

Indigenous Tourism –An Ideal Sustainable Tourism Model for Wayanad, Kerala

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ABSTRACT

India has been reinvented through the 'Incredible India' campaign which highlights the various facets of India. The current Indian tourism scenario seems to be optimistic. India's growing reputation in the last few years as one of the fastest emerging tourist destinations has enthralled the attention of tourists all over the world. The country is fast catching up on the infrastructural development with the upgradation of roads, airports and hotels. At the same time, there is a big concern of sustainability. Each tourist destination is unique in its own way. The alternative tourism possible in one place may not be same for another. Identifying a suitable tourism model and to conduct a study on its feasibility are very much essential for rightly positioning a tourism destination. This paper examines the indigenous tourism potential of Wayand district of Kerala, which is one of the emerging destinations in South India. Being an identified ecotourism destination, promoting indigenous tourism as special interest tourism was found ideal for the destination. The study examines the perceptions of the tourists about tourism in Wayanad and their preferences for various forms of tourism available there. Tourists' perception on Indigenous attractions of Wayanad has also been analysed. Major challenges faced by the destination are addressed along with recommending an Indigenous tourism model suitable for Wayanad.

KEYWORDS: *Alternative tourism, Indigenous tourism, Special Interest Tourism*

Introduction

Unlike earlier, tourist consumption process has changed. It is now mostly based on their interests and passion. New age tourists are very selective. They select the destinations according to their special needs and interests. Tourists have different expectations about their experiences at the destinations. Novelty, authenticity, excitement or adventure motivates them to visit a place. Hence Special Interest Tourism (SIT) is emerging as one of the most popular forms of international travel. SIT may be defined as a form of tourism which involves consumers whose holiday choice is inspired by specific motivations and whose level of satisfaction is determined by the experience they pursue (Marina Novelli, 2005). Indigenous tourism is a form of special interest tourism and depends on the primary motivation of the tourist. The prime attraction of indigenous tourism is the opportunity to experience a different culture. People around the world are always curious to

experience the variety in indigenous culture. The novelty in experiencing indigenous life, culture, tradition and ethnicity attracts tourists to aboriginal attractions. Each indigenous tourism experience is unique.

Most indigenous tourists seek first hand, authentic and sometimes intimate contact with people whose indigenous and/or cultural background is different from theirs. Tourists seek direct experience, the human element, more intimate and authentic contact. The degree of participation and involvement of the tourists with the local community is higher in indigenous tourism compared to the other closely related tourism concepts like cultural tourism, rural tourism, eco tourism and sustainable tourism (Hall & Weiler 1992).

The term Indigenous or Aboriginal Tourism is used broadly to describe the participation of aboriginal people in tourism either directly through jobs and employment or indirectly through ownership of business enterprises (Tourism Western Australia, 2006). Butler and Hinch (1996) opines that "Indigenous tourism is an tourism activity in which indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction". Indigenous people are generally regarded as tribal or native groups still living in their homeland areas. They are the native people with unique cultural beliefs and practices closely linked to local ecosystems and the use of natural resources (Furze et al. 1996). Accordingly, the term 'Indigenous people' is used to describe races of people who are endemic or native to a region (Butler & Hinch 1996). Smith (1996) defines Indigenous tourism as 'a culture bounded visitor experience' through the four Hs : Habitat, Heritage, History and Handicrafts.

Aboriginal culture is often the main motivating factor for traveling to indigenous attractions. The special interest to experience the cultural ethnicity of an event, attraction, region or destination inspires people to undertake indigenous tours (Smith, 1996; Dauglas et.al., 2001). Domestic and international visitors have very unique motivations. Chang, Wall and Chu (2006) identified the *natural scenery* to be the most important factor of the tourism experience of domestic visitors at two aboriginal tourism sites in Taiwan. Xie and Wall (2002) investigated the features attracting aboriginal tourists to Hainan, China and *aboriginal architecture* ranked first followed by *folk arts*, and *costumes*.

