



Developing TOWS for Tourism Higher Education in Kerala Through SWOT Analysis

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Abstract: Tourism education plays a significant role in developing quality professionals in this sector. The present study aims to identify internal strengths, weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats for developing sustainable strategies towards tourism higher education in Kerala. It initially starts with identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in tourism higher education through a literature review. Subsequently, Delphi method was conducted on tourism experts for shortlisting strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that best suites tourism higher education in Kerala. Accordingly, the questionnaire consisting of 40 statements were framed and distributed amongst students, teachers, and industry to understand the ground reality. Random sampling method was used for conducting the survey. After the data mining process 150 responses were valid and considered for further data processing. Ranking method was used to analyse the SWOT analysis. The SWOT matrix so developed was used to generate TOWS matrix to evolve strategies for tourism higher education within the state. The results evidently indicate

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that although Kerala has strong strengths like high employability potential, presence of skill-based tourism courses, and industry-linked academic programs, there are also prominent weaknesses like the absence of government support, poor academia-industry linkage etc.

Keywords: Tourism Higher Education, Delphi method, SWOT, TOWS, Kerala

1. Introduction

Tourism education plays an important role in tourism and hospitality industry, which is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world. As tourism grows so quickly, it opens the way for numerous job opportunities for students and professionals (Mahindra, I et al, 2024). It covers key areas such as travel, destination planning and development, Tour coordination, tourism marketing and promotion, airport management, event coordination, and hospitality management. In the global scenario, educational institutions and universities offer tourism as a specialisation in their management and hospitality programs. Tourism students learn about various destinations, its history, policies, marketing and promotional strategies in the field of tourism. Such knowledge is significant for the people who are looking to build a successful career in tourism field (Daniel, et al, 2017). Tourism education has an important role to shape the competences and capabilities of those entering the tourism industry workforce. Tourism education goes beyond the acquisition of skills; it seeks to educate persons with intellectual depth, combining vocational competence with reflective abilities (Kumari, B., 2024).

Tourism education offers students a combination of theoretical and practical learning experiences that are highly valuable for those planning to enter the tourism and hospitality field. Tourism courses also include internship training in areas like tour operations, event planning, destination management, and the hospitality sector. Such practical exposure helps students build the necessary skills and abilities for a successful career in the tourism industry (Kumar, P. K. G. S., & Suklabaidya, P., 2021). Tourism education encourages a global outlook. Since tourism is a global industry, students learn about different cultural, social, economic, and political factors which impact tourism in various regions. This helps them understand the industry's diversity and prepares them to work effectively in a global environment. Tourism studies also focus on the economic and environmental effects of tourism. Understanding both the positive and negative impacts of tourism is important. Students can learn how tourism impact local communities, natural environments, and cultural sites (Winowatan, W. J., & PriciliaAnneke, J. W., 2023).

The present study aims to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and treats of tourism education in Kerala, India. In order to develop strategies, the researcher had categorized the related work into four headings of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). SWOT is an instrument that maximizes internal strengths and external opportunities while minimizing internal weaknesses and external threats (Hossain & Khanal, 2020). This paper focuses on methods that could be employed to improve the quality of tourism higher education in Kerala. Accordingly, in the present study, internal factor evaluation matrix (IFEM) and external factor evaluation matrix (EFEM) were used to

develop decision-making strategies. The study also aims to generate strategies using the TOWS matrix for improving tourism higher education in Kerala.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Tourism Higher Education

In the domestic and global scenario, the tourism sector provides employment to millions of people. Tourism industry requires professionals who are educated and trained to run hotels and restaurants, to develop and promote tour packages, to provide assistance to tourists, to arrange transportation that all contribute to a vibrant industry (Nimina et al, 2018). Tourism education creates human resources to develop tourism sectors in order to showcase tourism destinations (Malihah Elly, 2014). It aims to create level headed students with a positive outlook towards work and life. Educated youth with good attitudes enhance employability and provide skilled manpower as per the demands of the tourism industry. Thus higher education in tourism is significant to develop the competence of prospective employees and thus promote the tourism industry. Suherlan, H (2017) observed that the institution of tourism education is a significant factor to create competitiveness in tourism in order to realize the social and economic growth of the nation. Higher education in tourism is one of the most important subsectors of the multifaceted tourism phenomenon, and its manifestations can have a multi-level impact on the entire tourism educator community (Ayikoru, 2009). According to UNWTO, if specific education and training are offered, tourism education has the ability to increase customer loyalty as well as the competitiveness of tourism businesses and regions (Ayikoru, 2009). It is a process that adds efficiency and meaning to workers in tourism. Education in this sector will lead to the development of better tourism activities involving high content. The main purpose of tourism education is to produce high quality professionals that assist the industry and allied sectors that are capable of working at the cutting edge of modern management (Murugan, 2006). Tribe (2002) emphasised that tourism education will enable in balancing the demands of society and world at large and the demands of the tourism industry. Vocational tourism education is a systematic process which enables to educate workers, who are needed by every enterprise in the tourism sector, with necessary qualifications such as theoretical and practical, to their job and teach them other skills to do their jobs at high quality (Gok, 2017).

