HOW 'GREEN' ARE THE TOURISTS VISITING ECO-TOURISM SPOTS AND STAYING IN RESORTS? A STUDY OF SELECTED RESORTS IN WAYANAD DISTRICT OF KERALA, INDIA

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Abstract
In the context of growing environmental awareness and emerging environmental concerns arising out of climate change-induced issues, the tourism industry has started transforming itself by making shifts in the strategies and the kinds of services they offer. In line with this, green tourism has been emerging as an innovative area in the field of tourism. But, for green tourism to be successful in every aspect of its being 'greener', the guests visiting resorts and tourist places as well as the Staffs including managers at different levels engaging the guests need to be 'green' in their behaviour. Drawing on data from 80 randomly selected visitors at certain chosen resorts from the Wayanad district of Kerala India reveals that only 24 per cent of the tourists are Fully Fledged Green Tourists (tourists satisfying the majority of the expected green behaviours considered in the study) whereas 29 per cent and 47 per cent are moderately and marginally green tourists respectively. Most worrying is the fact that the marginally green tourists appear to be the highest in percentage. This corroborates the argument that the tourists visiting resorts and tourist places need to be further greener in their behaviour and attitude.

Keywords: Green Tourism, Green Behaviour, Climate Change, Green Protocol, Environment

JEL Classification: Z30

1. INTRODUCTION

It is evident that tourism has been as diversified as any field of economic and leisure activity. Further, it is undeniable that tourism has become an industry which offers income and employment to a growing number of workforces despite adding to the exchequer of the government in the form of tax revenues, and hence it has been reckoned as a tool of mass economic development (Meler & Ham, 2012). In fact, owing to an enormous array of tested linkage effects that it provides, no government can ponder over growth strategies without considering the possibilities opened up by the tourism sector.

Many nations in the world rely mainly on the tourism sector in pursuing their economic advancement. Indeed, tourism has assumed a key place in the development agenda of governments (Burns, 1999). Although tourism has had very little adverse impact on environmental sustainability, the growing concern about the environment and the consequent threats being created and exacerbated by the issues of climate change have called for substantial changes in tourism activities in accordance with certain green protocols. Tourism activities of all sorts that fall in line with the code and conducts prescribed by the green protocol can be described as Green Tourism. Needless to say that in the growing

urgency that needs to be paid to the protection and sustainability of the environment, it is imperative that the tourism sector must also not overlook the importance attached to green efforts towards making the tourism sector eco-friendly. In this context, the present study intends to analyse how far the resorts in Kerala have remained green friendly, and how much greener the tourists arriving at such resorts.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of the present study is to analyse the extent of green behaviour of the tourists visiting the places and staying at resorts in the Wayanad district, the study area. The study also looks into the opinion of tourists with regard to the green behaviour of staff attending them in resorts, and the fun activities taking place at resorts to entertain the guests.

III. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY

With environmental concerns entering as a debating point in the discourses over development, the concept of being 'greener' has started occupying indomitable importance in the realms of both policy-making and theoretical studies. In fact, it has been noticed that being 'greener' has much wider ramifications as it encompasses social and political dimensions than just being a part and parcel of what

has been generally perceived as a bio-economy. Bio-economy is primarily understood to be a resource-based as it talks much about the resources of an economy, its overuse and the consequent depletion of non-renewable precious natural deposits, which would be inaccessible for future generations provided the state of technology and production coefficients continue to remain intact (D'Amato, et al., 2017). Before we examine the available literature on the green behaviour of tourists, it is pertinent to have an overview of the meaning and the contexts in which the concept of green tourists has popularly been used. First of all, it needs to be reiterated at this juncture that green behaviour has been very loosely defined and understood in different contexts. Some regard green behaviour as a very 'conservative' type of behaviour whereas some consider this as nothing short of environmentally responsible behaviour. Although many terms have been used to connote the idea behind green tourism, broadly, and to a greater extent practically, one would define 'green behaviour' as that behaviour which goes along with the spirit of preserving the environment causing no destruction to the ecosystem. Using the much-celebrated terminologies in the science of economics, one could define 'green behaviour' as that behaviour that would typically bring down negative externalities or maximize positive externalities that tourism creates for the society and the local community where tourists activities regularly take place (Steg & Vlek, 2009).