Indigenous tourism became a new visitor market from 1990s. The unique indigenous history and culture of aboriginal people offer indigenous tourism a heritage tourism manifestation. Indigenous association with nature makes it a form of nature based tourism. In a way indigenous tourism is community based tourism with the involvement of indigenous people at different levels. Indigenous ethnicity which is the major attraction for indigenous tourism provides it an image of Ethnic Tourism. It is also associated with Tribal Tourism, Regional Tourism and Alternate

tourism. The relevance of indigenous tourism lies in maintenance of cultural and social values, empowerment of indigenous people and enabling them the pride in showing to the rest of the world a culture which is quite refreshing. Indigenous tourism development contributes to balanced regional development (Chang, 2006).

Tourism in Wayand –An Overview

Wayanad district of Kerala is situated at 700 to 2100 mts above the sea level on the southern most part of Deccan Plateau in the mountain range of Western Ghats. Wayanad is situated at the junction of the three major hill ranges: Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats and Nilgiris. The district shares its border with three Indian states: Kerala, Karnataka and Tamilnadu. It is bordered by Nilgiris (Tamilnadu) and Mysore (Karnataka) in the east, Coorg (Karnataka) in the north, Malappuram (Kerala) in the South and Kozhikode and Kannur (Kerala) in the West.

It is primarily a rural area with 96.13 percent of the population living in the villages of the district. Wayanad also has the distinction of being large tribal populated area of Kerala. 37.36% of the people of Wayanad are tribes. It is significant to note that they form 17.43 % of the total tribal population in the state (Census 2011). Main Adivasi communities of the district are Paniyans, Adiyans, Kattunaickans, Mullu Kurumans, Urali Kurumans and Kurichians. Due to large scale immigration of people from the southern parts of Kerala, tribal population gradually outnumbered by the immigrants and thus marginalization of local tribal population began.

Agriculture is the main source of income for people of Wayanad. Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in Wayanad. On the tourism front the scenic beauty, exotic landscape and rich heritage of Wayanad offer unique and exciting opportunities for tourism promotion. Wayanad has evolved itself into a popular tourist destination in the last five years. Accordingly, the Government of Kerala has declared Wayanad as a Tourism District. The scenic beauty, exotic landscape and rich heritage of Wayanad offer several opportunities for tourism promotion more vigorously. Wayanad's wildlife, plantations, and cuisine further enrich the tourism potential. The district is best known among nature lovers who search for adventure and novel experiences.

Wayanad is a multi-faceted destination with immense potential for Rural tourism, Heritage tourism, Leisure tourism, Island tourism, Adventure tourism, Hydel tourism, Pilgrim tourism, Wildlife tourism, Tribal tourism, Plantation tourism, Spice tourism, Health tourism, Festival tourism, Shopping tourism and Ecotourism. (Sibi George, 2011). Wayanad has attractions for special interest tourists seeking nature, jungle walk and indigenous culture. In simple, Wayanad has in its tourism product basket everything for tourists.

Wayanad is not like other tourist destinations where tourists visit a place and

go back. Tourists of Wayanad look for and cherish interactions with nature and culture. This interaction with nature and involvement in the indigenous culture make the destination a memorable one. Tourist centric activities of Wayanad include Wildlife Safari, Trekking, Plantation visits, Shopping trails, River trails and Heritage and legend trails

Statement of the Problem

Wayanad is an exquisite hill station of Kerala, exotic and beautiful with mist clad mountains, intense forest and green plantations. The rich biodiversity has been attracting thousands of tourists across the globe. Wayanad is very unique with the indigenous culture of the area. Sustaining the variety of natural attractions and preserving the unique indigenous culture are the major issues of concern for Wayand. Incidentally, indigenous communities of Wayanad are searching for a stable source of income as agriculture and indigenous products could not support them as before. Therefore, designing an alternative tourism model suitable for Wayand is the need of the hour. Exploring the potential of indigenous tourism in Wayanad could help the region to tide over the difficulties caused by falling agricultural incomes.

