

# Community-Based Tourism Enterprises in Kerala: A Case Study of Kumarakom

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**Area of the Paper:** Business Management

**Type of the Paper:** Research Case Study.

**Type of Review:** Peer Reviewed as per [C|O|P|E|](#) guidance.

**Indexed In:** OpenAIRE.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10440824>

**Google Scholar Citation:** [IJCSBE](#)

## How to Cite this Paper:

Dhanya, K. M. & Ganesh Bhat, S. (2023). Community Based Tourism Enterprises in Kerala: A Case Study of Kumarakom. *International Journal of Case Studies in Business, IT, and Education (IJCSBE)*, 7(4), 459-473. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10440824>

**International Journal of Case Studies in Business, IT and Education (IJCSBE)**

A Refereed International Journal of Srinivas University, India.

Crossref DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47992/IJCSBE.2581.6942.0331>

Paper Submission: 16/07/2023

Paper Publication: 30/12/2023

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## Community Based Tourism Enterprises in Kerala: A Case Study of Kumarakom

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** *The purpose of this case study is to apply Dr Anna Maria Peredo and Dr James J. Chrisman's model of community-based enterprises to assess the success of community-based tourism enterprises in Kumarakom, Kerala. Through a qualitative analysis of primary and secondary data, this study aims to evaluate the extent to which community ownership and control, social mission and values, economic viability, and management and governance are present in the tourism initiatives studied, and how they contribute to the success of those initiatives. The findings of this study could help inform policy decisions and support the development of sustainable tourism practices that benefit local communities and preserve the environment.*

**Scope of the study:** *This study will focus on community-based tourism enterprises in Kumarakom, Kerala, and their adherence to the conceptual framework put forward by Dr Anna Maria Peredo and Dr James J. Chrisman's model of community-based enterprises. The study will include a review of relevant literature on community-based tourism and sustainable tourism development, as well as primary data collection through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders involved in the tourism initiatives, such as community members, government officials, and tourism operators.*

**Methodology:** *This research employs a case study approach to analyse the role of community-based tourism in the socio-economic development of Kumarakom, using the Dr Anna Maria Peredo and Dr James J. Chrisman model of Community-based Enterprises as a theoretical framework. A list of local businesses involved in tourism was created, considering those owned and managed by members of the local community. The assistance of tourist entrepreneurs in Kumarakom helped to identify such enterprises. Two types of questionnaires were administered to gather data: one aimed at local businesses and the other at tourists. Information was also gathered through personal meetings with authorities from the central and state tourist offices, the irrigation department, local community members, and industrial stakeholders. Data was analysed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, with the thematic analysis used for qualitative data and descriptive statistics used for quantitative data. In this study, ethical guidelines were followed to make sure that participants were informed about the study and their information was kept confidential. The study aimed to minimize harm and maximize benefits to the community by involving them in the research process and disseminating findings to relevant stakeholders.*

**Design:** *Tourists, the local communities, and Responsible Tourism-Mission (RT-M) units were chosen as the case study's group. The convenience sample technique was used, and survey participants who were willing to provide feedback were addressed. The information was gathered using a structured questionnaire like, what is the state of the art of knowledge on community-based tourism as well as community-based enterprises and the gaps in the current knowledge, what are the key factors that determine the success or failure of CBT in the rural*

areas of Kumarakom, what are the perceptions of local rural communities in Kumarakom on the role of CBT and CBE. This information was gathered from the study's group. In addition, the secondary data sources include articles, journals, the internet, and published survey reports.

**Findings:** *The study indicates that tourists prefer community-based tourism because they believe it can boost local economies and create job opportunities. This case study highlights the impact of community-based tourism initiatives on infrastructure, employment opportunities, and living standards of local citizens in villages, revealing a significant positive effect on the community. Furthermore, community-based tourism initiatives have transformed tourist perceptions of customs, culture, and ethnicity. Regulations are necessary to balance the positive benefits of community-based tourism on communities and tourists' perceptions of the town and its resources, enabling service providers to continue their sustainable expansion in the future.*

**Value:** *This study provides insights into local perceptions of community-based tourism and its role in local tourism and community development. The findings offer opportunities for further research in this area.*

**Paper Type:** *Case study-based Research Analysis*

**Keywords:** Community-based tourism development, Community-based enterprises, Social Entrepreneurs, Sustainable Development, Kumarakom, Responsible tourism, Economic Sustainability.

