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## Article

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Article

# Sustainability Initiatives for Green Tourism Development: The Case of Wayanad, India

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**Abstract:** Mainstream sustainability discussions draw focus to the balance between commercial and environmental interests. Responsible tourism (RT) practices are an outcome of these discussions and RT is a significant contributor to the “greenification” of economies in many countries. Green tourism promotes travel that supports natural and cultural aspirations, while also supporting protection of the destination community’s limited resources. Kerala, India, is a pioneer in implementing RT. The present study exploratively analyzes the RT initiatives at different phases, especially within the lens of sustainable responsible tourism initiatives for green tourism development. The research is descriptive in nature and is guided by the bottom line approach (TBL) for green economic development. The findings highlight the dynamics of challenges experienced in the different phases of RT implementation. Based on our analysis of the secondary data, the first phase implementation of RT was not very successful; the second and the third phases seemed to be more promising. The study also throws light on the need for future studies in other culturally distant destinations; this will result in promising practices being adopted as alternative strategies for sustainable tourism development globally.

**Keywords:** responsible tourism; sustainability; green tourism development; triple bottom line approach; Kerala; India



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## 1. Introduction

Mass- and over-tourism are some of the most negative impact-inducing forms of tourism, and these necessitate concerted efforts in the direction of inducing sustainable development (Korstanje and George 2020). Economies cannot grow green when the capitalist avarice is allowed to reap unlimited short-term gains and leave the adverse consequences to the public in the form of externalities (Sarkar et al. 2020). Over-tourism occurs when the number of visitors increases dramatically, resulting in overpopulation in locations where locals are affected by temporary and seasonal tourism peaks. It has a long-term impact on locals’ lifestyles, access to amenities, and overall well-being (Milano et al. 2018). Mass tourism growth leads to negative impacts. The negative economic, social, and environmental impacts caused by tourism development necessitate the need to adopt various sustainable tourism development strategies. The rise in environmental awareness campaigns states the need for a low-carbon era, and green tourism should be considered as the future direction for tourism development (Sarkar and George 2018). Green tourism should be developed from stakeholders’ perspective; this community includes tour operators, travel agents, hotels, guests, and hosts. Green tourism tries to protect the green environment by adopting various green consumptive activities. This is mainly to achieve social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

The creation of a quality environment and service sector for our future generations, as well as efforts toward sustainable growth using the latest industrial trends, has become

a pressing need. Responsible tourism was adopted by the industry as a strategy under community social responsibility (CSR) in this difficult scenario to attain this goal. The economic, social, and environmental factors of the destinations influence the mode of responsible tourism operations.

Most responsible tourism initiatives are largely based on the triple Bottom Line sustainability framework (Aguñaga et al. 2018). It is the underlying principle for balancing economic, social, and environmental arenas. Different gradations of responsible tourism have been implemented in India, SE Asia, and Africa. In India, Kerala tries to implement this to some destinations, including Kovalam, Kumarakom, Thekkadi, and Wayanad. The effectiveness of the responsible tourism initiatives in these destinations is yet to be explored. The launching of the official inauguration of this project was in the year 2008 in Kumarakom, and this venture was a big success. The panchayath and local groups have been very supportive in making the initiatives a huge success. The project became a booming initiative in supporting the livelihood of a large section of the native villagers. The project helped the villagers to interact with tourists and it provided the local communities a chance to have an exposure to new ideas and cultures. These efforts offered the villagers an opportunity to showcase their indigenous treasures.

In the year 2008, responsible tourism activities were launched in Wayanad. Initially, the entire district was chosen for the pilot intervention, but due to the difficulty of implementing change in such a large area, it was eventually confined to the Vythiri cluster, which includes the panchayaths of Vythiri, Kalpetta, Pozhuthana, and Meppadi. The implementation of the proposed projects is linked to the Samrudhi group and Kudumbashree units. Later, the Ambalavayal panchayath in Wayanad was included to the list of places to undertake responsible tourism in the second phase. The RT operated as a separate system with little link to the official activity of the Department of Tourism at the state and district levels, and the government later chose to establish a responsible tourism mission to expand RT activities across the state. The RT mission focused on balancing the economic, social, and environmental growth of the destinations. The unexpected natural calamities, such as the repeated floods in 2017 and 2018, the disastrous landslides, and the outbreak of unprecedented pandemics, such as Niphah and COVID-19, etc., affected the smooth functioning of the responsible tourism mission in the later phase. Located amidst the hilly terrain in the northern part of Kerala, Wayanad is not a closely connected destination compared with Kumarakom, which is famous for its backwaters. All these factors affected the steady growth of responsible tourism development in Wayanad. The current research aims to determine how much responsible tourism activities contribute to the destination's balanced economic, social, and environmental growth. A destination's long-term viability is dependent on its ability to grow in a balanced manner. Sustainable tourism development leads to a green economy. More research on the role of responsible tourism in supporting the green economy is needed, according to the current literature. The amount of widely published work in the tourism sector is extremely small. Even if it is researched in the Wayanad setting, we cannot deny its relevance to a specific place.