Significance of the Study

The tourism scenario in Wayanad throws open issues related to sustainable development and management of natural and cultural resources. It is high time an appropriate plan to promote tourism in line with the specific needs of Wayanad is evolved. The unique aboriginal culture of the region offers ample scope for indigenous tourism promotion. Therefore, it is highly relevant and appropriate to design an indigenous tourism model which would sustain the aboriginal culture and help the empowerment of the indigenous communities. The present study, therefore, unveils an avenue for special interest tourists who look for different experiences. Indigenous tourism thus offers multiple benefits- a novel experience for visitors, economic upliftment of indigenous community and an alternative model for sustainable tourism.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To evaluate the role of indigenous tourism in the tourism promotion of Wayanad;
- To study the perceptions of the tourists about promoting indigenous tourism in Wayanad and;
- To formulate and suggest an indigenous tourism model for the sustainable tourism development of Wayanad.

Major Hypothesis

H(0): Tourist's interest, earlier exposure, plan to visit or reason for not visiting

indigenous attractions are independent of nationality.

Research Methodology

Extensive literature review was undertaken to establish the theoretical roots of indigenous tourism and also to gain conceptual clarity of the research problem. A quantitative study was conducted which is of exploratory in nature. Questionnaire survey, and close observation of the various practices in the study area were the sources of primary data. 404 valid questionnaires from tourists were collected through Proportionate Purposive Random Sampling method. . Five tourist sites namely, Pookot Lake, Kuruva Islands, Edakkal caves, Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary and Soochippara Waterfalls were identified based on the number of tourist arrivals for data collection. The data collected were scrutinized, coded and entered into SPSS for analysis. Statistical tools like frequency tables, Mean, and Chi-Square were used for the analysis of data.

Discussions and Findings

Tripographic profile of tourists

The responses reveal that 62.1% of the respondents were domestic tourists and 37.9% were foreign tourists. Amongst 153 foreign tourists majority are from Europe (81%) followed by Asia (8.5%), America (8.5%) and Australia (3.2%). Further among the 88.1% of domestic tourists, 38.6% were from various districts of Kerala, followed by neighbouring states Karnataka (17.9%) and Tamilnadu (17.1%). Others represent very less in number and they are from Bihar, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Lakhadweep, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Pondicherry, Rajasthan and North Eastern states like Sikkim, Manipur and Assam.

It may be inferred that people from urban background prefer to visit the rural district of Wayanad as 67.6% of the respondents were from urban areas which explains the interest of the urban people who have a longing to step into the country side as an escape from their busy and stressful urban life. 15.6% of the respondents represent semi urban and 16.8% represent rural.

The responses on frequency of visits by the tourists reveal that 215 out of 404 (78%) respondents visited Wayanad for the first time followed by 55 (13.6) visited second time and 34 (8.4) visited the third time or more. The companionship reveals that a little less than half of the respondents (46.8%) visited Wayanad with friends followed by 30.2% with family and 13.6% in a group. Only 9.4% were single tourists.

As regards the specific strengths of Wayanad as a tourist attraction, the unexploited beauty of the place scores high in the perceptions of the tourists as could be seen by the fact that 31.7 % of the tourists were attracted by the natural beauty of the place. Further, tourists who visit Wayanad just to relax and refresh are also not less in number as 17.3% of the sample chose Wayanad for its beauty.

Similarly, Wayanad does not lag behind in attracting tourists for adventure activities (9.9%).

The source of efficacy of the information about a destination is very important as it is a critical factor that drives the tourists to a particular destination. As such, friends and relatives contribute the main source of information about Wayand for 42.6% of the respondents. Internet is the next major source of information (36.6%). Contrary to the popular perception, only 10% of the tourists obtained information from the professional tour operators. The other source of information includes Lonely Planet and other travel books wherefrom 7.7% of the respondents collected information about Wayanad.