## 1. INTRODUCTION :

Kerala was the first Indian state to encourage tourism as a business venture. The State's 'Tourism Vision 2025' envisions a long-term tourist boom focused on backwaters, eco-tourism, and naturopathy. "Kerala - God's Own Country," the tourism slogan of Kerala, became the inaugural trademark registered with the Government of India. State government tourism expenditure in India has been among the highest in the country, exceeding the national average. Its tourism expenditures account for 1.27 percent of total state spending, contrasted to 0.49 percent nationally. Tourism accounts for 10% of Kerala's GDP and around 23.5 percent of overall employment in the state. As a result, tourism was highlighted as a substantial economic growth option. In the late 1980s, this acknowledgment sparked a flurry of tourist development and promotional activity (Kerala State Planning Board (2011). [1]).

In recent years, the concept of community-based tourism has gained prominence in development debates. Community-Based Tourism emphasizes the advancement of local communities and grants residents significant involvement and control in its establishment and maintenance, ensuring that most of the benefits stay within the community (Blackstock (2005). [2]). Local inhabitants share their surroundings and way of life with guests through this type of tourism, increasing local revenue and boosting local economies (George (2010). [3]). A solid community-based tourism strategy collaborates with pre-existing community programmes, hires community leaders, and boosts local businesses (Kibicho (2008). [4]). In terms of CBT, the public and private cooperation fundamentally allows the creation of a long-term business connection between a service provider and a local community (SLi & Yang (2021). [5]).

## 2. COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM :

Community-based tourism refers to a form of tourism that places emphasis on the progress of local communities, enabling the active involvement and participation of residents in its planning and management. The objective to ensure that most of the benefits that generated by tourism activities are retained within the community itself. When done properly, it has the potential to reduce the negative impacts of tourism while also creating cash, diversifying the economy, preserving culture, protecting the environment, and offering educational opportunities for youngsters. Consequently, the community has gained empowerment to pursue their village development objectives. Through this form of tourism, known as community-based tourism, residents share their environment and way of life with visitors, resulting in community-based tourism enables communities to actively participate in the modern global economy while preserving their sustainable livelihoods. Activities such as festivals, homestays, and the

creation of artisanal goods contribute to this shared experience. A successful community-based tourism approach involves collaboration with existing community programs, the involvement of community leaders, and the prioritisation of local employment opportunities. This ensures that the money generated by tourism remains within the community, maximizing local economic benefits. In the context of community-based tourism, public-private cooperation plays a crucial role in establishing a long-term commercial partnership between service providers and local communities. It is a collaborative enterprise for the provision of infrastructure or services that, via the most effective allocation of resources, risks, and rewards, best serves clearly defined public requirements. It brings together and leverages the capabilities of all three parties: the community, the private partner, and the public sector.

### **3. COMMUNITY-BASED ENTERPRISES :**

"Community-Based Enterprise" (CBE) is defined by researchers as a community that works corporately as both an entrepreneur and a business in the interest of the greater good. To create and run a new business within its current social structure, a community must therefore exercise entrepreneurialism. CBEs are also managed and operated to achieve a community's economic and social goals in a way that results in long-term individual and societal benefits. We believe that CBE could promote long-term local development. Generally, conventional ideas of entrepreneurship and economic development don't seem to capture the essential elements of foraying into underserved populations like indigenous communities in developing nations. Similarly, there are resource and infrastructural gaps between developed and undeveloped areas that may go overlooked by traditional entrepreneurial methods. Finally, entrepreneurship theory holds that enterprises are formed by an entrepreneur who works alone or with a small group of people.

The form of entrepreneurial activity is determined by previously acquired talents and knowledge (Ensley et al., 2000). [6]. CBEs frequently have dual objectives. The communities creating CBEs emphasize the necessity of achieving social, economic, environmental, and cultural goals all at once, which is another important point to recognize. Several communities trapped in a cycle of poverty lack access to social and economic resources that could stop or reverse the trend, which leads to the convergence of these goals. The different needs of the people in their founding communities must also be recognized by CBEs (Peredo & Chrisman (2006). [7]).

### **4. COMMUNITY BASED ENTERPRISES MODEL BY ANNA MARIA PEREDO AND JAMES J. CHRISMAN :**

The community-based enterprises model developed by Prof. Anna Maria Peredo from University of Victoria and Prof. James J. Chrisman from Mississippi State University and University of Alberta, is a business model that emphasizes the involvement and empowerment of local communities in economic development activities. The model is built on the idea that communities are better positioned to identify and address their economic needs and challenges, and that by engaging in enterprise activities, they can achieve greater economic self-reliance and sustainability. According to the conceptual framework they have put forward in this model, there are certain conditions, characteristics and economic conduct associated with Community Based Enterprises.

#### **4.1 Conditions for Community Based Enterprises:**

##### **(1) Economic or social stress trigger:**

Community-based enterprises (CBEs) often emerge in response to economic crises, social disintegration, environmental degradation, post-war reconstruction, and large business volatility. A threat to the sustainability of a community's way of life is often the trigger for developing a CBE.