2. Research Methodology

Initially, the researcher had identified Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of Tourism Higher Education from the related literature. These were then shortlisted and reduced to twenty by taking suggestions from the panel of experts according to the Delphi technique. Further, these suggestions were developed as a questionnaire and taken to 150 respondents for further analysis.

3.1 Delphi method

According to Tavana, this method is used to generate the most accurate consensus from a group of experts on the subjects that could not be solved objectively (Tavana, 2011). The Delphi Technique aims to produce a thorough critical analysis and discussion. Delphi studies

have been instrumental in developing guidelines, criteria, solving the problems, and forecasting trends (Green, R. A., 2014). Initially, an expert panel was created by the researcher. Then in the panel, theoretical and practical experts were identified based on their prior experience and knowledge, which the researcher felt would effectively evaluate SWOT variables. Theoretical experts consisted of government tourism educators, whereas practical experts were from the industry related to government. As per the suggestions provided by the expert panel, the statements were refined and changed in accordance with the scenario of Kerala. In the first round, twenty statements of SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) dimensions were taken to the fifty experts who were requested to rank the items using the ranking method. In the first round, all statement averages were calculated based on rank

Table 1: Ranking of SWOT factors

Sr No.	Strengths	Mean score
1	The employability scope of fresh graduates is high (Raju, 2019)	7.92
2	Short term tourism courses such as airport management, hotel management, etc. are available at various levels of higher education (Boora, S.S, 2006)	5.72
3	Mahatma Gandhi University and Kannur university offer Ph.D. programs in Tourism; (Ramachandran, N, 2018)	0.58
4	The course helps in the acquisition of knowledge about various tourism resources and the recognition of tourism's potential as a career. (Bansal, S.P, 2006)	3.62
5	The tourism course is a powerful instrument to develop an individual's moral, cultural and spiritual values (Rodrigues Filipe e Melo, 2006).	0.82
6	Tourism degree develops professionalism & professional attitudes (Kunwar, R. R, 2013)	3.84
7	Highly committed and qualified educators;(R DulariQureshi, 2006),	1.24
8	A tourism degree offers industry subcategory specialization.	5.00
9	Students in tourism receive on-the-job training in a variety of tourist companies, hotels and accommodation sectors, and airlines (Aynalem S, 2016)	1.06
10	Permanent building and infrastructure for institutionsR DulariQureshi (2006),	1.04
11	Tourism course has practical and vocational value(Tribe, 2002)	5.82
12	Highly dedicated and hard-working teachersR DulariQureshi (2006),	0.72
13	An increasing trend towards student enrolment in Additional Skill Acquisition Programme (ASAP) Travel Education (Ramachandran, N, 2018)	2.50
14	Innovative teaching methods, as implemented by M.G. University, such as EDOMO (Ramachandran, N, 2018)	1.14
15	On-the-job training emphasizes acquiring skills in a competitive working environment (Bansal, S.P, 2006)	3.24
16	Tourism institutions at the government level are established in rural areas, and they can improve job prospects.	1.06
17	Nearly all tourism teachers have experience in the industry as well;	0.36
18	Ability to open up related graduate programs;	0.62
19	The course emphasizes quality and excellence and inculcates skills / theoretical knowledge (Chan, Jennifer Kim Lian, 2010).	2.40
20	Students are given projects and assignments based on industry trends. (Taylor, T, 2016).	1.52
Sr No	Weakness	Mean Score
1	Lack of specific criteria for tourism posts in government institutionsR DulariQureshi (2006),	6.30
2	Only a limited number of VHSE schools, Colleges under the state government provide tourism courses (Ramachandran N, 2018)	5.14
3	Lack of educators in specialization areas like event management, airport management, etc. within the tourism programs	0.76
4	Lack of positive attitude toward tourism education in general or a clear vision for the future. (Ilban, Mehmet, 2015).	0.22
5	There is a significant difference in expectations between academia and industry professionals.	3.42
6	Lack of lab facilities, application facilities (Bansal, S.P, 2006)	1.76
7	More number of students opt for tourism courses by chance and not by choice	5.10
8	Lack of training to improve English communication skills of students (Bhushan, R.K., 2006)	4.00

