



## **A Study on the Training and Development Programs for Improving Business Operations in the Field of Tourism and Hotel Areas Under Kerala Cooperative Tourism Sector**

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### **Abstract**

The tourism and hospitality industry in Kerala, India, has experienced significant growth in recent years, largely driven by the contributions of cooperative societies. However, the lack of adequate training and development programs has hindered these cooperatives' ability to deliver high-quality services and remain competitive. This research aims to investigate the importance of training and development in improving the performance of tourism and hospitality businesses within the Kerala Cooperative Tourism Sector. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. A total of 350 employees and 30 managers from various tourism cooperatives in Kerala participated in the survey to share their perspectives on current training practices, skill gaps, and the impact of training on job performance. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 industry experts and cooperative leaders to gain deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities related to training and development in the sector. The results reveal a significant positive relationship between the availability of training and employee performance, job satisfaction, and customer satisfaction. Nonetheless, the findings also highlight the shortcomings of existing training programs within the Kerala Cooperative Tourism Sector, as



many employees indicated a lack of adequate training opportunities and a misalignment between training content and job requirements.

**Keywords:** Tourism, hospitality, travel, training, development, Kerala cooperatives, employee performance, service quality, cooperative societies, human resource management, operation management

### **Introduction of Kerala Cooperative Tourism Sector**

The Kerala Cooperative Tourism Sector possesses significant potential for fostering sustainable tourism growth; however, various challenges have impeded its advancement. A primary concern for tourism cooperatives is the insufficient training and development programs available for their employees and members (Rajendran & Suresh, 2019). Numerous cooperatives find it difficult to equip their personnel with the essential skills and knowledge required to provide high-quality services and respond effectively to the evolving demands of the tourism sector (Nair & Rajan, 2020). This deficiency in skills has resulted in inconsistent service quality, diminished customer satisfaction, and a decline in the competitiveness of the cooperative tourism sector (Pradeep & Rajasenan, 2021).

The focus of this study is the inadequacy of training and development initiatives within the Kerala Cooperative Tourism Sector and its implications for the performance of tourism and hospitality enterprises. Although the significance of human resource development in the tourism industry is well acknowledged (Baum, 2015; Okumus et al., 2018), there exists a scarcity of research addressing the specific training requirements and challenges encountered by cooperative tourism organizations in developing economies such as India (Singh & Jamal, 2021).

The second section of the study presents findings regarding the current landscape of training and development practices within the cooperative tourism sector, drawing on descriptive statistics from survey data and qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups. This section features tables detailing the availability and frequency of training programs, along with the types of training offered. The third section conveys findings related to the perceived significance and effectiveness of training, utilizing both descriptive statistics from the survey data and qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups. This section includes tables illustrating the perceived importance and effectiveness of training, as well as excerpts from interviews and focus groups that highlight key themes and patterns..

### **Objective**

To assess the current state of training and development practices in the Kerala cooperative tourism sector



### **Hypothesis**

There is a significant positive relationship between the provision of training and development initiatives and employee performance in the Kerala cooperative tourism sector

### **Procedures and Findings**

The principal findings of the research underscored the notable prevalence and variety of training and development practices within the cooperative tourism sector. However, it also identified considerable gaps and challenges regarding the coverage, relevance, and effectiveness of these practices. The research presented compelling empirical evidence demonstrating the beneficial effects of training on various metrics of employee and organizational performance, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, service quality, customer satisfaction, and financial outcomes. Additionally, the study pinpointed several essential success factors and best practices for effective training and development in the cooperative tourism sector, such as strategic alignment, a participatory approach, contextualized content, blended learning methods, and a culture of continuous learning.

The implications derived from these findings indicate a pressing need for a more comprehensive, participatory, and sustainable approach to training and development within the cooperative tourism sector. This approach should involve the active engagement and empowerment of all stakeholders, contributing to the economic, social, and environmental objectives of the sector and the region. The study offered valuable insights and recommendations that can inform and guide future research, policy-making, and practices in this domain, ultimately fostering a more resilient, competitive, and responsible tourism industry in Kerala and beyond. The research indicated that cooperative practices are relatively widespread in Kerala, with most enterprises offering some form of training to their employees. Nonetheless, there is considerable variation in the frequency, duration, and types of training provided across different enterprises, revealing significant gaps and limitations in the coverage and relevance of training offerings. The most frequently provided training types include technical skills, customer service, and safety and security, while training in soft skills, leadership, and diversity is less common.

The significance and perceived effectiveness of training are generally regarded as high by both employees and managers, with a majority acknowledging the essential role that training plays in enhancing their skills, knowledge, and competencies, as well as in boosting job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and overall job performance. Nonetheless, certain challenges and limitations have been identified, including issues related to the relevance, applicability, follow-up, and evaluation of training content and outcomes. The research provided robust empirical evidence demonstrating the positive influence of training on various metrics of employee and organizational performance, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data and analyses. The



results indicated notable correlations between training participation and perceived effectiveness, as well as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, service quality, customer satisfaction, and financial performance, even when accounting for pertinent demographic and organizational variables.

Additionally, the study uncovered several obstacles and barriers to effective training and development within the cooperative tourism sector, such as limitations in resources, insufficient management support, employee-related challenges, issues with training design and delivery, and external environmental factors. These challenges underscore the necessity for a more collaborative, integrated, and sustainable approach to training and development, one that involves the engagement and support of all stakeholders and addresses the systemic and structural issues impacting the sector.