##### **(2) Incremental Learning:**

CBEs are the result of a process grounded in collective experience and incremental learning. The emergence of CBEs draws deeply on local resources in tradition and culture. The learning process of developing CBEs is ongoing, with knowledge and skills being accumulated over time through experimentation, trial and error, and feedback.

##### **(3) Social Capital:**

CBEs are often established in areas with little access to material resources and depend on social capital to address substantive everyday needs. Social capital allows CBEs to pool resources, coordinate actions, and create safety nets for individual community members.

#### **(4) Community Size:**

Communities with a medium-sized population have a higher likelihood of experiencing CBEs than those with extremely small or very big populations. This is because moderate-sized communities tend to have a critical mass of people who are committed to the enterprise and have the necessary skills, knowledge, and social capital to make it work. In contrast, very small communities may lack the necessary resources, while very large communities may face challenges in coordinating collective action.

### **4.2 Characteristics of Community Based Enterprises:**

#### **(1) Available community skills:**

The nature of the entrepreneurial activity is influenced by previously acquired skills and expertise (Ensley et al., 2000). [6]). CBEs' economic activities, such as farming, mining, trading, handicrafts, and so forth, are often tied to the sort of talents and expertise accumulated by local people prior to the establishment of the CBE. Some of these abilities, such as forestry, livestock, and crop management, are founded on common ancestral knowledge, whilst others have been created via the experiences of people working outside the community (e.g., in services or mining). Before venturing, skills and resources obtained are significant components that both boost the likelihood of venture success and give a framework for the search for opportunity (Minniti & Bygrave (1999). [8]). The ability of a community to blend and adapt traditional and contemporary skills, experiences, cooperative practices, and values in a creative manner plays a crucial role in the establishment and operation of a community-based enterprise (CBE). As the community itself acts as the entrepreneur, the specific type of venture undertaken by a CBE is often influenced by the community's existing skills, trades, and resources, as well as their perceived needs and opportunities (Peredo & Chrisman (2006). [7]).

#### **(2) A multiplicity of goals:**

Community-Based Enterprises (CBEs) place importance on the simultaneous achievement of social, economic, environmental, and cultural objectives (Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998). [9]). The variety of goals within CBEs reflects the range of local needs, which not only enables constructive local development but also requires the fulfilment of these needs for resource exchange and combinations to take place (Lyons (2002). [10]). CBEs primarily prioritize profits in relations to their instrumental effectiveness in attaining other community objectives. These enterprises emerge to enhance the sustainability and well-being of the community through economic methods (Dangi & Jamal (2016). [11]). CBEs have core objectives centred around sustainability, self-reliance, and enhancing community life through income-generating opportunities, access to social services, and the promotion of cultural activities. Achieving these objectives brings added value to the economic circumstances and revitalising isolated villages (Peredo & Chrisman (2006). [7]).

#### **(3) Community participation:**

Community participation is a vital characteristic of Community-Based Enterprises (CBEs) (Hall & Hickman (2002). [12]). It is crucial to foster effective and creative forms of community participation in decision making to ensure the long-term sustainability of CBEs (Boyce (2002). [13]). Grassroots engagement plays a significant role in CBEs, as it reflects the endogenous nature of these enterprises (Peredo & Chrisman (2006). [7]). Through community engagement, local people facing poverty can address various economic and social challenges while also enhancing their sense of ownership (Kapalus (2002). [14]), (Bendick & Egan (1995). [15]).

The governance structure of CBEs often aligns with the community's traditional decision-making processes, such as community assemblies, which are democratic and hold members accountable (Peredo & Chrisman (2006). [7]). As CBEs expand in size, they may require more formal administrative systems, but they can still maintain a coexistence with traditional ways of life rooted in cooperation (Peredo & Chrisman (2006). [7]). Balancing individual and collective goals within a CBE can be a common challenge, but frequent and inclusive community assemblies can help minimize opportunistic behaviour (Peredo & Chrisman (2006). [7]).

CBEs exhibit flexibility in adapting to the realities and demands of the market economy, all the while incorporating and preserving cultural traditions (Peredo & Chrisman (2006). [7]). They are viewed as naturally formed social and economic entities that cater to market demands while preserving local cultural values (Peredo (2001). [16]). The practice of holding regular and comprehensive community assemblies, derived from community history, instils a sense of ongoing responsibility among elected

officials. These representatives are directly accountable to the community, reducing the likelihood of unnoticed opportunistic activities (Peredo & Chrisman (2006). [7]).