9	Lack of an independent tourism department in the universities of Kerala except for M.G. University (Ramachandran, N 2018)	4.80
10	Non-availability of qualified teachers and researchers in tourism education in Kerala at present. (Kumar, S, 2013)	1.04
11	Lack of uniformity in tourism syllabus across universities (Bagri, 2011)	0.52
12	Shortage of journals, books for reference in the area of tourism education (Bansal, S.P, 2006)	0.84
13	The tourism industry lacks a separate wing of research and development	0.54
14	Lack of required professionals and industry experienced teachers in education (Jugmohan, Sean, 2010).	1.12
15	Limited professional interaction between tourism teachers, students, and industry professionals.R DulariQureshi (2006),	2.04
16	The teachers from interdisciplinary academic disciplines (management, commerce, etc.) compete with tourism professionals, thereby reducing tourism educators' employment opportunities.	2.50
17	Teachers are not appointed permanently in most institutions.	1.20
18	There is no strategy in place to upgrade existing tourist training institutes and university departments in terms of technology.	2.08
19	Lack of quality institutions in Kerala	3.54
20	There are currently no innovative teaching and learning opportunities for students.R DulariQureshi (2006),	3.02
Sr No	Opportunities	Mean Score
1	Opportunity for further academic studies like master's degree, Ph.D. Etc (Boora, 2006)	4.10
2	High demand for a skilled workforce in the tourism industry exists, but supply is low. (Ministry of Tourism report, 2012)	8.62
3	Introduction of tourism courses at university levels (Pani et al. 2015)	2.40
4	Educational programs as per industry standards will increase the availability of highly skilled human resources. (Saner, Tulen&MenemenciBahçelerli, 2016)	1.60
5	Scope of research work in tourism education is not explored yet (Tribe, J 2002)	0.80
6	Emphasis by both state and central government sponsoring various tourism-related skill development programs (govt of India, 2018)	2.04
7	The curriculum shall incorporate training in entrepreneurship for graduates to explore business opportunities (Usoh, E, 2018)	1.62
8	The involvement of industry experts in the design and development of the curriculum will allow for the development of skilled employees. (Balasubramani, R 2019)	1.04
9	Accreditation for tourism programs has gained prominence (Ramachandran, N, 2018)	2.22
10	Collaboration with international tourism partners increases employability (Ramachandran, N, 2018)	4.04
11	The inclusion of tourism topics in a higher secondary group (like humanities) has broadened the scope of tourism education.	1.02
12	Developing educational programs that are aligned with industry requirements will generate highly skilled people.	0.84
13	Growing relation with industry (Wakelin-Theron, 2019)	0.34
14	In the future, there's a good chance of accessing resources through modern technology. (Leal, 2018)	0.62
15	High employability in the tourism sector (WTTC, 2018)	4.36
16	Online platforms like e-learning and e internship will increase the employability opportunity during pandemic (Firdosh, Z. H, 2015)	6.02
17	Internationalization and innovations of tourism cause enormous demand for high-quality professionals (Kumar, S, 2013)	0.32
18	Possibilities for training and future education	0.34
19	Fast track career opportunities (Geetanjali, 2010)	0.58
20	Opportunities for learning which can apply later in other jobs	0.54
Sr No	Threats	Mean Score
1	"Semi-skilled and unskilled workforce in tourism (Pizam, A, 2016)	8.04
2	Tourism Graduates prefer to pursue master's degrees in other fields (like MBA)	1.42
3	The majority of female students opt out to start a career in the tourism sector even after securing a degree in tourism. (Scott Richardson, 2008)	4.08
4	Competition is increasing in private institutions (Bensal, S.P, 2006)	2.60
5	The majority of students are unsure about finding work in the tourism industry after completing the course. (Scott Richardson, 2008)	2.64
6	Most of the industry stakeholders prefer low-skilled or semi-skilled workers to save money. (Raju, 2019)	1.84
7	Lack of association between industry and academia in terms of syllabus design and training of students. (Bagri, S. C, 2011)	5.12

8	Lack of online educational portal for tourism in Kerala (ShailendraPalvia, 2018)	3.86
9	The curriculum does not match the industry requirements (Usoh, E, 2018)	4.06
10	There is no standard curriculum for tourism degree or diploma programs. (Bensal, S.P, 2006)	2.28
11	The scope of tourism as a career is not clearly understood by the public in general (Prasad, N.P, 2019)	4.08
12	A disparity in the fees charged by various institutions for tourism courses (Kumar, M, 2014)	1.08
13	The current tourism training institutes are not being upgraded in terms of technology (Kumar, M, 2014)	0.64
14	Poor performance, poor managerial skills, and uncompetitive salaries and wages are among the issues that the tourism business faces. (Singh, R, 2006, Raju, 2019)	0.42
15	The role of industry in education is unclear. (Prasad, N.P, 2019)	0.28
16	Impact of seasonality on employment (Rahimic, 2019)	0.22
17	Tourism department under the school of management, business schools, and commerce schools	0.18
18	The majority of tourism syllabuses are outdated and unsuitable for industry demands. (Bensal, S.P, 2006)	2.08
19	Shortage of trained personnel in tourism organizations and accommodation sectors. (Bensal, S.P, 2006)	2.08
20	Lack of training facilities for the state government tourism officials in Kerala (Kaplan, L, 2004)	1.32

Out of these twenty strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the researcher had selected statements ranked above 1.00 for the next round of re-ranking. Then, fifteen were shortlisted and taken for the second round of survey to the panel consisting of twenty experts. Responses were calculated and analysed, and those found above 1.00 were shortlisted. Finally, twelve statements were distributed amongst five experts to formulate the final questionnaire statements. The average was calculated, and the cut-off of the weighted mean score was increased to 3.5 to compile the final set of experts' views, as provided in Table 2. The expert's opinion and suggested weights based on their importance under each variable were considered. Finally, the top ten Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity, and Threat were considered for SWOT analysis.