Green tourism forms a part of alternative tourism which is quite opposite to mass tourism. Mass tourism does not necessarily distinguish activities that potentially harm the ecosystem and makes things unsustainable. Unlike mass tourism, alternative tourism takes care of many dimensions and repercussions of tourists' activities along with its economic benefits like income and employment generation. A country offering mass tourism concentrates only on aggressive strategies to attract tourists at any cost without any regard for the environment and its sustainability. Soft tourism, Ecotourism, Green Tourism etc. can be conceptualised under the broad umbrella of alternative tourism. For tourism to be 'Green', the tourists and operators are expected to have gained certain green behaviours. To put it in other words, green tourism incorporates different behaviours of tourists and service providers including a stubborn stand against unsound consumption practices which probably go against the interest of not only the economy but the ecology as well. Simply speaking, the term 'green' connotes 'environmentally sound' behaviour.

Studies have examined behavioural factors embedded in individual roles, attitudes and situational reasons in the determination of spot-centred eco-friendly and responsible behaviour at different tourist destinations. These studies have identified felt responsibility, knowledge about the environment, and sensitivity as the factors which prominently determine the environmentally responsible behaviour of tourists. Structuring constraints and conflicting goals usually act against the inculcation and development of such behaviours among potential tourists (Gupta, Arora, Sharma, & Mishra, 2021). Environmental issues appear to be detrimental to the existence of environmentally friendly eco-tourism in many places. This calls for developing environmentally friendly behaviours in tourists. The knowledge about the environment and the perceived benefits of environmental quality has a positive effect on shaping environmentally friendly tourists' behaviours (Ren, Su, Chang, & Wen, 2021).

The existence of lax environmental regulations in developing economies often tends to motivate people and policymakers to overlook the problems created by the tourists' activities, and hence, if it remains unattended properly, it will turn out to be a boomerang for the entire tourism industry as well (Amuquandoh, 2010). What constitutes Green behaviour? Indeed, Green behaviour is the sum and substance of different green-centric or eco-friendly actions and feelings which actually inculcate certain ideals in the minds of people that force them to act in line with the call of nature. Mainly four things may constitute green behaviour. First is the consumption aspect which is adopting a green dimension in the consumption of goods and services. Second, is the willingness to appreciate and critically evaluate global green initiatives and argue for giving a green dimension to all environmental actions. Thirdly, developing a socially responsible environmental attitude, and finally, keeping an interest in showing kindness towards wildlife along with a strong determination to safeguard the original habitat of wildlife without endeavouring to encroach on the areas of wildlife (Larson, Stedman, Cooper, & Decker, 2015).

IV. A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Environmental behaviours that are convenient and cost-saving have a greater chance to be accepted by economic agents whereas environmental behaviours escalating costs (cost-pushing) and are potentially inconvenient are likely to be rejected by people. This is true in the case of both service providers and tourists. Hence, we need to look at the issue within these constraints. The post-purchase evaluation of Eco-tourists products was well analysed using online surveys (Lisa, 2019) which found that factors like green behaviour of staff, facilities available in green modes and the nature of the food served were influential in evolving an outcome pertaining to the post-purchase opinion of eco-tourism products. It is true that in shaping the green behaviour of tourists, the hosts can play a key role. A study conducted in rural China threw some light on the role of hosts in reshaping the behaviour of tourists in tune with the requirements of green tourism (Wang, Wu,

Wu, & Pearce, 2018). The role of individual demographic background in shaping tourists' behaviour was studied by (Lee & Jan, 2015). Apart from the demographic background, studies have also highlighted the knowledge about the environment as a factor shaping the green behaviour of tourists and hosts in the tourism industry (Cheng & Wu, 2015). Attachment of tourists to the places and resorts they visit has also been found to be another crucial factor in determining the green behaviour of tourists (Hallpenny, 2010). Obviously, the personal norms that one keeps and inherits from his surroundings and family background may also exert an influence on shaping the green behaviour of tourists (Han, 2014). It is true that one's behaviour at home has an influence on determining his or her behavioural outcome at different other places in later stages of life. A study has been conducted on emerging green tourists focusing on the behavioural knowledge and practices that tourists develop at their homes (Mair, 2009).

V. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Conducting a study that involves the green behaviour of tourists and tour operators requires the application of sophisticated analytical tools which are applied in environmental economics. In this regard, it is imperative that an adequate number of representative visitors need to be chosen from different resorts in the study area. For this, we randomly chose resorts from the Wayanad District which is a well-known hill station tourist district in the Kerala state of Indian Union. Not only Wayanad has been famous for its hill tourism, but also its natural richness in terms of forest cover and diversity in natural conditions also make it popular among tourists, especially among domestic tourists in India. Although hectic tourist activities have caused damage to the ecosystem in hill locations in India, Wayanad has been able to someway withstand such untoward consequences of tourism. From the randomly chosen 4 resorts, using the check-in register of the resorts, 80 sample visitors have been chosen again on a random basis as respondents of the survey. After collecting contact information from the resorts, we sought responses from them over the telephone, video conferencing and Google forms. We also sat with the

managers and key informants including staff in high positions in resorts to have an in-depth informal discussion on the cleanliness and eco-friendly ways of running the resorts without causing environmental damage while fully satisfying the expectations of the visitors.

The interview schedule is prepared in such a way as to fetch reliable and useful information for classifying the tourists into varied categories of 'green tourists'. To understand environmental behaviour, the survey puts across the following questions on a five-point Likert scale of agreements.

1. In resorts, I prefer to use toilet paper made from recycled paper
2. I prefer to buy products packaged in reusable containers
3. I try to purchase products that are recycled
4. I do not take a printout of tickets
5. I do want to be water conscious while bathing and brushing
6. I attempt to use natural resources like water and energy with measure.
7. I help the local community by purchasing things from the small shops nearby and vendors which I think might enhance the income and employment of local people.
8. How far the behaviour of staff appears to be green?
9. How far fun activities appear to be green in the resorts?

VI. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Before we proceed to the analysis in detail, it is imperative to have a glance at the key socio socio-economic characteristics of the cases under the present study. For the sake of simplicity of analysis, we focus only on variables like gender, age, education, employment and place of origin of the respondents (Table No.1). It is worthwhile to note that males outnumber females as far as the visitors staying in resorts are concerned. Most of them belong to the age category of 36 years to 55 years, while the majority are postgraduates. Government officials and techies dominate the tourists staying in resorts. Again, it is important to note that resorts rarely attract travellers from outside as the majority of the visitors hail from the home state of Kerala

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Table 1 Key Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Visitors

Variable	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	57.5
	Female	42.5
Age (in Years)	18-35	30.0
	36-55	45.0
	Above 55	25.0
Education	Degree	27.5
	Post-Graduation	47.5

	Professional Degrees	25.0
Employment	Government Officials	32.5
	Private Sector Employees	21.2
	CEOs and Techies	30.0
	Self-Employees	16.2
Domicile	Non-Resident Indian from Middle East	3.8
	Non-Resident Indian from Europe	1.2
	Non-Resident Indian from other Countries	8.8
	State of Kerala	51.2
	Other Indian States	35.0

.   Source: Field Survey, 2021

Having analysed the key socio-economic characteristics of the visitors under the study, now we move on to analysing the green behaviour of visitors. For this, the study considers the following attributes: the preference of visitors to the use of toilet paper made of recycled paper, the preference towards buying products packaged in reusable containers, whether visitors tend to take a printout of their air/bus/flight tickets, consciousness in using water while bathing and brushing, and attempt to use natural resources with measure.