The duration of the stay of tourists at a destination has lot of significance from the economic point of view. The longer the duration, the greater is the economic impact on the place as tourists spend considerably on accommodation, food and other services like internal transport, etc. The responses show that more than half of the tourists (55%) stay on an average for 2-3 days in Wayanad, followed by 17.3% whose average stay is for 4-5 days and 10.6% stay just for a day. Interestingly, a sizeable number (7.7%) preferred to stay for more than a week.

The tourists' responses reveal that scenic beauty is the reason for selecting Wayanad for a vacation for 40.6% of the respondents. Unspoiled nature is another major reason for 28.5%, followed by novelty for 20.5% and proximity for 6.2%. Other reasons (4.2%) include Ayurvedic treatment and charity. There is no exaggeration in saying that Wayanad is one of the few places that has been able to retain its pristine nature.

Accommodation preferred largely determines the approach of tourists and their expectations from the destination. Resorts takes precedence over other forms of tourist accommodation in terms of respondents choice as 31.7% of the respondents preferred to stay in resorts. Homestay is the next preferred mode of accommodation (30.2%). Hotels are chosen by 27.5% and a very less percentage of respondents preferred to stay in Government guest houses (2.5%) followed by youth hostels (1.5%) and with friends and relatives (1.7%).

Tourists' interest for indigenous Tourism

An overwhelming majority of the respondent (358 out of 404) are interested to experience indigenous tours. Though many tourists have an innate desire to experience indigenous tours, unfortunately 371 out of 404 (91.8%) have not experienced an indigenous tour in any of their trips. In their visit to Wayanad, just a minicule 6 tourists out of 404 have planned to experience indigenous tourism in Muthanga Wildlife Sactuary and Uravu of Wayanad. Thus 227 respondents out of 398 are either not visiting any indigenous attractions because of lack of awareness about it or due to lack of time for not visiting indigenous attractions in Wayanad (45

tourists). The remaining 126 tourists do not have any interest in indigenous attractions

Perception of Wayanad as a tourist destination

Perception about a place usually refers mental images, popular notions, beliefs and so on. Positive perception about a tourist destination implies a captive market to be tapped by appropriate marketing strategies. It is heartening to note that tourists are very positively disposed towards Wayanad going by their perceptions about the place.

The results indicate that '*Wayanad as an Eco-friendly destination*' obtained highest weighted average score (4.2079) and ranked first. Similarly, '*Wayanad offers a novel tourism experience*' ranked second with a weighted average score 4.1634. '*Wayanad has the potential for interactive nature based adventure activities*' ranked third (4.0792). '*Wayanad is unique with its indigenous culture*' also received a good score (3.9777) and ranked fourth. All the other indicators secured a weighted average score close to four. '*Wayanad is an unexplored tourist destination*' perceived as the least scored indicator (3.5248).

Tourist Perceptions of Indigenous tourism

Sound understanding of the tourist perceptions of indigenous tourism is crucial to assess the demand for indigenous tourism in Wayanad. In order to capture the perceptions of tourists on the indigenous content of Wayanad Tourism, respondents' perceptions are obtained. Towards this six indicators of indigenous tourism were given in five point scale. Variables were ranked based on the weighted average score.

'*Wayanad is a potential indigenous tourism destination*' received the highest score of 4.1584 and ranked first. The statements '*Indigenous tourism helps in preserving the native culture*', '*Indigenous tourism helps in sustainable development of Wayanad*' and '*Indigenous tourism helps in empower the aboriginal community of Wayanad*' also got scores greater than 4. That means tourists have the opinion that Indigenous tourism helps in preserving the native culture and heritage, the sustainable development of Wayanad and to empower the aboriginal community of Wayanad. '*Indigenous tourism supports the rural tourism promotion of Wayanad*' scored very close to 4. '*Indigenous Tourism helps in poverty reduction*' ranked the least as very few respondents supported the view that indigenous tourism rarely helps in poverty reduction.