Table 2: Final top 10 SWOT statements after Delphi technique

Serial No.	Strengths	Mean score
1	The employability scope of fresh graduates are high	9.14
2	Short term tourism courses such as airport management, hotel management, etc. are available at various levels of higher education	8.57
3	A tourism degree develops professionalism & professional attitudes	8.00
4	The tourism degree offers industry subcategory specialization.	6.57
5	Tourism course has practical and vocational value	6.00
6	Extremely dedicated and hard-working teachers	5.71
7	The course helps in the acquisition of knowledge about various tourism resources and the recognition of tourism's potential as a career.	4.57
8	On-the-job training emphasizes acquiring skills in a competitive working environment	4.30
9	Students are given projects and assignments based on industry trends.	4.00
10	The course emphasizes quality and excellence and inculcates skills / theoretical knowledge	3.71
S. No	Weaknesses	Mean Score
1	Only a limited number of VHSE schools, Colleges under state government provide tourism course	8.71
2	Lack of specific criteria for tourism posts in government institutions	8.43
3	More number of students opt for tourism courses by chance and not by choice	6.86
4	Lack of training to improve English communication skills of students	6.71

5	Lack of an independent tourism department in the universities of Kerala except for M.G. university	5.71
6	Limited professional interaction between tourism teachers, students, and industry professionals.	5.29
7	Teachers are not appointed permanently in most institutions.	5.29
8	Lack of required professionals and trained teachers in education	4.53
9	Lack of quality institutions in Kerala	4.00
10	Shortage of journals, books for reference in the area of tourism education	3.63
S. No	Opportunities	Mean Score
1	Collaboration with international tourism partners increases the employability	7.71
2	Online platforms like e-learning and e-internship will increase the employability opportunity during the pandemic	7.57
3	High employability in the tourism sector	7.57
4	High demand for a skilled workforce in the tourism industry exists, but supply is low.	7.43
5	Emphasis by both state and central government sponsoring various tourism-related skill development programs	6.86
6	The involvement of industry experts in the design and development of the curriculum will allow for the development of skilled employees.	4.43
7	Scope of research work in tourism education is not explored yet	4.00
8	The curriculum shall incorporate training in entrepreneurship for graduates to explore business opportunities	3.71
9	Introduction of tourism courses at university levels	3.57
10	Opportunity for further academic studies like master's degree, Ph.D. Etc	3.57
S. No	Threats	Mean Score
1	Lack of association between industry and academia in terms of syllabus design and training of students.	8.43
2	The semi-skilled and unskilled workforce in tourism	8.00
3	The curriculum does not match the industry requirements	8.00
4	The majority of female students opt out to start a career in the tourism sector even after securing a degree in tourism.	6.86
5	The scope of tourism as a career is not clearly understood by the public in general	5.71
6	Misleading the students with various unapproved courses	5.00
7	The majority of students are unsure about finding work in the tourism industry after completing the course.	4.43
8	Most of the industry stakeholders prefer low-skilled or semi-skilled workers to save money.	4.29
9	Tourism Graduates prefer to pursue master's degrees in other fields (like MBA)	4.00
10	Competition is increasing in private institutions	3.86

3.2. Internal and External Survey of SWOT

A questionnaire consisting of 40 statements, as presented in Table 2 were distributed amongst students, teachers, and industry to understand the ground reality. Random sampling method was used to collect the samples. The ranking method was used to analyze the questionnaire. For each statement, the respondents were instructed to rank from 1 to 10, with the most relevant statement as 10th rank and the least as 1. 150 respondents consisting of 50 each from students, teachers, and industry were selected for the study. The researcher assisted the respondents personally wherever clarification was required. This weighted score was calculated based on expert advice. According to Saaty (Saaty,1987), all weights scores should sum up to 1.0 regardless of the number of factors. Accordingly, the average rating was calculated. To calculate its weighted score, each weight was multiplied by its average rating. According to the given answers, internal and external evaluation matrices were regulated, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) Matrix for Tourism Higher Education in Kerala

Internal Factors	Teachers			Industry			Students		
	Weight	Average rating	Weighted Score	Weight	Average Rating	Weighted Score	Weight	Average Rating	Weighted Score
Strengths									
The employability scope of fresh graduates are high	.15	3.4	.510	.15	3.14	.471	.15	2.6	.390
Short term tourism courses such as airport management, hotel management, etc. are available at various levels of higher education	.10	2.86	.286	.10	2.29	.229	.10	2.17	.217
A tourism degree develops professionalism & professional attitudes	.08	2.86	.229	.08	1.85	.148	.08	2.9	.232
The tourism degree that offers industry subcategory specialization that enhances employability	.06	2.86	.172	.06	3.57	.214	.06	3.27	.196
Tourism course has practical and vocational value	.05	2.8	.140	.05	4.14	.207	.05	3.2	.160
Highly dedicated and hard-working teachers	.04	2.5	.100	.04	1.57	.063	.04	3.07	.123
The course helps in the acquisition of knowledge about various tourism resources as well as the recognition of tourism's potential as a career	.03	3.45	.104	.03	3.71	.111	.03	3.77	.113
On-the-job training emphasizes acquiring skills in a competitive working environment	.02	3.05	.061	.02	4.4	.088	.02	2.9	.058
Students are given projects and assignments based on industry trends.	.02	2.05	.041	.02	2.29	.046	.02	2.7	.054
The course emphasizes quality and excellence and inculcates skills / theoretical knowledge	.02	2.73	.055	.02	2.57	.051	.02	2.4	.048
Weakness									
Only a limited number of VHSE schools, Colleges under state government provide tourism course	.10	2.55	.255	.10	2.71	.271	.10	3.07	.307
Lack of specific criteria for tourism posts in government institutions	.08	3.36	.269	.08	2.86	.229	.08	2.7	.216
More number of students opt for tourism courses by chance and not by choice	.06	2.73	.164	.06	3.29	.197	.06	2.6	.156
Lack of training to improve English communication skills of students	.04	3.6	.144	.04	3.57	.143	.04	2.99	.120
Lack of an independent tourism department in the universities of Kerala except for M.G. university	.04	3.27	.131	.04	4.00	.160	.04	3.3	.132
Lack of quality institutions in Kerala	.03	3.5	.105	.03	2.43	.073	.03	3.5	.105
Limited professional interaction between tourism teachers, students, and industry professionals.	.02	2.14	.043	.02	2.86	.057	.02	2.1	.042