The researchers want to look at and compare different phases of responsible tourism projects in Vythiri and Ambalavayal in Wayanad, as well as their involvement in satisfying the triple bottom line principle's three obligations (economic, environmental, and social responsibility). The research also looks into the role of responsible tourism in long-term tourism development and green economic growth. Furthermore, modest efforts such as this work may stimulate other scholars to perform more research on the effects of responsible tourism on other destinations.

The study contains seven sections, including the introductory part. The first section of this study describes the interrelationships between responsible tourism, green tourism development, CSR, and sustainable tourism development of the destination.

The second section begins by evaluating the key findings of specialized studies on the principles of green tourism development through responsible tourism as a CSR agenda for the long-term sustainability of tourist destinations. The report also looks at the benefits

and drawbacks of RT projects in Wayanad. The study's research gap is defined based on the relevant literature, and techniques are introduced.

The study's methodology is described in the third section, and the findings are presented in the fourth section, with an emphasis on two major themes that assess the influence of responsible tourism in Wayanad on sustainable tourist development and green economy. The findings, discussions, and implications of the results for future research in this field are presented in the fifth, sixth, and seventh sections of the paper.

## 2. Literature Review

Any destination with fragile environment may lose its original identity and resources when there is an uncontrolled tourism development in the area. Tourism development in the region may lead to destruction and exploitation of the nature on which the local tourism industry is based. Therefore, it is essential to encourage sustainable development in the destination ([Vazhakkatte Thazhathethil 2020](#)). Tourism is currently confronted with numerous issues ([Frey 2017](#)). As a result, the concept of tourism must be broadened in order to remain sustainable. The concept of sustainable tourism is a young notion that has only just formed, and it must grow and mature in order to save the environment. To achieve broad engagement and build consensus, sustainable tourism growth requires the participation of all stakeholders, as well as the critical role of political leadership. To achieve the goals of sustainable tourism, continuous impact assessments are required, as well as the implementation of appropriate preventive measures, as needed. Tourist satisfaction should be maintained at a high level in order for tourism to be sustainable. It should provide travelers with a memorable experience. It is imperative that they become more aware of sustainability challenges and encourage sustainable tourist Green tourism (GT) considers the existing and future needs of the environment, people, businesses, and visitors. From large to small, rural to urban, the 'green' concept can be used to every type of specialized tourism industry ([Chin et al. 2018](#)). Environmental responsibility has become a major concern for today's corporate image and long-term commercial success. Customers' ethical expectations and desires for more ethical business change all the time. As a result of this need, the CSR agenda and the necessity for CSR efforts in responsible tourism evolved ([McWilliams and Siegel 2001](#)). CSR is described as a company's or entity's commitment to all of its stakeholders in its operations and activities in order to achieve long-term success ([Fatma et al. 2016](#)). The definition of CSR is as follows: "context-specific business activities and policies that meet stakeholder expectations while also taking into account the triple underlying principles of economic, social, and environmental performance" ([Coles et al. 2013](#)). Tourism service companies, like other corporate sectors, have been implementing CSR initiatives that benefit the environment and community ([Bohdanowicz 2006](#)). CSR programs, according to proponents, will boost a tourism destination's desirability and popularity ([Abaeian et al. 2019](#); [Asadi et al. 2020](#); [Blinova et al. 2018](#); [Dodds and Kuehnelt 2010](#); [Melubo et al. 2019](#); [Williams et al. 2007](#)). RT has now been formally adopted and supported by many important tourism destinations, marketers, policymakers, and academic research organizations around the world as a result of its advancement in multiple strands of study ([Banerjee 2012](#); [Lian Chan and Baum 2007](#); [Chan and Tay 2016](#); [Del Chiappa et al. 2016](#)). They believe that the RT idea has the inherent potential to better deal with the environmental risks of tourism. The RT appears to have evolved into a type of model and a journey path, rather than being a type of tourism literature ([Clifton and Benson 2006](#)). Through local identification and contact with local people with whom tourists can feel a level of reciprocity and involvement, it is easy to deduce that RT is about reverence, understanding, and education ([Krippendorf 1987](#); [Stanford 2008](#)). As a result, many destinations have adopted the concept.