## **5. OBJECTIVES OF THE CASE STUDY :**

The primary purpose of the study is to assess how the local community and enterprises contributes to community based responsible tourism in Kumarakom. In doing so, the study aims to highlight:

- (1) the potential and capabilities of Kumarakom as a tourist destination,
- (2) the level of participation of community in tourism, and
- (3) Evaluation of the Community Based Enterprises (CBE) with respect to the Community Based Tourism (CBT) in Kumarakom.

## **6. KUMARAKOM DESTINATION PROFILE :**

### **6.1 Geography and Demography:**

Kumarakom is part of a group of islands in the Kuttanadu region, known as the "rice bowl of Kerala," located approximately 14 kilometers from Kottayam Town in Kerala (Kerala Tourism (2022). [17]). These islands are situated along the banks of Vembanad Lake, the longest lake in India, and designated as the second largest Ramsar Wetland after the Sundarbans in West Bengal (Kerala Tourism (2022). [17]). The village covers an area of 51.67 square kilometers and falls under the local government administration of the Kumarakom Grama Panchayath. With a population of approximately 23,000 residents and 5,120 households, Kumarakom offers a tropical wet climate characterized by pleasant and enjoyable weather throughout the year, with temperature variations ranging from a minimum of 22 to a maximum of 34 degrees Celsius (Shyamal (2008). [18]). Visitors to the village are enchanted by its scenic waterscapes and beautiful mangrove forests (Kerala Tourism (2022). [17]).

### **6.2 Ecology:**

Being a wetland, Kumarakom houses a diverse variety of flora and fauna. The area is known for its rich birdlife, serving as a natural habitat for various species of local and migratory birds. In fact, it is designated as a bird sanctuary and protected under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. The Vembanadu Lake, which surrounds Kumarakom, is home to over 100 species of fishes and aquatic creatures, including Shark catfish, Pearl Spot ("Karimeen"), Shrimps, and Tiger Shrimps. Black clams can also be found near the lake shore, and shell mining of black clams is a significant livelihood activity for women in Kumarakom. The fertile land in the region supports various agricultural activities, including paddy cultivation, rubber and coffee plantation, and horticulture such as Banana, Mango, Jackfruit, and coconut. This agricultural productivity has earned Kuttanadu the reputation of being the rice bowl of Kerala (Kerala Tourism (2022). [17]).

### **6.3 Cultural heritage:**

The communities living in the region share communal harmony and peace. The village is also considered as a destination for pilgrimage and festivities. Famous St. John the Baptist church, the thousand-year-old Thazhathangady Jumma Masjid (Mosque) and Sree Kumaramangalam Subramanyaswamy Temple is in Kumarakom. The preserved architectures from the period of both the colonial rule and Travancore Kings rule are still intact at the site. The famous Booker prize winning, "The God of Small Things" novel by Arundhati Roy, depicts the cultural realities of this region, her work attracts people from all over the world to this small paradise. The harvest festivals and Onam, Kathakali (traditional art form), Village life experience, annual Boat race are typical in the itineraries of tourists to Kumarakom (Sudheer & Cherthala (2015). [19]).

### **6.4 Economy:**

The main economic activities are based on Agriculture, Fishing and Tourism. More than half of the indigenous community are involved in Tourism sector both directly and indirectly. The Tourism sector significantly contributes to the State's revenue and image all over the world.

## **7. TOURISM POTENTIAL OF KUMARAKOM :**

Kumarakom has a lot to offer to satisfy different tastes of visitors. The major attraction involve:

- 1) waterscape tourism – Backwater and Houseboating
- 2) Bird Sanctuary and Eco tourism - mangroves
- 3) Food tourism -Local and exotic cuisines of Kerala
- 4) Cultural tourism- festivities and celebrations and heritage exploration

- 5) Agriculturally based tourism- Fishing, Horticulture, Poultry
- 6) Pilgrimage
- 7) Resort and Ayurveda tourism

The easy transport access to the destination is a great advantage for tourists. The nearest International Airport in Cochin is only 80 kms away, just two hours' drive from the airport. Nearby railway station and 24/7 State transport bus access is also available. The moderate and pleasant weather conditions would complement the beauty of the destination. It is said that there is a surge in visitors during the November to March period. According to the 2019, Tourism statistic report by the Kerala government, there were 50,1247 domestic tourists and 49,837 foreign tourists to Kumarakom in 2019. There was a total of 58,178 foreign tourists to Kottayam district in 2019. Out of which 49,837 visited Kumarakom, which means more than 85% of those foreigners who came to Kottayam district, chose it from their itinerary. This also indicates the capability and potential of Kumarakom tourist sector. These figures indicate that Kumarakom is a much-favoured tourists' destination among both domestic and international visitors to Kerala (Keralatourism.org (2022). [20]).