Lack of required professionals and trained teachers in education	.02	2.86	.057	.02	2.86	.057	.02	2.4	.048
Shortage of journals, books for reference in the area of tourism education	.02	2.45	.049	.02	2.43	.049	.02	2.8	.056
Teachers are not appointed permanently in most institutions.	.02	3.14	.063	.02	1.29	.026	.02	2.67	.053
Total	1.00		2.978	1.00		3.124	1.00		2.846

Table 4: External Factor Evaluation (EFE) Matrix for Tourism Education in Kerala

External Factors	Teachers			Industry			Students		
	Weight	Average Rating	Weighted Score	Weight	Average Rating	Weighted Score	Weight	Average Rating	Weighted Score
Opportunities									
High demand for a skilled workforce in the tourism industry exists, but supply is low.	.08	2.23	.178	.08	2.86	.229	.08	2.3	.184
Online platforms like e-learning and e internship will increase the employability opportunity during the pandemic	.08	2.71	.217	.08	2.5	.200	.08	2.41	.193
Emphasis by both state and central government sponsoring various tourism-related skill development programs	.10	2.32	.232	.10	2.43	.243	.10	2.4	.240
High employability in the tourism sector	.07	3.77	.264	.07	4.14	.290	.07	3.4	.238
Collaboration with international tourism partners increases the employability	.06	2.73	.164	.06	3.57	.214	.06	3.3	.198
The curriculum shall incorporate training in entrepreneurship for graduates to explore business opportunities	.05	2.5	.125	.05	1.86	.093	.05	2.7	.135
Introduction of tourism courses at university levels	.04	2.55	.102	.04	1.00	.040	.04	2.4	.096
Opportunity for further academic studies like master's degree, Ph.D. Etc	.04	3.1	.124	.04	3.3	.132	.04	3.87	.155
Educational programs as per industry standards will increase the availability of highly skilled human resources.	.03	3.18	.095	.03	3.57	.107	.03	2.8	.084
Scope of research work in tourism education is unexplored	.02	2.95	.059	.02	3.14	.063	.02	2.9	.058
Threats									
The semi-skilled and unskilled workforce in tourism	.10	2.86	.286	.10	3.00	.30	.10	2.57	.257
The majority of female students opt out to start a career in the tourism sector even after securing a degree in tourism.	.07	3.09	.216	.07	2.14	.150	.07	3.6	.252
Lack of association between industry and academia in terms of syllabus design and training of students.	.06	2.36	.142	.06	3.71	.223	.06	2.67	.160

The curriculum does not match the industry requirements	.05	2.64	.132	.05	3.29	.165	.05	2.77	.139
The public, in general, does not clearly understand the scope of tourism as a career	.04	3.86	.154	.04	3.43	.137	.04	3.77	.151
Most of the industry stakeholders prefer low-skilled or semi-skilled workers to save money.	.03	2.36	.071	.03	3.57	.107	.03	2.00	.06
The majority of students are unsure about finding work in the tourism industry after completing the course.	.03	2.23	.067	.03	2.43	.073	.03	2.47	.074
Tourism Graduates prefer to pursue master's degrees in other fields (such as MBA)	.02	2.32	.046	.02	3.14	.063	.02	2.67	.053
Competition is increasing in private institutions	.02	2.32	.046	.02	1.43	.029	.02	2.57	.051
Misleading the students with various unapproved courses	.01	3.41	.034	.01	3.71	.037	.01	3.00	.03
Total	1.00		2.754	1.00		2.895			2.808

Tables 3 and Table 4 presents a description of the categories for Tourism Education (SWOT), the average weight, average rating, and Weighted Score. This process identified a number of relevant internal and external factors for tourism Education in Kerala. As shown in Table 3 and 4, an Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) as well as External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS) has been done to analyze how well these factors are responding in the light of their importance to Tourism Education in Kerala using Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) and External Factor Evaluation (EFE) Matrices. Finally, SWOT statements were shortlisted as given in Table 5.

