

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RURAL TOURISM: A CASE STUDY ON KUMBALANGI VILLAGE

GEETHU JOHNSON
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
AQUINAS COLLEGE, EDAKOCHIN
ERNAKULAM, KERALA

GIFTY JOHNSON
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
AQUINAS COLLEGE, EDAKOCHIN
ERNAKULAM, KERALA

ABSTRACT: - It is widely recognized that tourism is a sector with immense potential economic development and employment generation. Hence, tourism is seriously encouraged by the Governments the word over, particularly in the developing nations. International agencies like World Tourism Organization (WTO) estimate that nations like India and China would become the superpowers in the global tourism map by the year 2020. In spite of the excellent tourism resources in India, the country could not utilize its vast potential because only during the last two decades tourism has been getting due attention in India. While China has already attained a prominent position in global tourism, the progress of India has been slower. India has to traverse a long way to catch up with the top players, including China. In respect of Kerala state in particular – one of the states with the highest tourism resources in India – the situation is more chronic as Kerala's performance in tourism has not at all been commensurate with its enviable tourism resources. A recent study of the present author has revealed the vast prospects of rural tourism for employment creation and economic development in the context of 'Kumbalangi' – a rural tourism destination in Ernakulam district of central Kerala and the first model tourism village in India. As a continuation of the earlier study, this paper makes an empirical study of the effects of rural tourism on the environment and local community.

Keywords: Tourism Competitiveness, Rural Tourism, Local Community, Environmental Sustainability, ICT.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is defined as the habit of traveling for enjoyment or the business of providing tours services for tourism. As it is clear from the definition of the concept of tourism was traditionally deeply linked to leisure. But a present thought it still maintains its relationship with leisure, goes beyond the field of leisure. Nowadays people make tours not only for leisure, but also for reasons like health, reawakening and education. World tourism organization gives an overall view regarding the meaning of tourism The growth of tourism has led to different forms of tourism. The important forms or types of tourism are medical tourism, health tourism, ecotourism, sustainable tourism, pro-tourism, rural tourism, sports and adventure tourism. Most countries have already identified the development potential of tourism. Rural tourism is considered to be an excellent mean to step up the development of less developed or developing regions of the world. The growth of tourist's interest for visiting rural areas encouraged the residence of inland villages to the new development and new entrepreneur orientation – tourism. Tourism activity has increased in the last decades in many rural areas. That were or still are economically and socially depressed and it can be said that rural tourism is playing a key role in their development. Besides economic characteristics, rural areas are characterized by demographic problems and by the abandonment of traditional economic activities such as agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, etc. But there is huge potential for these areas because general trend worldwide indicates a growing demand for services and facilities that are connected to tradition and to typical and authentic rural experiences.

In the last decades, local communities in rural areas across the world along with tourists have been showing a growing interest for rural tourism. On the one side, local communities are seeing rural tourism as a way that could be beneficial for their economic utility and for their living social environment. On the other side,

rural tourism has become a very important and fast-growing tourism industry and consequently there is increased competition for tourist among international destinations. In such conditions and in order to be sustainable it is necessary to carefully plan rural tourism development. Only well-planned development can produce positive economic, social and environmental effect of rural tourism. Therefore, since rural tourism has been proven to be current issue. Nowadays and since big interest has been shown for this topic. It was found approximate to explore further all the aspects of rural tourism is that majority of financial gains out of tourism directly reach the villagers. This study deals with socio economic impact of rural tourism: A case study on Kumbalangi village.