Table 2 Green Behaviour of Tourists based on different Statements

Variable	Opinion	Percentage
In resorts, I prefer to use toilet paper made from recycled paper	Never	2.5
	Rarely	11.2
	Sometimes	27.5
	Often	32.5
	Always	26.2
I prefer to buy products packaged in reusable containers	Never	20.0
	Occasionally	42.5
	Every time	37.5
I don't take printout of tickets	Very True of Me	41.2
	Somewhat True of Me	51.2
	Very Untrue of Me	7.5
I do want to be water conscious while bathing and brushing	Very True of Me	43.8
	Somewhat True of Me	48.8
	Very Untrue of Me	7.5
I attempt to use natural resources like water and energy with a measure	Very True of Me	36.7
	Somewhat True of Me	43.0
	Very Untrue of Me	20.3

Source: Field Survey, 2021

In Kerala, a water-rich state in India, generally people tend to use an enormous quantity of water in toilets and washrooms which is not a standardised practice given the value of water. Nevertheless, by international standards, it is apparent that a visitor using a high-quality resort should keep certain restraints on the use of water. In the study, however, it is shown that only 26.2 per cent of the visitors have the habit of using toilet paper made of recycled materials. It is interesting to note that only 11.2 per cent rarely use it while 27.5 per cent sometimes tend to use toilet paper (Table No.2). It is evident that in using toilet paper in washrooms, visitors' behaviour cannot be said to be satisfactory. When it comes to the second attribute of green behaviour which is buying products packaged in reusable containers, it is remarkable to note that 37.5 per cent of visitors opine that they always prefer to buy things in reusable containers. However, 20 per cent do not appear to be giving any heed to the repeated requests of authorities to use reusable containers while shopping which is somewhat worrying. It is true that with smartphones replacing feature phones, every traveller can keep tickets in digital forms, and in this study as well, it has been shown that 41.2 per cent of travellers obviously opine that they do not take printouts of tickets, and in the case of a little more than 50 per cent, it is at least somewhat true for them. Again water bound behaviour that is how far travellers are conscious of water use while bathing and brushing which by any count goes deep into the green behaviour of people at large. It is obvious that being water conscious is indeed important in view of climate change and associated consequences. The availability of safe drinking water has already become a severe life and livelihood issue in African nations. This study has

shown that most of the respondents are very conscious about using water while bathing and brushing. It is quite interesting to note that only 7.5 per cent of respondents regard the statement that 'I do want to be conscious in using water while bathing and brushing' to be 'very untrue of them'. If one were to believe the current data on energy, its supply and demand, it is obvious that water is on the verge of a crisis. Given this, 'green tourists' must be respectful of the use of energy and water. For this, it is expected that one must have a habit of using energy and water with measures which indirectly caution against using precious natural resources without any proper accounting. In the present study, it has been observed that only 20.3 per cent consider the statement 'I attempt to use natural resources like water and energy with measure' as 'very untrue of them' while 36.7 per cent consider it 'very true of them'.

Indeed, one important attribute of green tourism lies in the readiness or willingness on the part of the travellers to help the local community, including the vendors and small shops selling mostly local products,

by purchasing items from them. It is generally held that tourism must enhance the income and livelihood opportunities of the local people where tourism centres are located. In the absence of any perceptible improvement in the life and livelihood of local people, the tourism industry may have to face stringent opposition from locals, which will turn out to be detrimental to the interest of the tourism industry as a whole. Keeping this in mind, tourists have been urged to indulge in buying products which are locally produced and sold. In fact, this continues to be an important 'green tourist' attribute in many ways. The present study shows that 32 per cent opine that it is very true of them that they help the local community by purchasing locally produced things whereas in the case of 53 per cent it is somewhat true (Figure No.1). However, still 15 per cent consider it as very untrue of them. Nevertheless, it is obvious that for a tourist to be 'green' it is imperative that he or she should prefer to buy locally available products from the local people so that tourism may bring light to their life.