South Africa and India were among the first countries to develop responsible tourist policies. Kerala, India's Kerala state, has made significant progress in implementing responsible tourism. The Kerala Department of Tourism, the International Centre for Responsible Tourism, and EQUATIONS (a non-government activist organization and a

“hard campaigner on tourism issues”) supported the state-level inauguration on the 2nd and 3rd of February 2007 in Thiruvananthapuram. It was an attempt to look at many different aspects of responsible tourism, with a concentration on local self-governance and civil society organizations, the tourism sector, and state government departments and organizations (Frey and George 2010, p. 12).

These sub-groups identified a number of economic, sociocultural, and environmental issues, and the workshop discussions resulted in the State-Level Responsible Tourism Committee (SLRTC), which is made up of 40 members who represent various stakeholder groups, developing a framework for the implementation of RT Initiatives. The initial SLRTC areas include Kovalam (a near-saturated beach destination), Kumarakom (an environmentally sensitive backwaters destination), Wayanad (a dispersed settlement pattern and hill resort destination), and Tekkadi (a contained settlement pattern and hill resort destination).

Three multi-stakeholder working groups were constituted at the state level to begin implementing economic, environmental, and sociocultural aspects of tourist management in these areas. With the help of local self-government authorities, multi-stakeholder destination-level responsible tourism committees (DLRTCs) and local-level implementation cells, such as working groups, are developed at the very local level.

The government appointed the Great India Tourism Planners and Consultants (GIT-PAC) to provide technical assistance and coordination for the program in the designated centers after a competitive bidding process. With the help of GITPAC, the actual implementation process began in March 2008. Following that, the RT mission took over all RT activities and became the focal point for RT program implementation throughout Kerala. Kerala's tourism policy is based on responsible tourism concepts. Establishing RT activities is very important for the Tourism Department. This may be accomplished primarily by adopting RT principles into tourism activities and encouraging service suppliers to do the same. In the first phase, the RT principles set the groundwork for responsible tourism, which is now being implemented throughout the entire state for tourism development. The RT mission was established with clear functional autonomy under the direction of the Director of Tourism. All fourteen districts of the state became members of the responsible tourism mission after it was established. Triple bottom line sustainability is at the heart of the RT principles (TBLS). These concepts for balancing economic, social, and environmental agendas are widely utilized as a foundation for developing sustainable tourism, particularly in rural areas. In the tourist business, the triple bottom line framework emphasizes the goal of achieving sustainability in corporate operations, tour operators, and service providers (Mathew and Kuriakose 2017; Stoddard et al. 2012). The RT is a method for minimizing the negative (social, economic, and environmental) effects of tourist development while maximizing the good ones (George and Frey 2010). Both sides benefit from the relationship between destination sustainability and RT practice. A TBL approach that balances the economic, social, and environmental aspects is required for destination sustainability (Slaper and Hall 2011).

Kerala's responsible tourism mission used this technique to implement RT initiatives in several parts of Kerala. The “triple bottom line” mission idea, which includes economic, social, and environmental obligations, was embraced by the mission. The fundamental goal of the responsible tourism mission is to use tourism as a tool to help the village and local communities flourish and eradicate poverty, while simultaneously emphasizing the concepts of green economy and sustainable development. Farmers, traditional craftspeople, and marginalized people gain additional revenue and a better livelihood as a result of the mission, which also creates a social and environmental balance.

Kumarakom was one of the pilot projects under the responsible tourism mission in Kerala state. It turned out to be a successful initiative and received a lot of appreciation and awards. Even a lot of researchers studied the various aspects of responsible tourism development in Kumarakom (Chettiparamb and Kokkranikal 2012). However, there are no studies on Wayanad's responsible tourism development and how it contributes to en-



vironmental quality, social equality, and economic development of the destination's local communities. This study is an attempt to fill that gap in the literature. This investigation aims to assess and comprehend how the development of responsible tourism in the Wayanad district may help the district's green economy, while also increasing the destination's long-term sustainability. Furthermore, a study of the impact of responsible tourism in various destinations around the world will aid in understanding the reachability of the responsible tourism initiative, as well as assisting tourism practitioners, tour operators, travel agents, stakeholders, and organizations in adopting it as a means of developing tourism in their respective destinations. It is necessary to address the applicability of the concept of responsible tourism.