Choices of attractions

Wayanad is unique with a variety of attractions located in a single district. The region is home to Cultural tourism, Ethnic tourism, Rural tourism, Tribal tourism, Eco tourism, Wildlife tourism, Leisure tourism, Adventure tourism, Plantation tourism, Hydel tourism, Spice tourism, Island tourism and Pilgrimage tourism. Since

Wayanad has a rich endowment of tourism attractions and is a place for all, it was felt appropriate to ascertain the specific images that Wayanad conjures up in the minds of tourists. Accordingly, respondents were asked to rank in order what comes to their mind when they think of Wayanad and their intensity of desire to experience the various types of tourism products.

The Attractions of Wayanad

Respondents were asked to give their preferences for the forms of tourism available in Wayanad. Among the thirteen types of tourism products, Wild life tourism secured the highest mean score (1.8441) as the most preferred type of tourism followed by Eco- tourism (1.7797) with second highest score. Island tourism (1.6411) and Adventure tourism (1.6312) are ranked third and fourth. Cultural tourism (1.6188) and Ethnic tourism (1.5842) are also preferred by a significant number. Pilgrimage tourism scored the least (1.3168), followed by Hydel tourism (1.3416) and Spice tourism (1.4728) in the lowest rank.

Tourists' Nationality and Interest in Indigenous attractions

The responses related to the interest in exploring the indigenous attractions of Wayanad further reinforce Wayanad's strength and potential as an indigenous tourism attraction. An overwhelming majority of domestic tourists (84.4%), and foreign tourist (95.4%) are very positively disposed to the concept of indigenous tourism and the excitement that goes with it. Thus, it is evident that no matter where the tourists come from, so far as Wayanad is concerned indigenous tourism strikes them.

H0 Interest in indigenous attractions is independent of nationality. The Chi square test proves that there is significant association between nationality and interest in indigenous attractions (p value; 0.004). Thus the null hypothesis is rejected at 1 percent significant level.

Nationality and previous exposure to Indigenous tours

An attempt is also made to know the earlier exposure of the tourists to indigenous tours of any kind and anywhere. The data shows that both Indian and foreign tourists have not had any previous experience of indigenous tours. More than 90% of the tourists in both the categories have not visited any indigenous tourism attractions earlier.

Ho Past experience of indigenous tour is independent on nationality. The null hypothesis 'Past experience of indigenous tour is independent of nationality' cannot be rejected as the Chi Square P value is 0.349, which is greater than the significant level of 5 percent. Thus, it is clear that past experience of indigenous tourism and nationality are independent to each other.

Nationality and plan to visit indigenous attractions

It is noted that despite the curiosity, excitement and interest of the tourists, quite surprisingly, of the 404 sample respondents, only in the case of six tourist itineraries Wayanad's indigenous attractions found a place. From this, the tourism promotion and development agency's indifference towards indigenous tourism could be noted.

Ho Plan to visit indigenous attraction is independent of nationality. The P value of Pearson Chi square test is .021 which is less than .05, the significant level. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected. Nationality and plan to visit indigenous attractions are associated to each other.

Nationality and Reason for not visiting indigenous attractions

In line with the earlier findings presented, where Wayanad's indigenous attractions did not find a place in the tourist itinerary, the reasons for not visiting specific indigenous attractions of the place ranged from *unawareness of such attractions* to the *lack of time* and *not interested*. Here again, the marketing effort in showcasing Wayanad's indigenous attractions leaves much to be desired. Since tourism is an economic activity, nothing happens for the good of the destination unless the tourists visit the place.

Ho Reason for not visiting indigenous attractions is independent of nationality

The P value .020 explains that the null hypothesis rejected at 5% significant level. That means reason for not visiting indigenous attractions and nationality are related. It is quite natural that people who are completely new to a culture would have more interest towards it than who are familiar to it.