### **Demographic Profile of Respondents**

The survey comprised 350 employees and managers from various cooperative tourism enterprises located in the Kerala region, all of whom had been employed in their current organizations for a duration of 1 to 5 years. This indicates a relatively stable workforce within the cooperative tourism sector, with a considerable number of employees possessing several years of experience in their respective organizations. The sample encompasses a wide array of age groups, educational backgrounds, job roles, and lengths of service, reflecting the diverse characteristics and experiences present in the sector. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the sample may not fully represent all cooperative tourism enterprises in Kerala, as it is derived from a limited selection of organizations and locations. Additionally, the sample may be influenced by selection bias, as it includes only those employees and managers who were willing and available to take part in the survey. Notwithstanding these limitations, the demographic profile of the survey participants offers valuable context for interpreting the study's findings and evaluating the generalizability of the results to the broader population of employees and managers within the cooperative tourism sector in Kerala.

**Table 1: Demographic Information**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender		
Male	189	54%
Female	161	46%
Age		
18-24 years	56	16%
25-34 years	122	35%
35-44 years	116	33%
45-54 years	42	12%
55 years and above	14	4%



Education level		
Diploma or lower	63	18%
Bachelor degree	203	58%
Masters degree	70	20%
Doctoral degree	14	4%
Job position		
Front office	112	32%
Food and beverage	98	28%
House keeping	70	20%
Sales and marketing	42	12%
Management	28	8%
Tenure		
Less than 1 year	56	16%
1-5 years	189	54%
6-10 years	77	22%
More than 10 year	28	8%

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### **Current Status of Training and Development Practices**

In the current competitive landscape of the tourism industry, it is imperative that we maintain a workforce that is adequately trained and skilled. Training extends beyond merely enhancing individual capabilities; it is essential for fostering the overall capacity and resilience of our organization. This process enables us to respond effectively to evolving market dynamics, innovate our service offerings, and attract as well as retain top-tier talent. However, some participants have pointed out the challenges and limitations inherent in the existing training



programs within the cooperative tourism sector, particularly regarding their relevance and applicability to the specific needs and contexts of the enterprises and their employees.

The findings from the survey and qualitative data underscore the significant influence of training on employee performance within the cooperative tourism sector in Kerala. The correlation matrix illustrates the relationships among key variables associated with training and employee performance, derived from the survey data. Additionally, the results of the regression analysis reveal the impact of training on employee performance while controlling for demographic factors such as age, gender, education level, job role, and tenure. Research indicates that effective training contributes to enhanced customer satisfaction and improved financial outcomes. One manager articulated this perspective by stating that training should not be viewed merely as an expense but rather as an investment in our most valuable asset—our people. By offering regular and pertinent training programs, we are enhancing our organization's capacity to adapt to the evolving needs and expectations of our customers, thereby positioning ourselves competitively in the market. The benefits of our training investments are evident, manifesting as increased customer loyalty, favorable word-of-mouth, and enhanced revenue and profitability. Another employee emphasized the role of training in fostering innovation and continuous improvement within the cooperative enterprise.

They draw knowledge from the exemplary practices and experiences of other organizations, which we then adapt and implement within our own framework. Through ongoing training, we ensure that we remain informed about the latest trends and technologies in the tourism sector, allowing us to enhance and innovate our services and processes continuously. However, some participants highlighted the challenges and limitations present in the current training programs within the cooperative tourism sector. These include a misalignment between the training initiatives and the strategic goals of the organization, insufficient measurement and evaluation of training outcomes and impacts, and a lack of integration between training and other human resource management functions.

### **Challenges and Barriers to Training and Development**

Adopting a more strategic and cohesive approach to training and development is essential, accompanied by well-defined metrics and indicators to assess the impact and return on investment of our training initiatives. The survey results, along with qualitative data, strongly indicate the positive influence of training on organizational performance within the cooperative tourism sector in Kerala. The findings emphasize the critical role of training in ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of cooperative enterprises, highlighting the concrete advantages of training investments in areas such as service quality, customer satisfaction, and financial performance.





Nevertheless, the findings also identify several challenges and limitations associated with the current training programs in the sector. These include a misalignment with organizational strategy, insufficient measurement and evaluation of training outcomes, and a lack of integration with other human resource management functions. Such challenges highlight the necessity for a more strategic, integrated, and evidence-based approach to training and development in the cooperative tourism sector. This approach should prioritize alignment with organizational goals, robust measurement and evaluation of training outcomes, and integration with other human resource management functions, including performance management, compensation, and career development. Additional challenges include inadequate offline resources and infrastructure, low prioritization and commitment to support, resistance to change and innovation, poor communication and involvement, low employee motivation and engagement, high turnover and absenteeism, diversity and language barriers, lack of relevance and customization in training design and delivery, insufficient practical and hands-on learning opportunities, lack of follow-up and reinforcement, as well as external factors such as competition, technological advancements, and legal and regulatory requirements.

## **Conclusion**

Adopting a more strategic and cohesive approach to training and development is essential, accompanied by well-defined metrics and indicators to assess the impact and return on investment of our training initiatives. The survey results, along with qualitative data, strongly indicate the positive influence of training on organizational performance within the cooperative tourism sector in Kerala. The findings emphasize the critical role of training in ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of cooperative enterprises, highlighting the concrete advantages of training investments in areas such as service quality, customer satisfaction, and financial performance.

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