Figure 1 'I help the local community by purchasing things from the small shops nearby and vendors which I think might enhance income and employment of local people'.
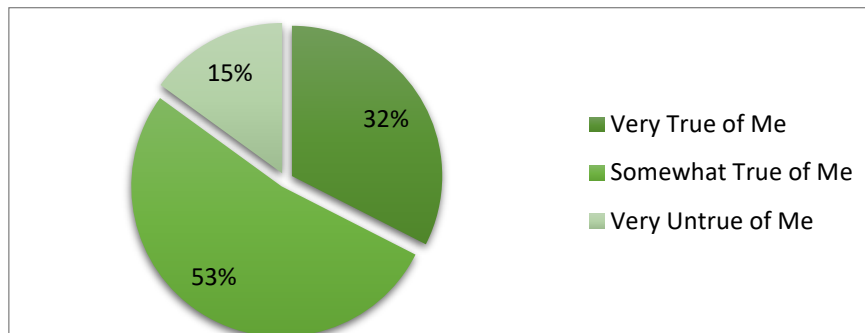
Source: Field Survey, 2021

It may sound more interesting if we look into the employment wise distribution of the willingness on the part of the visitors to spend money on the goods sold and produced by the local people in the tourists places (Table No.3). Among those who expressed the opinion 'Very Tue of Me' about the statement 'I help the local community by purchasing things from the small shops nearby tourist location', government officials constitute 50 per cent, and in the case of those who said 'Somewhat True of Me' 40.5

per cent are CEOs and Techies, and among the 'Very Untrue of Me', 33.3 per cent are private sector employees. Thus, it is evident that Government officials who visit tourist places come forward to buy more products from the local sellers which would augment the local demand for products, thereby raising income and employment opportunities in the tourist places. However, there is not too much association between the willingness to buy from the locals and the employment category of green tourists.

**Table 3 Employment-wise Distribution of Visitors willing to buy from local People**

Employment	Very True of Me	Somewhat True of Me	Very Untrue of Me	Total
Government Officials	50.0	26.2	16.7	32.5
Private Sector Employee	19.2	19.0	33.3	21.2
CEOs and Techies	15.4	40.5	25.0	30.0
Self Employed	15.4	14.3	25.0	16.2
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2021;   P value is .172

In resorts which claim to be 'green', it is indispensable that the staff attending the visitors need also to be purely 'green' in their attitude and behaviours. They also need to adopt certain 'green' protocols in their dealing with visitors. The owners of resorts must have trained these employees as to how they should look and behave in an eco-friendly green manner with the visitors. At the same time, it is the sole duty of the management and other monitoring staff to ensure that the visitors also fall in line the with 'green' protocols of the resorts. Apart from staff including managers and visitors, the activities in resorts including both entertainment and infotainment activities should also be done with a 'greener' perspective. The activities should not lead to the production of excess waste, and it should not, in any way, destruct nature and disturb other species including wild animals in forests. To ascertain how far the staff have been greener in their behaviour and attitude, we seek the opinion of visitors on a five point-scale: Perfectly acceptable, Acceptable, Neutral, Unacceptable, and Totally Unacceptable. Interestingly, it could be observed that only 17 per cent (Unacceptable and Totally Unacceptable put together) opine negatively about the 'green' behaviour of the staff in the resorts whereas an overwhelming majority to the tune of 56.2 per cent rate behaviour as 'Acceptable' and 17.5 per cent consider their behaviour as Perfectly Acceptable (Figure No.2). It boils down to the fact that Staffs in resorts generally appear to be 'green' in the eyes of the visitors which is indeed a good aspect of the 'greener' nature of the resorts in the study area.