OBJECTIVES

- The objectives of the study are:
- To study the impact and effectiveness of rural tourism on the upliftment of standard of living in Kumbalangi village.
- To find out the impact of rural tourism in infrastructural development in Kumbalangi village.
- To identify the challenges and opportunities in rural tourism.
- To analyze the positive social economic impact of tourism on local community.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Study was conducted in Kumbalangi village. In order to enhance the rural tourism efforts in Kumbalangi village, the UNDP and Government of India funded it as one of the endogenous tourism projects. The study concentrates on the socio-economic impact of rural tourism in Kumbalangi village. The target group includes the local communities who belong to this area. All findings and conclusions were arrived from the responses gathered from 50 respondents of Kumbalangi village and also from various administrators connected with tourism projects in this village by using structured questionnaire. Here we are considering questionnaire method. The technique of random sampling was used to select the sample.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The significance of tourism as an economic activity is growing all over the world. India with her diverse historical and cultural heritage has ample potential not only in international tourism but also in developing domestic tourism. Each state in India has many splendid offers to the tourists. Kumbalangi is a village that is near to Kochi town of Kerala. This village is one of the domestic tourism model villages funded by UNDP and government of India. Tourism in Kumbalangi is in its blooming stage. There is very high eagerness for local people in developing tourism in their village. They look ahead to the utilization of different tourism projects as a means to strengthen their livelihood earnings. There are quite a number of positive and negative impacts of tourism in the economic, social, cultural, and environmental field. Unless implemented with care, tourism will not only fail to keep up the growth but also will spell adverse side effects in the future, especially on the less privileged. The research problem here is “Socio-Economic impact of Rural Tourism: A case study of Kumbalangi Village”. The study was conducted with the aim of analyzing the socio-economic impacts of rural tourism in Kumbalangi village.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Source of data:** The data required for the study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Structured questionnaire was used for collecting the primary data. And the secondary data was collected from published books, periodicals, research journals, websites and other sources.
- **Universe:** The universe of the survey research was people in Kumbalangi village. In addition to the survey among peoples, interactions with the tourists in Kumbalangi during the period of data collection also enhanced the understanding of strength and weakness of the project.
- **Sample size:** The sample size of the study was 50 respondents including both male and female category.
- **Data used for collection and presentation of data:** Data analysis has been done by using appropriate mathematical and statistical tools. The tools used for presentation of data are charts and tables.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study was restricted only to a sample of 50 persons. The entire behavior of the society may be different.
- It was difficult to get a questionnaire filled personally from the person who selected.
- The finding may not be conclusive but only indicative.
- Questionnaire method is used for data collection and the limitation of questionnaire method is applicable to the study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Bramwell & Lane, 1994 quoted in Su, 2011, 1438: Education, arts and heritage taking place in countryside not only farm-based but also multi-faceted activities.
- Pedford, 1996 quoted in Su, 2011, 1438: The concept includes rural custom and folklore, local people's traditions, values, beliefs and common heritage.
- McKercher & Robbins, 1998, 173: Operated on a small and regional scale that lie outside the mainstream of tourism
- Reichel et al., 2000, 451: Rural tourism is based on features of rurality and sustainability with small scale enterprises in rural areas.
- MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003, 308: Refers to a distinct rural community with its own traditions, heritage, arts, lifestyles, places, and values as preserved between generations.
- Sharpley & Roberts, 2004, 122: Rural tourism can be both a complement to mass tourism in most countries that have warm climates and also a pioneering initiative in a place where tourism is low.
- Negrusa et al., 2007, 1: A form of tourism provided by local people in rural area, with a small-scale accommodation, rural activities and customs of life.
- Irshad, 2010, 5: Rural tourism is located in rural areas, contains traditional societies and practices, in small scale.
- Lo et al., 2012, 59: Rural tourism offers differentiated products to the industry.
- J. Urry's definition of RT areas

- *Rural tourism may be defined as: the movement of people from their normal place of residence to rural areas for a minimum period of twenty-four hours to the maximum of six months for the sole purpose of leisure and pleasure. Rural tourism refers to all tourism activities in a rural area.
- Oklahoma Agritourism: Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism. Rural tourism is essentially an activity which takes place in the countryside. It is multi-faceted and may entail farm / agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, and eco – tourism. As against conventional tourism, rural tourism has certain typical characteristics, like it is experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is predominantly in natural environment, it meshes with seasonality and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and traditions.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RURAL TOURISM