Findings of the Study

1. The place of origin of tourists reveals that Wayanad is known as a tourist attraction across the globe. Europe is the major International market for Wayanad. Similarly, Wayand also receives a sizeable number of visitors from other districts of Kerala. Karnataka and Tamilnadu are the other tourist generating regions for Wayanad.
2. Though more than three- fourths of the tourists are the first time visitors, number of repeated visitors are also significant. It may be assumed that Wayanad has enough attractions which enthral tourists to visit Wayanad often.
3. It is assumed that hustle and bustle of urban life force the people of urban areas to look for unpolluted and peaceful natural scenic places for relaxation and rejuvenation. The nature, environment, climate and the native village activities might offer a new experience for urban tourists in Wayanad.
4. Wayanad is endowed with breathtaking natural attractions and nature based activities are savoured by tourists with family and friends very much.

5. The result highlights that Wayand is promoted primarily by word of mouth between friends and relatives. Internet plays a very important role as a large number of tourists especially foreign tourists collect information and keenly read the feedback reviews of the earlier visitors about a destination.
6. Wayanad is a place for all categories of tourists from weekenders to tourists who stay for more than a week.
7. Strikingly scenic, well-preserved nature and novelty forms the major pulling factors for the district. Even the small percent arrival for Ayurvedic treatment open a vital avenue for Wayanad since the climate and availability of medicinal plants could make it a hub of Ayurvedic treatments
8. Resorts are the preferred mode of accommodation at all the major destinations of hill stations. However homestay is also equally preferred by tourists in Wayand. Thus, the trend for homestay is in the right direction as homestays are the accommodation suitable for the nature of tourism in Wayanad .
9. Tourists coming to Wayanad are highly interested to experience indigenous attractions. But there is neither any information nor effective promotion of the indigenous tourism products of Wayanad. It is clear that they would have planned to visit and experience the flavour of indigenous areas if they had known about it earlier.
10. Wayanad has been perceived as an eco friendly, reasonably priced destination with unique indigenous culture, variety in attractions and scope for interactive nature based adventure activities offering a novel tourism experience.
11. The responses make it amply clear that tourists by and large have a positive disposition towards indigenous tourism. They seem to have realised the benefits of indigenous tourism and favour it.
12. Tourists to Wayanad are keen to watch wildlife and experience eco friendly nature. Wayanad is not known for religious tourism as pilgrimage tourism ranks last. So also, spice tourism and hydel tourism of Wayanad are yet to catch up. Further, going by the responses, it may be seen that culture and ethnic tourism do not score high
13. Despite little exposure to indigenous tourism, Wayanad has lured them to experience what indigenous tourism is.
14. The previous exposure to of indigenous tourism is independent to nationality.
15. The absence of Wayanad's indigenous attractions in the tourist itineraries explains the failure of the promoters at national and international level in communicating the essence of indigenous tourism and Wayanad as a product of the same to the market.

Suggested model for indigenous tourism in Wayand

The proposed indigenous tourism model aims at providing livelihood security

and financial empowerment for indigenous people by encouraging them to directly involve and participate in the tourism management in their own village. It also aims at conserving the indigenous culture and protecting the natural resources. The model provides direct access to the market without the involvement of middlemen.

The model recommends indigenous attractions of two different streams - **Natural and Created**. Natural indigenous attractions may be designed and targeted at Special Interest Tourists. Indigenous village visits to experience the lifestyle and culture of native people, to enjoy ethnic food, to learn about tribal medicines and treatments, opportunity to interact with indigenous people, and to listen to indigenous interpretations are the major attractions in this segment. As tourists visit the native settlements, all these activities need to be systematically planned without disturbing the inhabitants. Identifying the interested community members and co-ordinating with them are crucial in the whole exercise. Once the reservation for the visit of the tourist is made, various activities with respect to the visit of the destination, stay and participation of the visitors in the activities need to be coordinated.