With significant touristic activities there comes an equivalent demand for resources to sustain the existing levels and growth in the sector. The demand for essential resources such as food, water and accommodation increase as the influx of visitors grows. Sufficient resource mapping, planning and allocation is required in this aspect to meet the needs of the visitors to the destination. Any such demand should be met sustainably and in a responsible manner, without causing any ecological imbalances. Enhancement of agricultural production, conversion of unused ponds and water bodies into use and optimal land planning and allocation for infrastructures are required. National Wetland Conservation and Management Programme in its report found that besides the Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary, the Vembanadu lake has no other notable flora or fauna; instead, it is densely overgrown with water hyacinth. The report suggests that the relevant authority clean the lake on a regular basis and plant mangroves. The report also recommends introducing new fish species to the lake (National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) (2022). [21]).

Land planning and creation raises a serious concern about the Land reclamation, which can threaten the ecology of Kumarakom. Land reclamation rules should be strictly administered in the ecotone regions in Kumarakom. Tourism has the potential to bolster other businesses and industries in Kumarakom. It can help rejuvenate agricultural, hospitality, transport, food & beverage, and culture industries (Sebastian & Rajagopalan (2009). [22]). There would be sufficient opportunities for entrepreneurs' activities. Shell mining has huge scope for such entrepreneurial ventures. Kumarakom now is favoured more for Destination weddings, recently such wedding management businesses have marked their presence in the region.

Like anywhere else in the world, tourism helps generate more employment, gender empowerment, poverty alleviation and heritage preservation. At the same time, tourism sector thrives on the consensus and cooperation of the local communities, private sector, and the government in that region. So, it is imperative that these three parties share mutual interests and work together to bring social, cultural, and economic benefits into a region.

## **8. COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM (CBT) IN KUMARAKOM :**

Kumarakom's community-based tourism initiatives emerged as a response to the socio-economic stress and environmental degradation caused by unsustainable tourism practices in the region (Babu (2018). [23]). The lack of regulation in the tourism industry and unchecked growth of resorts and houseboats led to environmental degradation, social conflicts, and economic inequalities in the local community. The government and the local people recognized the need for a sustainable and community-based approach to tourism to address these issues. As a result, The Responsible Tourism Mission (RT-M), a government-led initiative launched in 2007, aims to promote tourism that is responsible, sustainable, and ethical (Babu (2018). [23]).

RT-M has been instrumental in creating a platform for local communities to participate in tourism activities, making it a key driver of community-based tourism in Kumarakom. However, RT-M is not the only community-based tourism initiative in the area. Private resort owners and residents have also established micro and medium-sized tourism enterprises that contribute to the development of the community, including homestays, cultural tours, village walks, kayaking, birdwatching, and fishing tours.

The Kudumbashree initiative, an all-women self-help group, has also played a crucial role in the development of community-based tourism in Kumarakom. The organization provides training, financial support, and market linkages to women entrepreneurs involved in tourism activities, enabling them to contribute to the local economy and become self-sufficient. In recent years, community-based tourism in Kumarakom has generated significant revenue and employment opportunities, contributing to the overall development of the region (Kudumbashree (2022). [24]).

The Responsible Tourism initiative in Kerala is based on the "triple-bottom-line" concept, which prioritizes social, economic, and environmental factors. RT-M aims to develop rural and local communities, alleviate poverty, and empower women in the destination. Since its inception, RT-M has implemented multiple projects in collaboration with the local community and private players, fostering a sense of mutualism and cooperation (Chettiparamb & Kokkranikal (2012). [25]). At the state level, the State Level Responsible Tourism Committee (SLRTC) is responsible for implementing Responsible Tourism in four destinations, including Kumarakom. The Kumarakom Panchayath president represents the destination in the SLRTC and heads the District Level Responsible Tourism Committee (DLRTC) at the destination level. The meetings, plans, and projects are implemented with a triple-bottom-line approach.

