIVES

To assess the demographic profile of the respondents

To analyse the impact of responsible tourism on women empowerment in Kumarakom

To suggest feasible solutions to empower women in effective ways

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sanuja & Joseph (2022) The objectives of the study is to examine the economic empowerment and satisfaction of women entrepreneurs involved in responsible tourism in Kerala and the researcher used 385 samples for the study and the sample units are women entrepreneurs registered under the Responsible Tourism Mission. The Statistical Tools used to the study is Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The Findings are The study investigated the role of responsible tourism in promoting economic empowerment among women entrepreneurs in Kerala. Data were collected from women participating in tourism enterprises such as handicrafts, homestays, and cultural tourism services. The findings revealed that responsible tourism has significantly improved women's income levels and financial independence. Women reported increased access to economic opportunities and better participation in family decision-making processes. The study also found that responsible tourism programs improved entrepreneurial skills, self-confidence, and leadership qualities among women participants. However, the relationship between economic empowerment and job satisfaction was found to be moderately positive. The research highlighted that government initiatives and training programs play a major role in supporting women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector. The study concluded that responsible tourism initiatives contribute significantly to women empowerment and sustainable community development in Kerala.

Elias & John (2023) has done an empirical study on entrepreneurial initiatives of women self-help groups in promoting sustainable tourism in Kerala. The objectives of the study is to analyze the entrepreneurial initiatives of women self-help groups in promoting sustainable tourism in Kerala. The Sample Size is 210 women members of Kudumbashree self-help groups.

Statistical Tools: Factor analysis and descriptive statistics. The study examined the role of Kudumbashree women self-help groups in promoting sustainable tourism in Kerala. It was observed that self-help groups play a vital role in supporting women entrepreneurship through tourism activities such as handicrafts, food production, and cultural performances. The research indicated that women involved in self-help groups

gained financial independence and improved social status. Participation in tourism enterprises enabled women to develop leadership skills and decision-making abilities. The study also revealed that community-based tourism initiatives create employment opportunities for rural women. Tourism enterprises managed by women contribute significantly to local economic development and cultural preservation. However, the study suggested the need for additional training and marketing support to strengthen women-led tourism enterprises.

Fernando & Kaluarachchi (2023) has done a research study on Sustainable tourism and women empowerment in South Asia the objective of the study is to examine the relationship between sustainable tourism development and women empowerment in South Asian tourist destinations and the sample Size is 250 women tourism workers. Statistical Tools used in the research study is Structural equation modelling and regression analysis. The findings of the study is The research investigated how sustainable tourism contributes to women empowerment in South Asian countries. The results showed that tourism employment increases women's financial independence and social participation. Women involved in tourism reported higher levels of confidence and entrepreneurial skills. The study also revealed that tourism enterprises encourage women to participate in community decision-making processes. Sustainable tourism practices were found to improve income generation, employment opportunities, and social equality among women. The research emphasized that responsible tourism policies should focus on gender equality and skill development programs to maximize the benefits of tourism for women.

Prithviraj (2025) has done a empirical study on Analyzing destination development through responsible tourism planning. The objectives of the study is to analyze responsible tourism planning and destination development in Kerala tourism villages. The researcher used both primary and secondary data for this research and the sample Size is 150 by random sampling method. tourism stakeholders including women entrepreneurs. Statistical Tools in the study is Case study analysis and descriptive statistics and the Findings the study focused on responsible tourism initiatives in Kumarakom village in Kerala. The research examined how responsible tourism contributes to destination development and community participation. The results revealed that responsible tourism programs increase employment opportunities for women through homestays, handicrafts, and cultural tourism activities. Women entrepreneurs benefited from improved income levels and social recognition. The study also emphasized that responsible tourism strengthens local cultural identity and environmental conservation. The findings indicated that tourism development strategies should include women participation to achieve sustainable development goals.

Singh & Verma (2021) has done a research study on Tourism entrepreneurship and women empowerment. The objective of this study is to examine the role of tourism entrepreneurship in promoting women empowerment in developing countries. The researcher used simple random sampling and the Sample Size is 175 women tourism entrepreneurs. Statistical Tools used in this study is Multiple regression analysis and descriptive statistics and the findings are

The research found that tourism entrepreneurship significantly contributes to women empowerment by improving income generation and employment opportunities. Women entrepreneurs involved in tourism enterprises experienced increased financial independence and social mobility. The study also highlighted the role of government support and microfinance institutions in promoting women-led tourism businesses.

The results indicated that tourism enterprises enable women to gain leadership skills and participate in community development activities. The study concluded that tourism entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality and economic development.