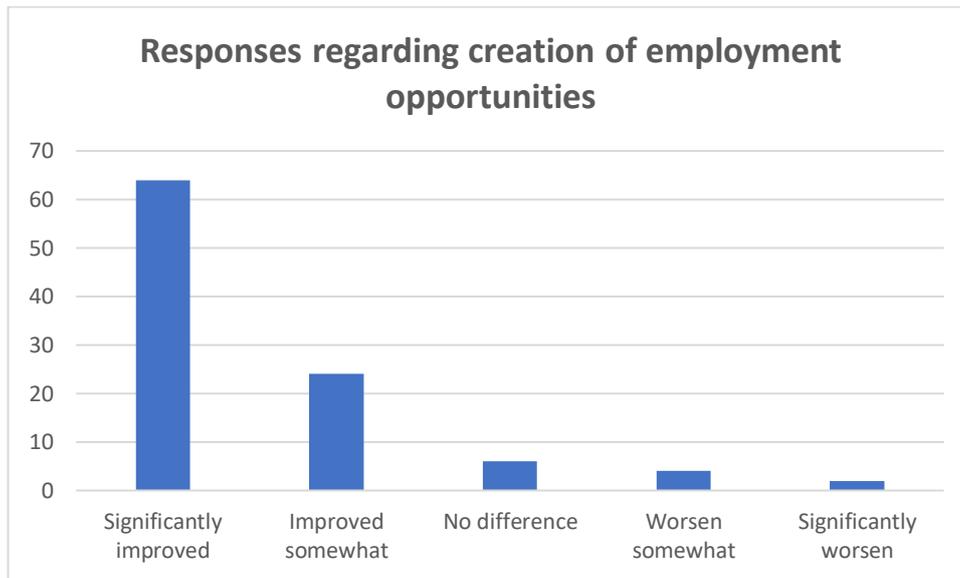
CREATION OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Table1 : Responses regarding creation of employment opportunities

| RESPONSE | NUMBER OF RESPONSES | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Significantly improved | 32 | 64 |
| Improved somewhat | 12 | 24 |
| No difference | 3 | 6 |
| Worsen somewhat | 2 | 4 |
| Significantly worsen | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

Chart 1: Responses regarding creation of employment opportunities



Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION

From the above table regarding creation of employment opportunities, it is clear that majority of respondents have positive response towards employment opportunity. It also indicates that there is not much difference between in mean score of each factor.

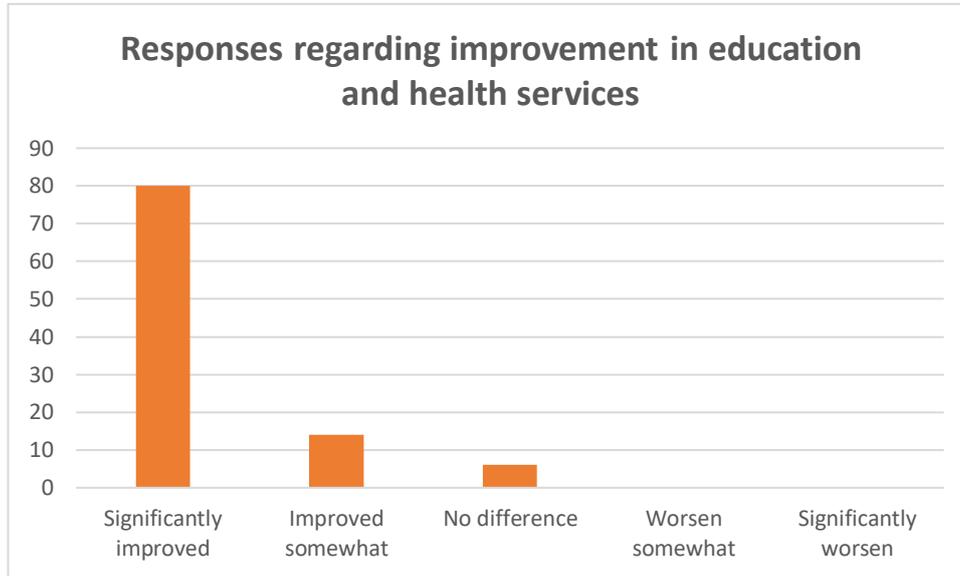
IMPROVEMENT IN EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICES

Table 2: Responses regarding improvement in education and health services

| RESPONSE | NUMBER OF RESPONSES | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Significantly improved | 40 | 80 |
| Improved somewhat | 7 | 14 |
| No difference | 3 | 6 |
| Worsen somewhat | 0 | 0 |
| Significantly worsen | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

Chart 2: Responses regarding improvement in education and health services



Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION

From the above table, it indicates that the education and health services have been significantly improved. That there also 14% improved somewhat.

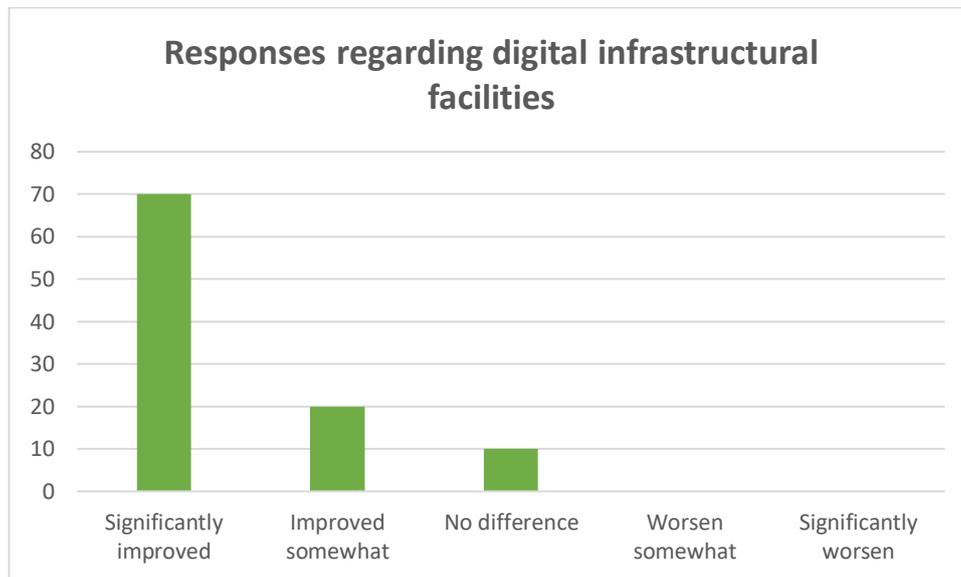
DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

Table 3: Responses regarding digital infrastructural facilities

| RESPONSE | NUMBER OF RESPONSES | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Significantly improved | 35 | 70 |
| Improved somewhat | 10 | 20 |
| No difference | 5 | 10 |
| Worsen somewhat | 0 | 0 |
| Significantly worsen | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

Chart 3: Responses regarding digital infrastructural facilities



Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION

From the above table it indicates that the tourism initiatives also improved the infrastructure and digital measures. 70% of digital infrastructure has significantly improved.