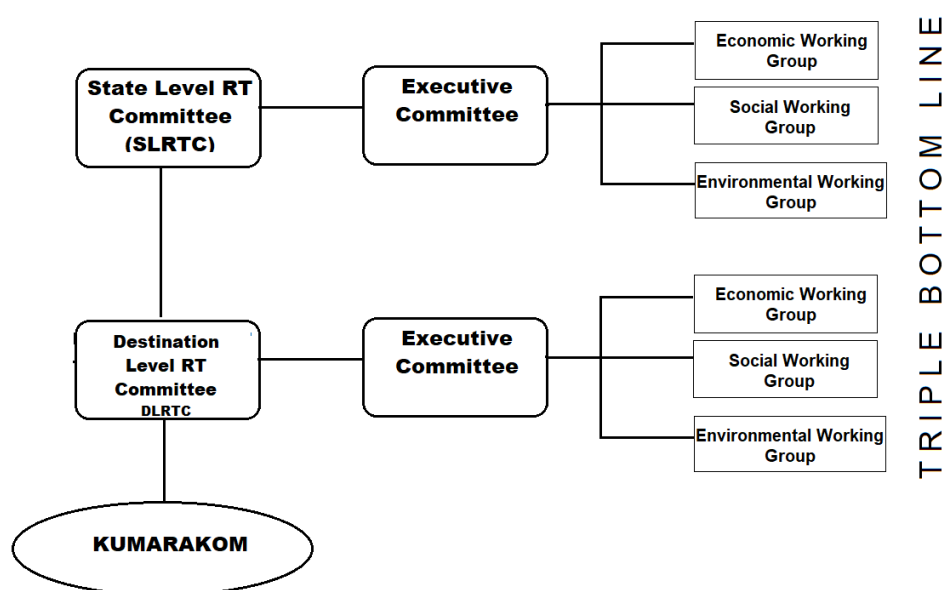


Fig. 1: Responsible Tourism Mission (RT-M) Model hierarchy in Kumarakom.

Kumarakom's Responsible Tourism Project was recognized with the National Tourism Award in 2008-09, and the initiative continues to achieve great milestones through the implementation of innovative projects (Kerala Tourism (2022). [17]).

### 8.1 Community involvement in RT-M:

The success of the RT-M is attributed to community participation, particularly the pivotal role of Kudumbasree, a gender-based community organization under the State's Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM) or the State's Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM). Along with Kudumbasree, other communities such as farmers, cultural groups, artisans, and self-help groups like Purusha swayam sangha join hands in implementing the RT-M, while private investors in the hotel and resort industries have also played a significant role in developing private infrastructure and tourist facilities in Kumarakom. These facilities are a key factor in retaining tourists (Kerala Tourism (2022). [17]).

Under the RT-M, local communities or private groups/individuals can register with the Responsible Tourism Mission Units (RT-M units) and involve themselves in running businesses related to boosting responsible tourism. To date, there are more than 3,500 registered RT-M units, with the number of members in each unit ranging from a few individuals to over 250. According to RT-M estimates in 2019, the annual income of all units was around Rs. 5.5 crores (The Hindu (2019). [26]).



Two farmer's associations involved in the RT-M are "Karshaka Samithis" and "Karshaka Koottayama," comprising over 600 farmers and agriculturists who form the primary link in the supply chain for the RT-M. However, production enhancement is needed since the products sold to hotels and restaurants are not sufficient to cater to the required volume. Often, the women powered Kudumbasree group helps farmers financially and acts as the middleman between them and the hotels and restaurants, demonstrating a high level of cooperation and coordination among different groups. In total, about 2,000 households are directly involved in RT-M activities (Kerala Tourism (2022). [17]).

The hotel and resort chains are the largest players in Kumarakom, making huge profits but leveraging them on community enterprises in the area. The hotel industry has contributed to the land for the panchayat's water supply scheme and skill development training programs for drivers and other skilled workers in the Kumarakom tourism sector, exemplifying public-private cooperation (Ranjith (2021). [27]).

Kudumbasree has registered around 180 RT-M Units in Kumarakom, with an average strength of 30 members in each unit. Local vegetable farming had served as a Kickstarter for the RT program from the initial days. Kudumbasree participated in the production, procurement, supply, and transportation of those farm produces (Manoj (2020). [28]). The organization soon expanded into other businesses, including handicrafts, processed food, regional snacks, paper bags, and rice powder, all of which find a market in the well-known tourist attraction. These small businesses and the tourism industry have helped the local populace flourish (Kerala Tourism (2022). [17]).

On approximately 300 acres, the Kumarakom Kudumbasree units produced 3,825 quintals of paddy in 2010, with each acre producing around 17 quintals. The paddy was sold for about Rs. 46 lakhs after setting aside adequate money for the needs of the concerned ladies. The organization also practiced eco-friendly approaches by converting more than 60 acres of fallow land to cultivate paddy (Kerala Tourism (2022). [17]).

## **9. COMMUNITY BASED ENTERPRISES ASSOCIATED WITH COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM IN KUMARAKOM :**

When following a Community Based Tourism (CBT) through Community Based Enterprises (CBEs), it is important to note that it is not about profit creation, the prime motivation behind running such CBEs is about fulfilling a broader range of community goals like employment generation, poverty eradication, better living standards, environmental and cultural preservation, and finally reducing the need for migration of residents for better living standards (Udayakumar (2015). [29]). The following are some Responsible Tourism mission registered community-based enterprises.