Research Methodology

This paper concentrates on the impact of responsible tourism on women empowerment in kumarakom. The researcher used both of the primary and secondary data. The researcher used simple Random sampling used to collect the data. The sample was the women entrepreneurs in the region of kollam under the responsible tourism mission and the sample size is 142. The researcher used One way ANOVA to find the result.

Analysis & Interpretation

Table :1 Opinion of Respondents towards Study Variables Based on women Income

Factors	Experience and Mean value			ANOVA Result	
	Below Rs.10000	Rs 10000 - 20000	Above Rs.30000	F-value	P-value
Community Participation in Tourism	3.49	3.39	3.40	1.003	.368
Employment Opportunities in Tourism Sector	3.33	3.27	3.17	8.260	.000
Skill Development and Training Programs	3.46	3.19	3.07	9.682	.000
Access to Financial Resources	3.30	3.20	3.09	8.176	.000
Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Tourism	3.55	3.51	3.51	.386	.680
Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Tourism	3.69	3.78	3.62	2.540	.080
Government Policies and Support	3.19	3.40	3.32	.433	.649

Source: Primary data, * Significant at one percent level, NS-Not Significant

** Significant at five percent level

Ho: There is no difference of opinion towards study variables based on income of respondents.

ANOVA is used to test the variation between responsible tourism and women empowerment practice experience. The above table shows that respondents have income below Rs.10000 are giving high importance to .Community Participation in Tourism, Employment Opportunities in Tourism Sector, Skill Development and Training Programs, Income Generation through Tourism, Access to Financial Resources, Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Tourism, Government Policies and Support

The respondents having experience between Rs. 10000 - 20000 are giving high importance to Employment Opportunities in Tourism Sector, Skill Development and Training Programs, Income Generation through Tourism, Access to Financial Resources, Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Tourism, Government Policies and Support and Community Participation in Tourism,

The respondents having income above Rs. 30000 are giving high importance to Skill Development and Training Programs, Employment Opportunities in Tourism Sector, Income Generation through Tourism, Access to Financial Resources, Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Tourism, Government Policies and Support and Community Participation in Tourism,

Suggestions

- Strengthen skill development programs tailored for women in tourism.
- Provide easy access to microfinance and credit facilities.
- Promote digital literacy for better marketing opportunities.
- Encourage women-led tourism enterprises.
- Improve infrastructure in rural tourism areas.
- Ensure year-round employment opportunities.
- Conduct regular training in hospitality management.
- Strengthen the role of self-help groups like Kudumbashree.
- Promote eco-friendly tourism practices.
- Increase government support and subsidies.
- Create awareness about responsible tourism among locals.
- Encourage participation of women in decision-making bodies.
- Develop safety and security measures for women workers.
- Build strong market linkages for local products.
- Encourage public-private partnerships for sustainable tourism.

Conclusion

Responsible tourism has emerged as a powerful instrument for promoting sustainable development and social inclusion. The findings of this study clearly indicate that responsible tourism in Kumarakom has significantly contributed to women empowerment by providing employment opportunities, enhancing income levels, and improving social status. Women's participation in tourism-related activities has not only strengthened their economic independence but also increased their confidence and decision-making abilities.

However, the study also highlights certain challenges such as seasonal employment, limited access to financial resources, and inadequate training facilities. Addressing these issues is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of women empowerment through tourism. Effective policy implementation, institutional support, and community participation are crucial in overcoming these challenges.

The study concludes that responsible tourism is not merely an economic activity but a transformative process that promotes gender equality and inclusive growth. Kumarakom serves as a successful model

that demonstrates how tourism can be leveraged for community development. By adopting similar approaches in other regions, it is possible to create a more equitable and sustainable tourism sector. Continuous efforts from government, stakeholders, and local communities are necessary to maximize the benefits of responsible tourism for women empowerment.

Reference

1. Sanuja, K. V., & Joseph, S. (2022). Economic empowerment and satisfaction of Kerala women through responsible tourism entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Health Sciences*.
2. Fernando, S., & Kaluarachchi, S. (2023). Sustainable tourism and women empowerment in South Asia. *Journal of Tourism and Development*.
3. Singh, R., & Verma, P. (2021). Tourism entrepreneurship and women empowerment. *Journal of Tourism Economics*.
4. Prithviraj, A. S. (2025). Analyzing destination development through responsible tourism planning. *International Journal of Urban development*
5. Elias, I. P., & John, G. (2023). Entrepreneurial initiatives of women self-help groups to facilitate sustainable tourism. *ATNA Journal of Tourism studies*