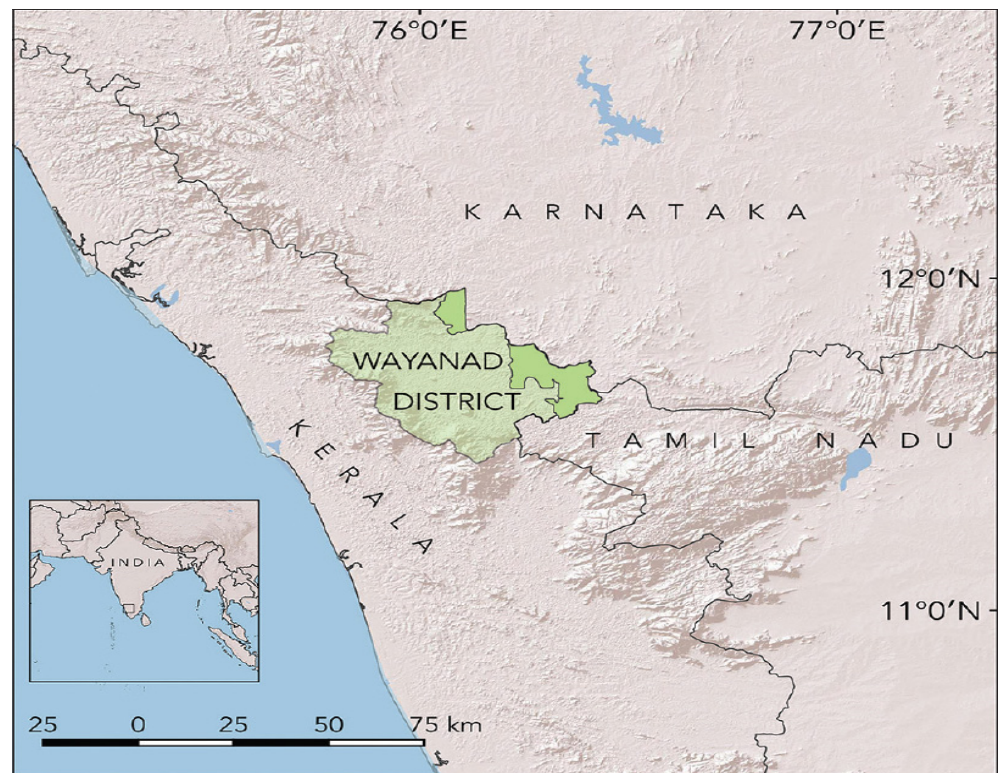
### 3. Methodology

A case study method (Piekkari and Welch 2018) was used for the study. Secondary data was collected from the Kerala tourism website and website of the RT mission, Kerala, in 2019. Additional information was collected from various journals, articles, newspapers, and from various websites, including the Kudumbasree mission website. The researchers identified the research questions based on a systematic review of the literature (Xiao and Watson 2019). Preliminary analysis of secondary data helped the researchers to better articulate the research questions. This then led to the search for additional secondary data and the literature. Analysis of these helped us answer the research questions.

The details of the study location are as follows: Wayanad, Kerala, India, has a total area of 2132 km<sup>2</sup>, a total population of 780,619 people (2001 census), and a population density of 369 people/km<sup>2</sup>. Sulthan Bathery, Kalpetta, and Mananthavadi are the three taluks that make up the Wayanad district. The district headquarters are in the municipality of Kalpetta, which has a population of 29,602 people according to the 2001 census. Geographically, Wayanad shares a border with Tamil Nadu and Karnataka (Figure 1). Additionally, it shares with Wayanad wildlife sanctuary and Bandipur National Park. The major tourist destinations near Wayanad are Ooty, Coorg, Mysore, Bangalore, and Kannur.

The District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC) is a governing body responsible for managing activities and destinations for tourism development. DTPC is responsible for developing tourist-specific destinations and creating opportunities for domestic as well as foreign investors, using existing available resources. Wayanad's social, economic, and environmental development was aided by the DTPC and the responsible tourism mission through various programs for the growth of local communities. The potential and challenges of responsible tourism in the destinations are addressed in various kinds of literature. Kumarakom is one of the four destinations in Kerala where responsible tourism was implemented in the first phase. According to (Ram and Arun 2018), the responsible tourism initiative, Kumarakom, was a big success, even though the economic growth in other destinations seems to be a failure. The current literature demands more studies in other responsible tourism destinations to assess the efficiency of responsible tourism initiatives (Chettiparamb and Kokkranikal 2012; Mathew and Sreejesh 2017). The researcher took Wayanad as a destination to study the effectiveness RT initiative for sustainable tourism progress and expansion of the green economy.

The next section briefly presents the results of the study, focusing on the responsible tourism development in different phases in Wayanad, and details of various initiatives implemented in the destination to achieve economic, environmental, and social sustainability.



**Figure 1.** Wayanad District in northern Kerala (light green shading) and Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary on the Karnataka–Tamil Nadu state boundary (darker green shading). Source: [https://www.conservationandsociety.org.in/viewimage.asp?img=ConservatSoc\\_2018\\_16\\_2\\_181\\_228938\\_f1.jpg](https://www.conservationandsociety.org.in/viewimage.asp?img=ConservatSoc_2018_16_2_181_228938_f1.jpg) (accessed on 4 October 2019).