### **(1) Suvarna cultural unit:**

The group, which consisted of housewives from the area, was formed to provide Thiruvathira, Kolkali, and Vattakkali dances for tourists to enjoy. Painting and craft-related units were also encouraged by Kudumbasree.

### **(2) Tender Coconut business unit:**

This unit involves the production and sale of tender coconuts, with the involvement of local farmers and entrepreneurs. The unit provides a refreshing drink for tourists while also promoting sustainable agriculture practices in the region.

### **(3) Paper Bag business unit:**

The paper bag business unit engages in the manufacture and sale of eco-friendly paper bags made from locally sourced materials. This unit is run by a group of women entrepreneurs from the local community.

### **(4) Shinkari melam unit:**

Women and children choreographed themselves into groups who performs the traditional Chenda Melam (percussion instrument) orchestra for entertaining tourists in homestays, hotels, and resorts. Kudumbasree organises the needed training programmes for nurturing such talents among their members and fosters such ventures.

### **(5) Coconut coir unit:**

This unit engages in the production and sale of coconut coir products such as mats and ropes, with the involvement of local farmers and artisans. The unit provides a sustainable livelihood for the community while also promoting the use of natural materials.

### **(6) Plantain leaves unit:**

The plantain leaves unit engages in the production and sale of plantain leaves, which are widely used as plates for traditional meals in Kerala. This unit is run by a group of women entrepreneurs from the local community.

**(7) Samrudhi ethnic food restaurant unit:**

Is an ethnic food restaurant, that is being run by eight women form Kumarakom Kudumbashree. The restaurant was setup in April 2011. The women were trained under “Café Kudumbasree” training program under the Kudumbasree in how to run the establishment. This venture in 2019 won the Gold Award of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) for successfully running the venture and for inspiring women empowerment through such tourism ventures (The Hindu (2019). [26]).

**(8) Milk unit:**

The milk unit involves the production and sale of milk from locally reared cows, with the involvement of local farmers. This unit provides a source of fresh and healthy milk for tourists while also promoting the dairy industry in the region.

**(9) Coconut unit:**

The coconut unit participates in the production and sale of various coconut products, such as coconut oil and coconut-based sweets. A group of local entrepreneurs and farmers run this unit.

**(10) Laundry unit:**

The laundry unit engages in the provision of laundry services for tourists, with the involvement of local entrepreneurs and workers. This unit provides a convenient service for tourists while also promoting the growth of the service sector in the region.

**(11) Parisara Sevika Unit:**

Few members of Kudumbasree, formed a destination cleaning group. They take care of the waste collection from the neighbourhood and helps in keeping the Kumarakom clean. The group has started operating biogas plants or vermicompost plants. In doing so they are committed in fulfilling their responsibilities towards the environment and society.

**(12) Tapioca business unit:**

The tapioca business unit engages in the production and sale of various tapioca-based snacks, with the involvement of local farmers and entrepreneurs. This unit provides a sustainable livelihood for the community while also promoting the use of local agricultural produce.

**(13) Auto rickshaw tour units:**

The auto rickshaw tour units engage in providing guided tours of the region to tourists, using locally sourced auto rickshaws and with the involvement of local entrepreneurs and drivers. This unit provides an authentic and sustainable tourism experience.

The success of running a CBE depends on how much it adheres to its own core features and objectives (Mathew (2019). [30]). The importance of social capital and social networking is crucial in the success of a CBE. While running a CBE, the orientation of community should be in line with the needs of the community.

**10. ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM ENTERPRISES IN KUMARAKOM BASED ON ANNA MARIA PEREDO AND JAMES J. CHRISMAN CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF COMMUNITY BASED ENTERPRISES :**

**10.1 Case review of Kumarakom with respect to Characteristic features of Community Based Enterprises (CBEs):**

**Table 1:** Characteristic features-based analysis of CBEs in Kumarakom

Characteristic Features of CBEs	Community Based Enterprise Activities in Kumarakom	Remark
1. Community Participation	Karshaka Samithi, Karshaka koottayama, Purusha Swayam Sangham, Kudumbashree.  Village life experience homestays	<b>Community embeddedness:</b> These are community organizations and groups which shows their embeddedness and involvement in motivating different communities in Kumarakom.