The **created indigenous attractions** in contrast to natural indigenous attractions focus on the common interest tourists. Indigenous culture of Wayanad is recreated in an artificial ambience and offered as a tourism product. Indigenous museums and cultural theatres can be designed in this project where they provide a venue for tribal artists to perform their art forms. The current generation, thus could be motivated to learn and retain the interest in the traditional dance, music and instruments once these arts are built in the tourism product. Similarly, tribal markets may be created where tribal people could sell agriculture products, forest products, medicinal plants and tribal medicines, bamboo and cane crafts, tribal weapons, musical instruments, pottery, ornaments etc. to the tourists. A forum for the indigenous people to showcase their products and market them to the visitors will eventually relieve them from the exploitation of the middlemen. In order to give a professional touch to the whole exercise, training facilities could be created to impart the required skills to the local people.

Suggestions

The need for sustainable tourism practices for protecting the rich biodiversity and preserving the indigenous culture of Wayanad is possible only when conservation and tourism development reciprocate each other. Tourism development should be compatible with the eco-system of the place. For instance, encouraging homestay operations in Wayanad will contribute to sustainable accommodation option suitable for Wayanad, which will be beneficial for the local community also. Training and education on various indigenous arts may be imparted to youth of the region who could carry forward the rich legacy of

indigenous culture. The Tribal Development Department of Kerala could encourage and support local tribal entrepreneurship in opening up tribal handicraft centers at major tourist sites. The Government of Kerala and District Tourism Promotion Council should work together to spread awareness among the stakeholders about their role in promoting responsible tourism initiatives.

Government has to embark on more effective programmes to involve and enable participation of local people in a big way in the development and promotion of indigenous tourism of the region. Simultaneously, appropriate measures may be taken up by the government towards complementing tourism with other sectors such as agriculture, small scale industry, handicrafts, etc.

Excepting very few tribal people who work in association with tourism, others of the various tribal communities are not aware about tourism. It is difficult to design and develop indigenous tourism without the direct involvement and co-operation of tribal community of Wayanad. Hence, the need of the hour is creating awareness among them about the benefits of indigenous tourism. Their meaningful and whole hearted involvement in every stage of tourism is essential for the success of indigenous tourism. NGOs and other social groups may reach out to the tribes in Wayanad and contribute to politics aimed at empowerment of tribal people through promotion of tourism.

Well coordinated effort by Department of Tourism and Department of Tribal Development to identify few tribal villages for indigenous tourism on a trial basis is the need of the hour. Tribal village visits, indigenous interpretation of nature and their culture, a platform to experience the arts, crafts and ethnic food of the indigenous people, etc. may be created with the guidance of select people from the respective tribal villages. Ethno medicine is another important area to be focused in indigenous tourism. Aboriginal interpretations can be facilitated by employing educated tribal youth as guides. Indigenous interpretations by these guides would bring out more vividly the cultural and social aspects of the region.

There should also be clear policy prescriptions that recognize, respect and safeguard indigenous sovereignty over the resources. Appropriate laws may be enacted to minimize the exploitation of tribal community at different levels in the name of tourism. Holistic and dynamic approach to the concept of indigenous tourism need to be adopted by considering the value of indigenous products

Conclusion

There is a global demand for indigenous tourism experiences and for values and knowledge for indigenous culture. At the global level, countries like Australia, Newzeland and South America have been effectively marketing their indigenous attractions. The study reveals that Wayanad has enormous potential for indigenous tourism promotion and there is high demand for it in the tourist market, it is high

time to start initiatives for designing indigenous tourism suitable for Wayanad. As it involves many sentiments and emotional elements, well organized and well planned efforts with indigenous people in the front may bring a unique image for Wayanad tourism. The suggested twin stream model would match with the requirements of the destination. Such a good model if comes true, will brand the district as a responsible indigenous tourist destination.

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