Table 5: SWOT analysis for Tourism Education in Kerala

Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
S1. The employability scope of fresh graduates is high	W1. Only a limited number of VHSE schools, Colleges under the state government provide tourism courses
S2. Short term tourism courses such as airport management, hotel management, etc. are available at various levels of higher education	W2. Lack of specific criteria for tourism posts in government institutions
S3. A tourism degree develops professionalism & professional attitudes	W3. More number of students opt for tourism courses by chance and not by choice
S4. The tourism degree that offers industry subcategory specialization that enhances employability	W4. Lack of an independent tourism department in the universities of Kerala except for M.G. university
S5. Tourism course has practical and vocational value	W5. Lack of training to improve English communication skills of students
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
O1. High demand for skilled human resources in the tourism industry exists but supply is low.	T1. Semi-skilled and unskilled human resources in tourism
O2. High employability in the tourism sector	T2. The majority of female students opt out to start a career in the tourism sector even after securing a degree in tourism.
O3. Emphasis by both state and central government sponsoring various tourism-related skill development programs	T3. Lack of association between industry and academia in terms of syllabus design and training of students.

O4. Collaboration with international tourism partners increases employability.	T4. The curriculum does not match the industry requirements
O5. Online platforms like e-learning and e internship will increase the employability opportunity during the pandemic	T5. The scope of tourism as a career is not clearly understood by the public in general

4. TOWS Matrix

As indicated in Table 5, the SWOT statements show the current situation of tourism education in Kerala. TOWS concept is closely related to SWOT analysis. According to H. Wehrich (1982), as a problem-solving sequence, Threats, Opportunities (in the environment), Weaknesses, Strengths (of the organization) should be analysed for formulating strategies. TOWS Matrix has been developed and presented in Table 6 in order to reduce Kerala’s weaknesses and threats to promote tourism education. It provides a means to develop strategies based on logical combinations of SWOT factors related to internal strengths (or weaknesses) with external opportunities (or threats). TOWS matrix recognizes four conceptually different strategy groups to develop alternate strategies: “Strength-Opportunity (S.O.); Strength-Threats (S.T.); Weaknesses- Opportunities (W.O.); and Weaknesses-Threats (W.T).”

“SO - Maxi-maxi strategy: This condition refers to a situation in which strengths and opportunities dominate in the environment. This situation is consistent with the maxi-maxi strategy, which allows for both substantial expansion and diverse growth. (Kulshrestha, 2017)

W.O. - Mini-maxi strategy: This situation has more limitations - defects - but it also has a more favorable environment. The strategy should include the use of these opportunities while reducing or correcting weaknesses within. (Kulshrestha, 2017)

S.T. - Maxi-mini strategy: The source of difficulties in growth and development are unfavorable external conditions (prevalence of threats). The strategy should use enormous internal strengths in an attempt to overcome threats from the environment. (Kulshrestha, 2017)

W.T. - Mini-mini strategy: This situation is devoid of any development opportunities. It operates in hostile environments, and its potential for change is small. It does not have significant strengths, which could withstand threats. Mini-mini strategy boils down to a pessimistic version of the shutdown or in an optimistic situation - to strive for survival with hopes of a revival.” (Kulshrestha, 2017).

Table 6: TOWS Matrix

<p>Internal Factors (IFAS)</p> <p>External Factors (EFAS)</p>	<p>Strengths (S)</p> <p>S1. The employability scope of fresh graduates is high</p> <p>S2. Short term tourism courses such as airport management, hotel management, etc. are available at various levels of higher education</p> <p>S3. Tourism degree programs develop professionalism & professional attitudes</p> <p>S4. The tourism degree that offers industry subcategory specialization that enhance employability</p> <p>S5. Tourism course has practical and vocational value</p>	<p>Weaknesses (W)</p> <p>W1. Only a limited number of VHSE schools, Colleges under the state government provide tourism courses.</p> <p>W2. Lack of specific criteria for tourism posts in government institutions</p> <p>W3. More number of students opt for tourism courses by chance and not by choice</p> <p>W4. Lack of an independent tourism department in the universities of Kerala</p> <p>W5. Lack of training to improve English communication skills of students</p>
	<p>Opportunities (O)</p> <p>O1. High demand for a skilled workforce in the tourism industry exists, but supply is low.</p> <p>O2. High employability in the tourism sector</p> <p>O3. Emphasis by both state and central government sponsoring various tourism-related skill development programs</p> <p>O4. Collaboration with international tourism partners increases employability.</p> <p>O5. Online platforms like e-learning and e internship will increase the employability opportunity during the pandemic</p>	<p>SO Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The gap between demand and supply regarding skilled human resources could be reduced by the collaboration of both government and private tourism industry (S1,O1) Initiatives like the udaan scheme and tie-up of private tourism companies with foreign companies can bring positive changes in the domestic and international tourism sector and thereby open employment opportunities in the tourism industry (S1,O4) Utilizing tourism-related courses by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to enhance skill development in the field of tourism (S2, O3) Educational and professional training institutions can offer short term courses and certificate programs in tourism for applicants who want to upgrade their competitive skills or to those employees in the tourism sector who seeks higher management level jobs (S2, O1, O3) Specific skills and competencies gained through practical experience will help students find work and plan for future career options. (S5, O2) E-learning can encourage educational institutions to create more specialized courses in tourism that make employability. (S2, O2) The tourism industry can provide E internships to interested students and keep in contact with universities to hire full-time and part-time students. (S1, O5) MOU could be signed between the universities of Kerala and reputed international organisations to conduct internship programs that boost