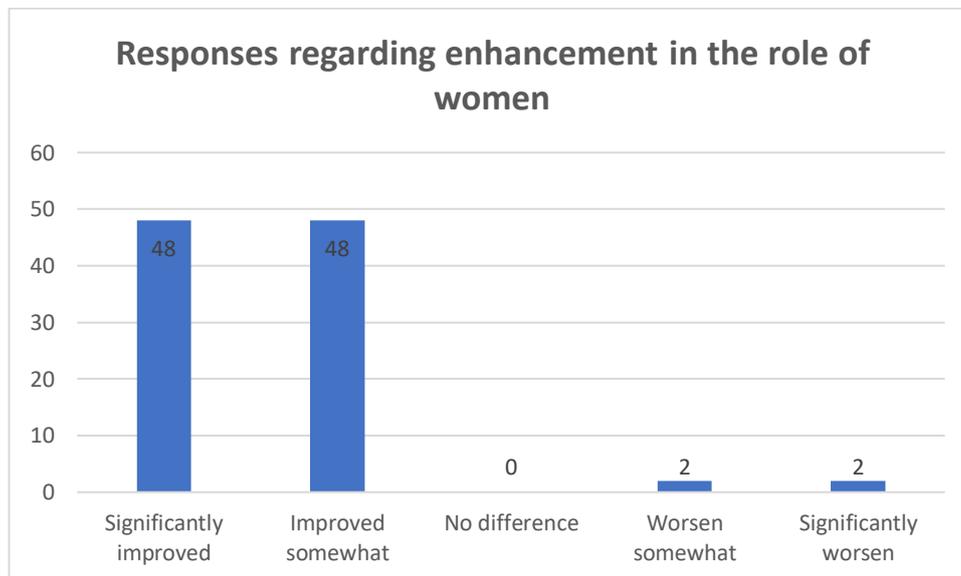
ENHANCEMENT IN THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Table 4: Responses regarding enhancement in the role of women

| RESPONSE | NUMBER OF RESPONSES | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Significantly improved | 24 | 48 |
| Improved somewhat | 24 | 48 |
| No difference | 0 | 0 |
| Worsen somewhat | 1 | 2 |
| Significantly worsen | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

Chart 4: Responses regarding enhancement in the role of women



Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION

From the above table, it indicates that there is no much improvement in the enhancement of women’s role. Because, responses for “significantly improved” and “improved somewhat” are equal (48%).

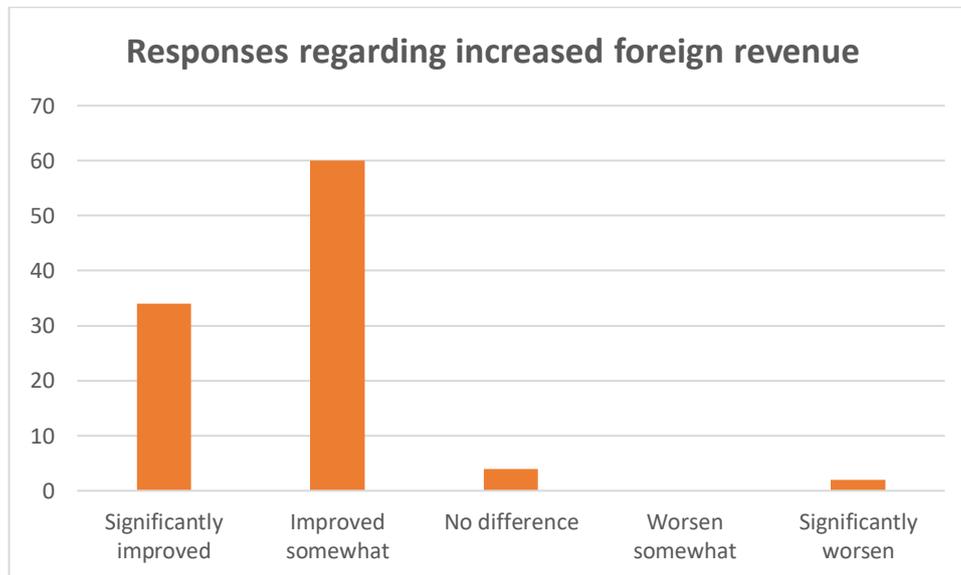
INCREASED FOREIGN REVENUE

Table 5: Responses regarding increased foreign revenue

| RESPONSE | NUMBER OF RESPONSES | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Significantly improved | 17 | 34 |
| Improved somewhat | 30 | 60 |
| No difference | 2 | 4 |
| Worsen somewhat | 0 | 0 |
| Significantly worsen | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

Charts 5: Responses regarding increased foreign revenue



Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION

From the above table, it is clear that there is no increase in the foreign revenue. 60% of respondents are of the opinion that it is only less improved.