#### 4. Results of the Website Analysis

##### 4.1. Responsible Tourism Wayanad: First Phase (2008–2012)

In the first phase, responsible tourism was initiated in four destinations in Kerala and Wayanad was one of the chosen destinations. After 6 months of introductory initiatives kicked off at Kumarakom, on 1 September 2008, the responsible tourism mission was launched in Vythiri village. Initially, the entire district was selected for the implementation, but considering the difficulties of large area implementation, it was limited to the Vythiri cluster that includes Kalpetta, Vythiri, and the Pozhuthana and Meppadi panchayaths. Samrudhi group (The activity group initially constituted for procurement and supply by Kudumbasree) and Kudumbashree are involved with the implementation of RT initiatives. Local items manufactured by Kudumbashree units, craftsmen, and the farmers are distributed to the hotel sector using the triple bottom line strategy to make them economically sustainable, increase community cohesiveness, and close the gap between local community and industry. Tourism activities were started using a participatory method. The local government, District Kudumbashree Mission, NGOs, social workers, the tourism industry, and other key stakeholders are all cooperating to meet the destination's economic, social, and environmental obligations. The Samrudhi group is one such company that has successfully launched its operations in the destination. Samrudhi has a strong relationship with industry partners as a consequence of ongoing conversations and meetings with hoteliers. The RT mission's principal goals were the identification of farmer groups and production units. The promotion of organic farming in the destination was a step in the right direction. The local farmers' enthusiasm for putting this approach into practice was a good effect of this undertaking.

#### 4.1.1. Economic Responsibility

A total of 12 items were first distributed to 2 properties. Later, the number of items and properties climbed to 43 and 10, respectively. In Wayanad, the establishment of a price-fixing committee and a quality committee aided in the effective delivery of products. One of Wayanad's model efforts was ethnic food outlets near the Edakkal Caves and Pookot Lake. The tribal community was in charge of the former, while Kudumbashree was in charge of the latter. Within a month, the ethnic food corner in Edakkal, which sold tribal, ethnic, and indigenous snacks, earned Rs. 1.25 lakhs. Around 20 Kudumbashree units, farmers, and 10 handcraft manufacturers offer their items through the Samrudhi shop. From March 2009 to May 2010, Samrudhi generated a total revenue of Rs. 7,22,460/- based on the revenue details given in the Kerala responsible tourism website. (<https://www.keralatourism.org/responsible-tourism/uploads/revenue-status/Revenue-Status-Apr-May-Jun-2019.pdf>, accessed on 1 November 2021). In that more than 80% of the funds were donated to the inhabitants of the area. Samrudhi is affiliated with 10 major hotels and resorts.

#### 4.1.2. Social Responsibility

One of the important focus area of the responsible tourism initiatives were the Achieving social responsibility. The various initiatives include mission's festival calendar featured numerous pilgrim centers, fairs, and festivals, among other things. The RT mission also conducted studies on ethnic food, safety issues, and local cuisine, as well as developing a code of conduct, assessing infrastructure gaps, creating a destination directory, identifying community-based tourism products, developing Wayanad souvenirs, and conducting social surveys, resource mapping, core destination surveys, and labor directories. The RT mission also established two village life experience packages, Sugandhagiri and Pozhuthana Grama Panchayaths, which assisted tourists in learning about and purchasing traditional products made from local resources, such as bamboo, clay, and theruva grass. Some of the other initiatives of RT include safety issues, code of conduct, brochure, audit social issues, etc., of the local area.

#### 4.1.3. Environmental Responsibility

Clean Soochipara, Pookot Lake Plastic Pollution Control, Environment Survey, Street Light Survey, and the sacred groves study are just a few of the environmental responsibility initiatives supervised by the RT cell of Wayanad, as are other responsibility areas.

### 4.2. Second Phase (2012–2017)

#### 4.2.1. Responsible Tourism in Vythiri

Continuous efforts are taken to beat the drawbacks of RT implementation in Vythiri within the first phase. RT mission brought new village life experience packages in Wayanad offers a journey through the sleepy hamlet Nellarachal. The experience ranges from enjoying native cuisines to making indigenous tribal percussion instruments and handicrafts. Aside from its scenic beauty, Wayanad holds much historical significance too. The Village Life Experience takes one to learn about old weapons and their usage. It also provides a visit to the Tribal Art Centre, the spice plantations, Uravu Bamboo Craft Village, etc. The responsible tourism mission conducted training for around 1060 people in Vythiri. Around 18 units were formed in Vythiri itself. The entire sales carryout by the units under the Vythiri cluster is Rs. 68 lakh per annum (<https://www.keralatourism.org/responsible-tourism/destination/vythiri/2>, accessed on 1 November 2021).