Figure 2 How have the Staffs in Resorts been 'Green' in their behaviour?
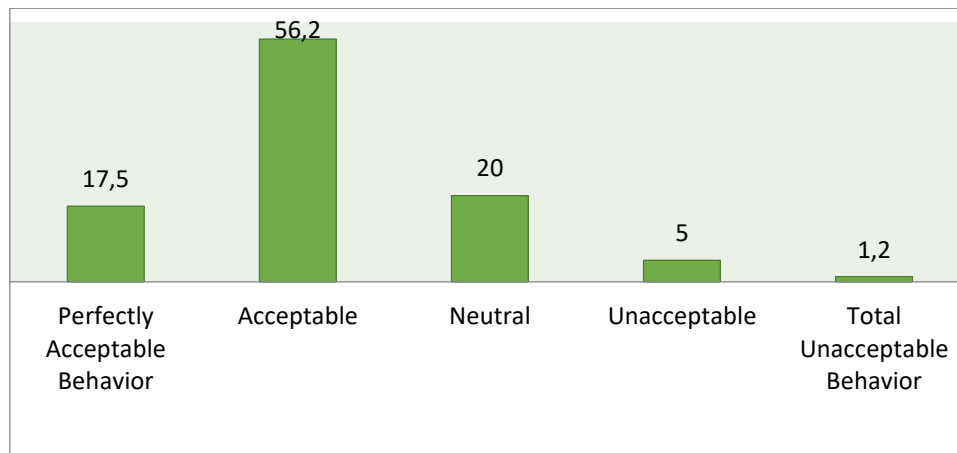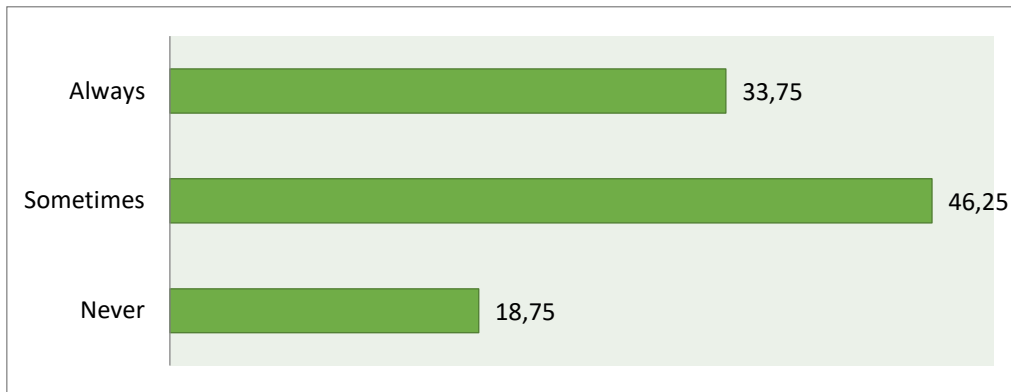

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Moving onto how far the fun activities in the resorts been 'green', 46.25 per cent of visitors opine that activities have been 'green' only 'sometimes' and not always. Again 18.75 per cent are of the view that they have never been 'green' in any respect whereas 33.75 per cent opine fun activities have 'always' been 'green' in every respect (Figure No.3). It could, however, been observed that fun activates in resorts need to be still greener in accordance with the perception of the visitors.

**Figure 3 How far fun activities appear to be green in the resorts?**

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Now, we move onto the crux of the study where we intend to categorize the visitors in selected resorts based on their prominent opinion about the green behaviour. Tourists of the resorts have been categorized into three: Full Fledged Green Tourists, Moderately Green Tourists, and Marginally Green Tourists. To arrive at this categorization, the study has considered four important aspects: (1) 'In resorts, I prefer to use toilet paper made from recycled paper'. (2) 'I prefer to buy products packaged in reusable containers. (3) 'I do not take a printout of tickets. (4)

'I help the local community by purchasing things from the small shops nearby and vendors which I think might enhance income and employment of local people'. It has been found that only 24 per cent of the tourists turn out to be Fully Fledged Green Tourists whereas 29 per cent and 47 per cent are moderately and marginally green tourists respectively (Figure No.4). It is someway disheartening to note that marginally green tourists appear to be highest in percentage. This obviously throws light on the fact that tourists visiting resorts and tourist places need to be further greener in their behaviour and attitude.