	<p>employability (S1, S5, O4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of an online database of tourism graduates whereby companies can recruit qualified candidates. . (S1, O1) • MOU could be signed between the universities of Kerala and esteemed international organisations to conduct industrial internships (S1, O4) • Teamwork, Communication, interpersonal, and intercultural could be improved by online Zoom meetings combined with online training, allowing students to complete online work that brings attention to an internship partner. (S3, O5) • Educational institutions can present various tourism course options for students in terms of standards through online learning. (S2, O5) • Both central and state governments should start national tourism education programs in collaboration with the private sector leading hotels like Taj and with NGOs from panchayath for creating job opportunities (S1, O3) • Extracurricular activities like organizing tours, events etc. should be incorporated in the syllabus to enhance the skills that boost employability (S5, O1) • E-internships provide a new way to study work-based and work-applied learning outside of the classroom and in the workplace, allowing us to better understand work-based and work-applied learning in the workplace. (S5, O5) 	<p>tourism staff to ensure the skilled workforce (W2, O1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-learning can attract more students through which they get an opportunity to study courses from esteemed organizations abroad (W3, O4, O5) • Starting tourism departments at State Universities has to be a priority since merit-based admissions and can ensure quality training in these institutions through e internship program (W4, O5) • Mphil and Ph.D. should be launched in tourism-related subjects in the universities to create job opportunities in educational institutions.(W4, O2) • University can include online courses in their curriculum to strengthen the tourism department (W4, O5) • Tourism educational boards can develop online forums and encourage students to participate in these social platforms to share their knowledge, information, and experiences, encouraging students to pursue tourism as a profession. (W3, O5) • Collaborate with global tourism authorities and NGOs to develop fellowship or traineeship opportunities for government tourism positions, which can push to set transparent, internationally recognizable job standards (W2, O4) • Introduce communication skill enhancement as a main course within tourism degree programs, with certification options, to directly support higher employability in customer-facing roles.(W5, O2)
<p>Threats (T)</p> <p>T1. The semi-skilled and unskilled workforce in tourism</p> <p>T2. The majority of female students opt out to pursue a career in the tourism industry even after securing a tourism degree</p> <p>T3. Lack of association between industry and academia in terms of syllabus design and training of students.</p> <p>T4. The curriculum does not match the industry requirements</p> <p>T5. The scope of tourism as a career is not clearly understood by the public in general</p>	<p>ST Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the new short term practically oriented courses in association with the tourism industry (S2, T3) • More students can opt for specialized tourism courses like travel consultant, meeting conference and event planner, housekeeping supervisor, food & beverage service steward under ASAP, which can contribute to the trained workforce in the tourism sector (S4, T1) • The professional interaction between the tourism industry and tourism educational institutions have to be consistent so that students are molded based on the requirements and demands of the sector (S1, T1, T3), • Conduct entrepreneurship training and awareness creation on the benefits provided by the government for women entrepreneurs, especially in the field of tourism. (S1, T2) 	<p>W.T. Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special focus on spoken English with modern communication software/Apps for skill enhancement & employability (W5, T1) • The focus should be there to make higher secondary students aware of the scope of tourism courses. (W3, T5) • During admission, a selection process can be conducted to select students with aptitude in tourism to create a credible workforce that the tourism industry may require in the future. (W3, T5) • A systematic review and continual updating of the curriculum and instruction are provided to implement essential changes to meet industry requirements. (W5, T4) • Language labs for improving English communication should be provided (W5, T1)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tie up with tourism industry can be strengthened for campus placement(S1, T3) ● The signing of MOU between educational institutions and tourism companies concerning areas of mutual interest (S3, T3) ● Tourism institutions can organize frequent events/ seminars on current trends/development in tourism industry by involving industry experts (S3, T4) ● The universities can collaborate with tourism stakeholders to design updated education programs that boost employability. (S3, T3) ● Can achieve the requirement and demand for competent tourism professionals through a curriculum framework that emphasizes on-site practical experience. (S5, T1, T4) ● Universities should incorporate the local, regional, and global market skills into their educational curricula to meet the challenge of creating new jobs and offering the skills new employees need to ensure more sustainable and inclusive development. (S1, T1, T5) ● A forum that enhances the association between industry stakeholders and academia can be established to orient new trends in the tourism industry. (S5, T4) ● Association between industry and educational providers for benchmarking and setting standards for examination and certification. (S2, T3, T4) ● The gap between the tourism industry and tourism education providers can be bridged by industry-education collaboration, which can help graduates gain employment. (S1, T3) ● Educational institutions must provide a forum for students to engage with industry employers on how industry-based training will help students acquire the skills to advance in their long-term careers in the tourism industry. (S3, T5) ● Curriculum development by linking theoretical knowledge with practical experiences through experimental learning and internship to bridge the gap from classroom to the place of work. (S5, T4) ● Curriculum changes are required to provide adequately qualified human resources for the future tourism sector, including updated content, practical learning, teaching methods, educators' involvement within the tourism sectors, and investment in equipment and staff training. (S1, T4) ● There is a need to find a proper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need is to conduct National Tourism Education Meet / Feast where several institutes and industry people meet and sit together to discuss tourism and tourism profession (W5, T5) ● Should introduce tourism as an essential subject at the secondary and higher secondary level in the school curriculum that helps the students to be aware of the scope of tourism (W1, T5) ● As a primary goal in designing tourism curricula, educational institutions should seek to address the needs and expectations of the tourism industry, which will encourage graduates to develop competencies and required skills to work in the sector (W5, T4) ● Since language proficiency is essential in the tourism industry, languages play a unique role in the curriculum and should be included. (W5, T4) ● Should emphasize exposure to soft skill development and personality development in the curriculum to help them get employed. (W5, T1, T4) ● The tourism industry professionals have to be a part of the education sector by arranging regular workshops, guest lectures, and seminars on the campus. Should explore the scope of signing a memorandum of understandings with educational institutions and reputed tourism companies. (W5, T4, T5) ● To create awareness regarding the scope of tourism, social media can be used for better reach amongst students (W3, T5). ● Create awareness campaigns in schools and colleges to provide students with information about their career prospects in the tourism industry based on real success stories or testimonials. (W1, T5) ● Mentoring programs conducted by successful women professionals in the tourism industry can be initiated to motivate female students to seek career in the industry after graduation. (W3, T2) ● Plan and conduct special interactions/ confidence building workshops for the girl students for overcoming socio-cultural constraints and career preparedness. (W5, T2) ● Universities need a more flexible curriculum that acknowledges courses leading to industry certification (IATA, Travel Foundation) and allows them to be creditworthy within the academic structure. (W4, T3, T4)
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	<p>equilibrium between practice and theory to attain skilled workforce (S5, T1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employability can be increased through the active industrial involvement in developing and sharpening the student's skills from time to time (S1, T3) ● Developing professionalism & professional attitudes of tourism graduates can be possible through the evaluation of training programs and supply of feedback from the industry (S3, T3) ● Creation of entrepreneurial skills for self-employment is possible through the focus on specialization like F&B, tour operation (S4, T1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Universities should release annual reports reflecting tourism graduate placement statistics and careers to enhance public image and transparency. (W4, T5) ● Universities should also launch 'Industry in Campus' schemes, wherein tourism businesses can open temporary labs or experience zones to students for real world exposure. (W4, T3) ● Entry-level career guidance and aptitude testing should be made compulsory to make sure that enthusiastic students join tourism courses, thus providing quality professionals(W3, T1, T5) ● Government recruitment policies should be revised to mandate tourism-specific qualifications for relevant posts, promoting structured career pathways in public tourism departments. . (W2, T3)
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5. Discussion