In Vythiri a total of 11 LSG groups are functioning. Under these LSG groups, a total of 300 families are benefitting. It paved the way for women's empowerment and social enrichment and improved the way of life through the economic support given by the varied MSME's. As per the data given in the RT mission website, 2019 (<https://www.keralatourism.org/responsible-tourism/revenue-generated/33>, accessed on 1 November 2021) one coconut craft maker unit under Vengappilli, 160 milk units under Meppadi and Pozhuthana, 8 bamboo craft units under Meppadi, 16 Kerala Mural painting units



under Poothadi, 5 lemongrass oil and essential oil units under Pozhuthana, 17 spices and other masala powder units under Vythiri, 9 Pappad units under Meppadi, 1 copra oil unit in Pulpally, 6 Chili Kondattom and bitter gourd Kondattom units under Panamaram, 4 nettippattam and dry flower units under Kalpetta, and 5 candle units under Vythiri, 16 mushroom units under Meenangadi; Meppadi and Pozhuthana units and also several other small units are functioning under Vythiri cluster. These contribute to economic, social also as environmental responsibility.

#### 4.2.2. Responsible Tourism in Ambalavayal

RT started in Ambalavayal within the year 2012. Ambalavayal is in its initial stage of development. Several programs and training are conducted within the region to develop it into a successful RT destination. Several micro-unit meetings conducted by RT Ambalavayal helped within the formation of several units also. The units formed under this mission perform sales worth around Rs. 50 lakh per annum. RT mission conducted training programs for around 50 women during sack and cloth bag making in April 2018. Supported these 13 units were formed and production was also started by these units. In May 2018, the RT mission gave training for creating sample soaps. Around 48 women got trained to make soap with pure coconut oil to be utilized in resorts and hotels. They were taught to form soaps without the utilization of plastic covers. Aside from this, training was also given for candle making in June 2018. Forty-nine village women were trained to form colorful, perfumed, and water candles. The training mainly focused on making candles that are utilized in candlelight dinners. Another initiative of RT Ambalavayal is that the making of a gift for Wayanad, “Chuthumani Kammal” (rosary pea). The RT mission plans to offer training for around 50 people from the tribal community soon. The RT mission gave training to 50 people in Pappad making, considering the high demand. The RT mission also decided to conduct community tour leaders’ training programs. Ambalavayal has two tribal dance groups. Tribes from the Paniya and Kuruma community provide the performances in Vattakkali and Kambala Kali. Within the previous year, a total of 300 people were trained in various initiatives. Aside from this, village life experiences in Ambalavayal were the other initiative of the RT mission. The varied packages include the Chekadi Village Tour, each day at Chetyalathoor, each day at Nellarachal, and each day at Cheruvayal. This marked a greater change and tourists were getting more opportunities to explore the unexplored villages of Wayanad. the varied packages offered tourists to experience Gandhakasala paddy cultivation, bamboo craft making, farmyard and bee farm visit, traditional lunch, village school visit, experience cattle farming and plugging, making of musical instruments, making of essential oil, visits to Uravu bamboo craft village, plantation visit, traditional weapons and gear making, pottery making, temple visits, and poly house farming.

In Ambalavayal, a total of 6 LSG groups are functioning. Under one LSG group, a total of 72 families and about 100 members are benefiting from it. It paved the way for women’s empowerment and social enrichment and improved quality of life, through the economic support given by the varied MSMEs (<https://www.keralatourism.org/responsible-tourism/destination/ambalavayal/8>, accessed on 1 November 2021). There are two archery units under Ambalavayal, 11 pottery units under Ambalavayal and Panamaram, 13 bamboo craft units under Panamaram and Muttill, 1 essential oil unit under Ambalavayal, 10 banana fiber value-added units under Meppadi, 4 ethnic food units under Edavaka, Pulpally, and Ambalavayal, 2 tribal groups units and 1 thudi unit under Ambalavayal and Panamaram, and 10 paper bags units under Ambalavayal. LSGs are there, which contribute to economic responsibility.

#### 4.3. Third Phase (2017–2019)

In the third phase, responsible tourism in Kerala mainly aimed to promote local community development through tourism. To bring this development about, the responsible tourism mission was launched on 20 October 2017. The mission’s goal was to strengthen villages and local communities, as well as encourage women’s empowerment through