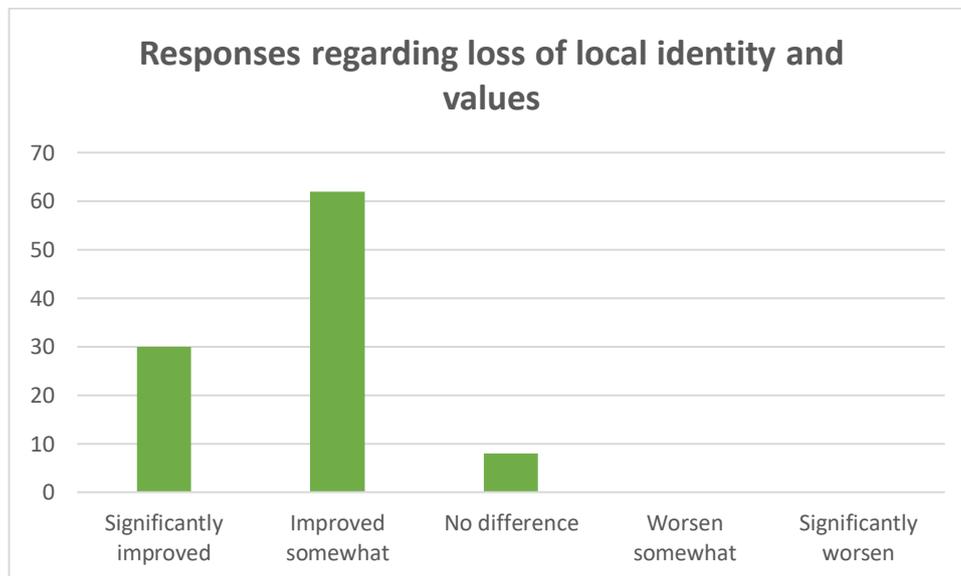
LOSS OF LOCAL IDENTITY AND VALUES

Table 6: Responses regarding loss of local identity and values

| RESPONSE | NUMBER OF RESPONSES | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Significantly improved | 15 | 30 |
| Improved somewhat | 31 | 62 |
| No difference | 4 | 8 |
| Worsen somewhat | 0 | 0 |
| Significantly worsen | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

Chart 6: Responses regarding loss of local identity and values



Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION

From the above table, loss of local identity and values are improved somewhat. Only 30% of respondents are having an opinion that it is significantly improved.

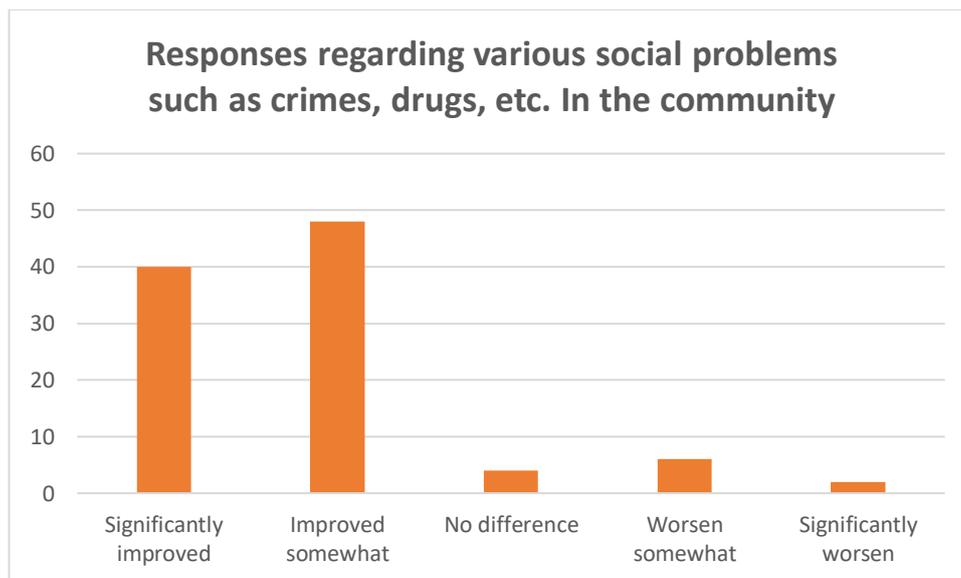
LED TO VARIOUS SOCIAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS CRIMES, DRUGS, ETC. IN THE COMMUNITY