	<p>Around two thousand households are directly involved in RT-M units</p>	<p><b>Grassroot participation:</b> All these activities which are done at the very bottom level of the RT-M increases its beauty.</p> <p><b>Social capital and social networking:</b> These many people in different RT-M units are the backbone of this mission.</p>
<p><b>2. Multiplicity of Goals</b></p>	<p>Agriculture, various RT-M units, shell mining, tourism related services, hotel and resort industry, entrepreneurship opportunities</p> <p>Ethnic food restaurants, Suvarna RT-M cultural unit, Shinkari Melam units</p> <p>Bird Sanctuary, mangrove creations, lake cleaning, water body rejuvenation, waste management, plastic free zone initiatives</p>	<p><b>Social and Infrastructure Development:</b> women empowerment, clean water and reliable power source, road development and better accessibility. Since the inception of the RT-M in 2008, Kumarakom and its residents have witnessed continuous social developments at the destination.</p> <p><b>Cultural preservation:</b> Their efforts to promote their culture in front of visitors delights and excites both foreigners and the domestic visitors. And there by there is a transmissibility of culture.</p> <p><b>Employment and income generation:</b> Employment and income generation through RT-M has helped people in Kumarakom in poverty alleviation and livelihood creation, and hence reduced migration out of Kumarkom.</p> <p><b>Environmental preservation:</b> RT-M and its enterprises strictly adheres to eco-friendly and sustainable practices.</p>
<p><b>3. Available community skills</b></p>	<p>Homestead farming, shell mining, clay pottery, Coir making, souvenir making, fishing, cultural arts school performances units, Ayurveda massage therapy units.</p>	<p><b>Venture creations:</b> Availability of such community skills in Kumarakom led to creation and adoption of associated business activities that</p>

		leverages these skills, experience, and knowledge.
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## 10.2 Case review of Kumarakom with respect to the Conditions for Community Based Enterprises (CBEs):

**Table 2:** Conditions based analysis of CBE's in Kumarakom

Conditions for CBEs	REMARK
1. <b>Social / Economic stress trigger</b>	Kumarakom, like many other rural areas, faced economic stress due to the decline of traditional occupations such as agriculture and fishing. This led to a situation where the local communities had to find alternative sources of income. Community-based tourism enterprises were identified as a viable option for sustainable livelihoods, and several initiatives were taken to promote this sector.
2. <b>Incremental Learning</b>	The community of Kumarakom has engaged in incremental learning over time to build its capacity in the tourism industry. Through trial and error, they have developed skills in activities such as homestays, village walks, cultural performances, and other tourism-related services. Kudumbashree and RT-M have played a significant role in providing training and capacity building to the local community in Kumarakom. They have helped to develop the necessary skills and knowledge needed to engage in community-based tourism enterprises, such as homestays, shell mining, coir making, and fishing. This incremental learning has been crucial in enabling the community to develop sustainable tourism practices and generate income while preserving their culture and environment.
3. <b>Social Capital</b>	Kumarakom has a strong social capital that has contributed to the growth and development of community-based tourism enterprises. The community has a deep understanding of its natural and cultural resources, and this knowledge has been leveraged to develop unique tourism products. The social capital of Kumarakom has also enabled the development of strong networks and partnerships with external agencies, which has been crucial in the growth and sustainability of community-based tourism.
4. <b>Community Size</b>	The community-based tourism enterprises in Kumarakom are characterized by a small community size. This is because the enterprises are typically owned and operated by local families who have limited resources and capacity. However, these enterprises have been able to sustain themselves by offering unique and authentic experiences to tourists. The small size also ensures that the enterprises remain embedded within the community, and that the benefits of tourism are distributed more equitably.

## 11. CONCLUSIONS :

This case study of community-based tourism enterprises in Kumarakom exemplifies the success and impact of these initiatives in achieving sustainable and inclusive tourism development. The findings align with the principles of community-based enterprises as advocated by Anna Maria Peredo and James J. Chrisman. The community's embeddedness and active involvement, grassroots participation, social capital and networking, social and infrastructure development, cultural preservation, employment and income generation, environmental preservation, and venture creations have been key factors contributing to the positive outcomes.

Kumarakom's community-based tourism enterprises have brought significant social and economic changes, empowering local communities, particularly women, through income generation and poverty alleviation, reducing migration. The preservation of cultural heritage has enhanced tourism experiences and fostered mutual appreciation between visitors and the community.

Moreover, Kumarakom places great importance on taking care of the environment by following eco-friendly practices that protect its natural resources. They also value building connections and working together with external organizations to share knowledge and gather resources for tourism development. The success of Kumarakom's ventures is evident as they make good use of the skills, experiences, and knowledge within the community to create related business activities. Organizations like Kudumbashree and RT-M have been instrumental in supporting Kumarakom's continuous learning process, helping them develop the necessary skills to thrive in community-based tourism.

The case of Kumarakom serves as a model for other destinations aspiring to implement community-based tourism initiatives. By integrating social, economic, environmental, and cultural goals, Kumarakom has achieved sustainable tourism development that benefits both the local community and visitors. Overall, community-based tourism enterprises have proven to be a viable and impactful approach to foster inclusive growth, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship in Kumarakom.

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