tourism development and poverty eradication. Around 50,000 inhabitants will be trained in a variety of activities and productions as part of the RT mission. Through these RT initiatives, the Department of Tourism aimed to employ 1000 people in the tourism sector, agriculture, traditional product trade, resource mapping, cultural packages, tourism packages, accessible tourism, publication of the tourism resource directory, waste management in destinations, cultural forum, RT network, and the RT Human Resource Directory for enabling employment in the tourism sector. Twenty villages were chosen as part of the RT mission to introduce village life experience packages. In Wayanad now, around 6 villages have taken up these initiatives and provide hands-on experience to tourists through handicraft making, pottery making, paddy field visits, etc. As part of tourism development, RT wants to bring greater benefits to the local community by creating traditional art forms, rituals, and handicrafts from our own country. The RT mission has now completely taken over the responsible tourism activities. Even Kerala's tourism policy was developed using RT principles as a foundation. RT activities must be established by the Tourism Department. These can only be accomplished by applying the RT principle to all aspects of tourism and encouraging service providers to adopt the principles in their operations. The concepts of the first phase of RT implementation have been adopted by the entire state. The RT mission of Kerala was formed under the leadership of the director with the introduction of the RT mission in 14 districts of the state, functioning systematically. The responsible tourism mission, Wayanad, was functioning under two coordinators till 2018. The two sub-groups of the Wayanad RT mission, Vythiri and Ambalavayal, were brought under one state coordinator, and this year it functions as the RT mission, Wayanad.

#### 4.3.1. Economic Responsibility

The RT mission started focusing on more fulfilling economic responsibility. The table given below shows that, in the last five months, more initiatives under RT mission Wayanad were started and running successfully. In the last 4 months, the total revenue from various initiatives increased to Rs. 5,48,0810 (<https://www.keralatourism.org/responsible-tourism/destination/ambalavayal/8>, accessed on 1 November 2021). The various initiatives include spices and tea powder making, pottery, woodcraft, food products and ice creams, catering units, paper bag making, honey making, handicraft from bamboo products, ethnic food items, clay products making, souvenir-making units, lemongrass and eucalyptus oil making, dance groups, cultural arts groups, tribal art groups, etc. The total revenues earned from different initiatives were Rs. 16,424,20, Rs. 6,10,220, Rs. 17,23,520, and Rs. 15,04,650 in July, August, September, and October 2019, respectively. There are fluctuations in the revenue earned from different initiatives in continuous months, though it is contributing to the economic growth of the local communities. Various responsible tourism initiatives try to bring local communities to the forefront.

#### 4.3.2. Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is the area which is given much importance in the RT mission, Wayanad; mainly focusing on women's empowerment, local community participation, village life experiences, cultural experiences, native experiences, promoting bamboo craft, ethnic food, and local cuisine, infrastructure gap assessment, identification of community-based tourism products, preparation of code of conduct, human resource directory, development of Wayanad souvenirs, RT art and cultural forum, Kerala responsible tourism network, and community tour leaders and storyteller training, etc.

#### 4.3.3. Ensuring Local Community Participation

To ensure local community participation in tourism, a greater number of MSMEs were introduced by giving proper training to women and local people. Additionally, it provides support to the development of the tribal community through tribal dance groups and cultural groups and encourages them to take on roles in other initiatives; moreover, the local community will benefit, and through tourism, their lifestyle will be improved. The

initiatives are focused mainly on women's empowerment. The women received training in starting various units, involving bamboo handicraft units, spices and tea powder units, Pappad-making units, pure coconut oil-making units, chili Kondattom and bitter guard Kondattom units, Nettippattam and dry flower-making units, candle making, paper bag, ethnic food units, pottery, and mushroom and curry powder units. A total of 74 families were involved in various activities.

#### 4.3.4. Environmental Responsibility

Like other key areas, environmental responsibility was also taken up by the RT cell in Wayanad. This includes destination safety studies, working toward being a waste-free tourist destination, implementation of a green protocol, and aiming to be a plastic-free destination to ensure environmental protection on the RT principles. To implement the green protocol and waste-free destination aims, efforts have been made to announce at least 21 tourism centers as waste-free tourist destinations, based on sustainable tourism criteria. Among these, Ambalavayal and Vythiri are two destinations selected from Wayanad. Additionally, the roles of stakeholders in waste management are stated.

### 5. Discussion

The green economy takes different shapes and directions in different industries (Pan et al. 2018; Ramirez and George 2019; Walsh and George 2019). Responsible tourism plays a significant role in tourism destinations, according to the study's findings, in order to fulfil the aims of sustainable tourism development and greening the economy. A key component in achieving this is transformational leadership (El-Amin and George 2020). The planned implementation of the responsible tourism initiatives in the destinations will support sustainable tourism development and will also promote a green economy. This study was conducted in the Wayanad district. In Wayanad, responsible tourism is based on the triple bottom line idea (economic, social, and environmental aims). Wayanad's responsible tourism aims to reduce the negative effects of tourism, while also respecting and preserving natural resources. Wayanad's responsible tourism operations promote green tourist growth that is long-term. The components of green tourism, according to Dodds and Joppe (2001), include the following areas. (1) Environmental responsibility, which was taken into consideration through various initiatives, such as destination safety studies, aiming to be a waste free-tourist destination, implementation of the green protocol, and aiming to be a plastic-free destination, to ensure environmental protection. The green tourism protocol and waste-free destination efforts were announced in the 21 tourism centers based on sustainable tourism criteria. (2) Local economic vitality: supporting local economies through various small-scale businesses, such as spices and tea powder making, pottery, woodcraft, bamboo products, food products, souvenir making units, etc.; however, fluctuations in the revenue earned from different initiatives are visible here. Sustainable economic development needs to be considered at the destination. (3) Cultural variety: cultural art groups, tribal art groups, cultural experiences, and the production of souvenirs, among other aspects, could be used to respect and appreciate cultures and cultural diversity. (4) Experiential diversity: ethical tourism, which includes village life experiences, cultural experiences, native experiences, and storyteller training, among other factors. It offers interesting and satisfying experiences via active personal and meaningful engagement with nature, people, places, and cultures (Velmurugan et al. 2021).