Figure 4 Categories Green Tourist
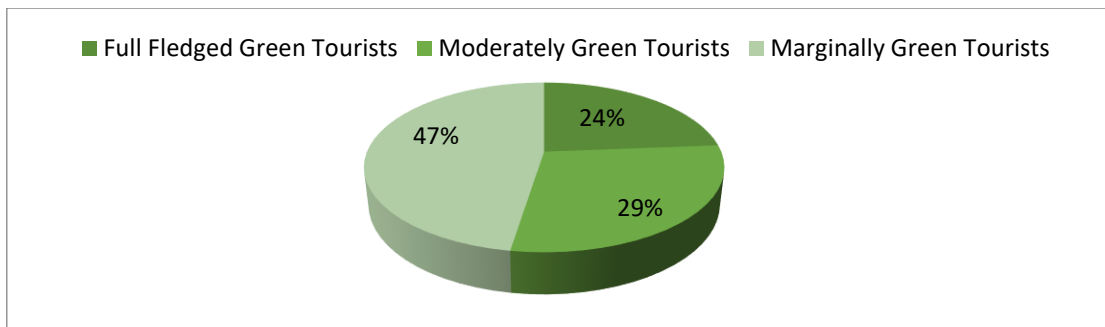
Source: Field Survey, 2021

As said earlier, this study has categorized visitors into four categories based on their job profile viz. Government Officers, Private Sector Employees, CEOs and Techies employed mainly in corporatized entities and self-employed. Having categorized visitors on the basis of their green behaviour and attitude, it is pertinent to understand whether there exists any association between the employment of visitors and their green tourist status. Among the fully fledged green tourists, CEOs and Techies constitutes 57.9 per cent while among the Moderately green tourists CEOs and Techies again come up with 43.5 per cent of visitors. However, it is disheartening to

note that among the marginally green tourists, visitors with a government background constitute 44.7 per cent (Table No.4). It obviously boils down to the fact that CEOs and Techies are the better Green Tourist, and government officials followed by employees of private companies are the highest among marginally Green Tourist category. Going much deeper into the understanding of whether there exists any association between the categories of employment and green tourists, the study has administered a Chi-Square test. In this context, the study proposes the following hypotheses.

H0 = There is no association between different categories of Green Tourists and the employment status of tourists.

H1 = There is association between different categories of Green Tourists and the employment status tourists.

The Chi-Square results show that since the P value falls below .05 at five per cent level, we reject the null hypothesis and come to the conclusion that there is association between different employment status of tourists and the degrees of their green behaviour (Table No.5). In other words, the employment as a factor has considerable influence on determining the green status of the tourists under the present study.

Table 4 Employment Wise Distribution of Different Category of Green Tourists

Employment Category	Category of Green Tourists			
	Full Fledged Green Tourists	Moderately Green Tourists	Marginally Green Tourists	Total
Government Officials	26.3	17.3	44.7	32.5
Private Sector Employee	5.3	17.5	31.6	21.2
CEOs and Techies	57.9	43.5	7.9	30.0
Self Employed	10.5	21.7	15.8	16.2
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 5 Chi-Square Test: Employment and Category of Green Tourists

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.269[a]	6	.002
Likelihood Ratio	23.568	6	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.974	1	.026

VII. CONCLUSION

In view of emerging environmental concerns and climate change issues, tourism spots in many places in the world have been subject to different kinds of threats. Local people voice their concerns regarding the issues that over-tourism has caused to their existence and livelihood. Against this background, there has been a growing demand that tourism must be in line with the practice of keeping environmental quality intact. This has led to the emergence of concepts and practices like green tourism. However, it has been well acknowledged that for green tourism to be effective, the tourists visiting the places must follow certain green practices. This paper has made an attempt to analyse the extent to which tourist visiting places in the Wayanad district

of Kerala, India, have been 'green' in their attitude. The present study reveals that only 24 per cent of the tourists are Fully Fledged Green Tourists (tourists satisfying the majority of expected green behaviours considered in the study) whereas 29 per cent and 47 per cent are moderately and marginally green tourists respectively. Most worrying is the fact that the marginally green tourists appear to be the highest in percentage. This cements the argument that the tourists visiting resorts and tourist places need to be further greener in their behaviour and attitude. It is evident from the study that the staff including managerial staff at different levels are found to be having 'acceptable' green behaviour in their attitude towards the guests. However, exceptionally good green behaviour is rarely found among the staff. The study also shows that the job profile of people has an influence on their degree of green behaviour.

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