Table 7: Responses regarding various social problems such as crimes, drugs, etc. In the community

| RESPONSE | NUMBER OF RESPONSES | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Significantly improved | 20 | 40 |
| Improved somewhat | 24 | 48 |
| No difference | 2 | 4 |
| Worsen somewhat | 3 | 6 |
| Significantly worsen | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 50 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

Chart 7: Responses regarding various social problems such as crimes, drugs, etc. In the community



Source: Primary data

INTERPRETATION

From the above table, it is understood that the problems such as crimes, drugs, are increasing. There is no improvement in its control. Because it is clear from the table, that majority of them (48%) polled for “improved somewhat”.

SUGGESTIONS

To improve and develop the tourism in villages, proper training programs should be organized for the village people. They must provide proper orientation and awareness among the village people about their importance and involvement in tourism activities. The government should allot more funds to the development of village tourism and for the development of better infrastructure facilities. The number of tourist information centers has to be increased. The government must ensure a reasonable return for the investment of rural people in tourism activities. The government or tourism department should conduct more tourism related festivals yearly, so the rural people will get more opportunities to showcase their traditions and skills and also it helps in generating more income. The rural tourism should give more priority to the production of more rural products and must take proper measures to the promotion of these products. The government should provide more trained guides and necessary brochures for the tourists to explore the village at the maximum. The cleanliness of the restaurants should be maintained. The government should appoint proper agencies to check the illegal activities and social crimes in relation to tourism.

CONCLUSION

Kumbalangi is one of the endogenous tourism model villages funded by UNDP and government of India. The tourism in Kumbalangi village had a greater positive impact on the socio-economic life of rural folks. The Kumbalangi tourism has created a vast employment opportunities and economic development in the village. It raises the culture of the village and also helped in preserving their traditions and values. The tourists also get opportunities to understand and experience the life of rural people. The villagers also get opportunities showcase their culture and traditions in front of the outside world. One of the major impacts in relation to tourism in Kumbalangi is the improvement of the economic status and stability of the local community. The increased new employment opportunities and the increase in the quality of education paved a way to increase in the personal income generation capability of the people in Kumbalangi Village. It resulted in the improvement of their economic status. The increased economic stability and status and the improvement of the basic infrastructure of the village resulted in betterment of their quality of life and welfare of the local community. The quality of the resources provided also increased with tourism.

The Kumbalangi endogenous tourism model is a great example of Gramma Swaraj of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's ideal village was based on the self-sufficiency and economic independence. Tourism in Kumbalangi Village has brought higher standard of living to the people of the region. Like every coin has two sides, it also has some negative impacts like increased crimes, social issues, drugs, alcoholism and losing of the cultural values. Even though the tourism had made some problems in Kumbalangi Village, this can be overcome through proper measures. The socio-economic impact of rural tourism in Kumbalangi Village is a great example of development of villages and the enhancement of overall life of the people in rural villages through tourism.

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