The responsible tourism initiatives do support green tourism growth to achieve sustainability (Karjoko et al. 2020). Even though all the areas are taken into consideration, there are still ways to go to achieve economic vitality because there is not much evidence of sustainable economic development of the destination. This will also depend on the lifecycle of the tourism products in any given destination (Gore et al. 2021). It is the results of continuous natural calamities, such as the floods in 2017 and 2018, and the landslides due to heavy rain. Another reason behind this is the pandemics, such as Niphah, and the COVID-19 outbreak. Furthermore, the amount of support for the development of responsible tourism

was extremely poor, with little local assistance and support, particularly for the Samrudhi group's development. Because the Samrudhi group lacked local support and funding to establish and implement their small-scale businesses, banks can play a crucial role in allowing them to maintain and expand their activities by introducing new bank loans with lower interest rates. Lack of stakeholder participation, cooperation, and awareness, lack of funding for SHGs (self-help groups—these are small groups of impoverished people, also referred to as Kudumbasrees) to start small businesses, lack of government coordination of the “idea”, underutilization of skill sets of local resources, and so on, are some of the major gaps that need to be filled in order to achieve the desired results of responsible tourism (Hasana et al. 2022).

## 6. Conclusions

In this study, we have studied the concept of responsible tourism and the initiatives of the RT mission in Wayanad. The development of responsible tourism in Wayanad is mainly divided into three phases. In the first phase, the responsible tourism initiative, Kerala, was introduced in four destinations, including Wayanad. In Wayanad, Vythiri was taken as a cluster for implementation. In the initial phase, Vythiri was not that successful in fulfilling the economic responsibility. So, in the second phase, to bring developments, Wayanad was divided into two clusters: RT Vythiri and RT Ambalavayal. Both the clusters functioned well under two district coordinators. In this phase, they gave importance to fulfilling three responsibilities. Later, the RT mission was formed and took control of RT initiatives. They mainly focused on ensuring local community participation and the development of tourism. In the third phase, the RT mission in Wayanad was brought under one umbrella with one district coordinator to function effectively in three core areas. Its primary goal was to ensure Wayanad's economic, social, and environmental viability, as well as to promote the development of a green tourism concept in the region. Both the ideas of responsible tourism and green tourism can be adapted and equated for the destination's long-term tourism development. The economic vitality of the destination is still under consideration. Consistent economic development of the destination also needed to be achieved to ensure the economic sustainability of the destination. Even though there are some limitations, more efforts in the implementation side of the responsible tourism initiatives may help to develop destination sustainability in all ways. From the study, it is clear that responsible tourism has a positive impact on destinations. Responsible tourism can be an effective practice for sustainable tourist development and green economic growth in numerous destinations if greater efforts are made to make the destination economically sustainable (Pulido-Fernández et al. 2019).

## 7. Implications of the Study

The major suggestion of the study for policymakers is that, instead of having a single major cluster, the dividing of the destination into specific subclusters and decentralizing the regulations seemed to be an effective and productive solution in the Wayanad destination—this might be suitable in other areas. Future researchers can study the impact of the pandemic on the RT implementation of Wayanad. A more comprehensive method of combining the local community and visitors' perception of RT mission in the destination is recommended. Future tourism also can focus on the role of responsible tourism growth in the destination in the current scenario. This study also can initiate the study of changes in the tourism business over the period and the impact of COVID-19 on the industry, as well as its impacts on various sectors of local communities. Future researchers also can study the execution of responsible tourism in various destinations. To generalize the model to a global platform, the impact of responsible tourism in various destinations needed to be studied. Future researchers also can study more about the interrelationship between responsible tourism and green tourism. Future researchers can also throw light on the role of public–private partnerships (PPP) in responsible tourism. More studies are required to



understand the role and impact of responsible tourism to achieve sustainable green tourism development.

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