As indicated in Table 5, employability scope and availability of various tourism short-term courses were identified as significant tourism higher education strengths in Kerala. The major weakness of the state is the lack of government support for promoting tourism in academics even though the state collects more income from tourism sector in comparison to others. The number of colleges having a full-fledged tourism department is minimal; it reduces the scope of vocational tourism students. The study also states that eligibility criteria for many of the tourism posts in the government sector are not defined. In the current scenario, any degree holder can apply for a tourism post in the government sector. State universities here neglect independent tourism departments except for Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala.

State has many highly educated young people; they can be easily employed in the tourism sector. At present, both the central and state governments offer several skill development programs related to tourism. These initiatives provide good opportunities to improve tourism education. Increasing partnerships amongst international organizations enhance employment opportunities. Online platforms like e-learning and e-internship are the other possibilities of tourism education in Kerala. The major threats are unskilled manpower, lack of association between industry and academia in terms of syllabus design, and lack of updated curriculum as per industry requirements. Lack of awareness regarding tourism job opportunities is also a significant threat in public generally. Most female students opt out of the tourism sector even after securing a degree due to cultural constraints. In general, successful firms build on their strengths to take advantage of opportunities. Table 6 shows the TOWS matrix where IFAS and EFAS were combined to develop strategies. To reduce the shortcomings in tourism education, strategies were formulated. Starting new tourism courses at universities, creating government posts exclusively for tourism graduates, and introducing new online platforms

can minimize the problems. The primary threat of being unaware of the scope of tourism as a career can be solved by introducing awareness programs in tourism subjects at the secondary and higher secondary level within the state. By giving more focus on modern communication software or applications is a solution for unskilled human resources. If the above strategies are properly implemented, the state can improve the quality of tourism higher education in Kerala.

6. Conclusion

Tourism education is significant for developing competent professionals for improving the industry's overall competency. The study has given a critical examination of tourism higher education in Kerala using the SWOT and TOWS matrices, which provide strategic guidance on how the tourism industry can be strengthened. The results evidently indicate that although Kerala has strong strengths like high employability potential, presence of skill-based tourism courses, and industry-linked academic programs, there are also prominent weaknesses like the absence of organized government support, and poor academia-industry linkage. By translating these insights into actionable strategies using the TOWS matrix, the study proposes practical solutions like curriculum modernization, increased government involvement, integration of digital learning tools, and establishing stronger academia-industry partnerships. Ultimately, the study emphasizes strategies to be systematically implemented especially in areas like curriculum reform, infrastructure development, students training, and international collaboration. Kerala has the potential to emerge as a leading hub for tourism education in India, producing globally competitive professionals to meet the evolving demands of the tourism industry.

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