

Indigenous Tourism Practices And Their Role In Promoting An Eco-Friendly And Livable Society

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Abstract

Indigenous tourism has emerged as an important pathway for linking environmental conservation with the socio-economic well-being of local communities. By integrating traditional knowledge, cultural heritage, and locally available resources, indigenous tourism contributes to revenue generation, cultural preservation, and community capacity building. This paper examines key indigenous tourism practices and analyses their role in promoting an eco-friendly and livable society. Drawing on secondary sources and documented practices, the study highlights how indigenous tourism supports biodiversity conservation, strengthens local economies, revitalizes traditional arts and crafts, and enhances community participation in tourism development. The findings suggest that indigenous tourism offers a balanced approach to tourism development by harmonizing environmental sustainability, economic inclusiveness, and socio-cultural integrity. The study emphasizes the need for policy support and community-centric planning to integrate indigenous tourism into mainstream sustainable tourism strategies.

Keywords: Indigenous tourism; Sustainable tourism; Community participation; Eco-friendly tourism; Livable society
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Introduction

Tourism has evolved into one of the largest global industries, contributing significantly to employment generation, investment flows, and regional development. Since the 1960s, many developing economies have increasingly positioned tourism as a strategic tool for socio-economic development. In this context, indigenous tourism has gained prominence as a form of tourism that leverages local resources, traditional knowledge, and cultural heritage to create sustainable and inclusive development outcomes. The growth and development of tourism industry create more and improved jobs, consolidate higher investment returns, benefit local development and add to poverty reduction, while levitating awareness and provision for the sustainable use of natural resources. In most cases, a lion's share of the destination income is generated using indigenously available resources and traditional knowledge of the tourist areas. It opens a new approach on the regional resources based tourism, called Indigenous tourism.

Indigenous Tourism

Indigenous tourism refers to tourism activities that are owned, managed, or significantly influenced by indigenous communities, where indigenous culture, land, and traditional knowledge constitute the core tourism attraction. Existing literature highlights indigenous tourism as a mechanism for enhancing economic participation, cultural revitalization, and self-determination among indigenous populations (Ryan, 2002; Butler & Hinch, 2007). [Indigenous tourism concentrated on inherent community and described by different terms, is gradually growing as a vital part of global tourism industry. It is referred to as

Native or First Nations tourism in Canada; Aboriginal or Indigenous tourism in Australia. It is also referred to as ethnological Tourism or Ancestral Tourism in some nations. Augmented demand for Indigenous cultural experiences is creating new economic opportunities for many indigenous or local communities around the world. Tourism is absolutely a significant economic, socio-cultural and political phenomenon and has been identified as a basis for Indigenous peoples and communities to develop a better socio-economic future (Ryan 2002; Deutschlander and Miller 2003; Fuller, Buultjens and Cummings 2005; Butler and Hinch 2007). Indigenous tourism is a tourism activity in which indigenous people not only directly involved in tourism but also control and or having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction. The term Indigenous or Aboriginal Tourism is used broadly to describe the participation of indigenous local people in tourism either directly through jobs and employment or indirectly through ownership of business enterprises (Tourism, Western Australia, 2006). In Australia, Aboriginal or Indigenous tourism is interpreted as, a tourism product which is either aboriginal maintained or part retained, employs local people, or provides agreeable contact with aboriginal people, culture or land' (SATC, 1995). In the words of Butler and Hinch (2007), In Canada, Parker (1993) defined Aboriginal tourism as, any tourism product or service, which is owned and operated by Aboriginal people. Among the Kuna Indians of Panama, Swain (1989) considers indigenous tourism as tourism based on the group's land and cultural identity and controlled from within by the group's. Therefore, indigenous tourism typically involves small businesses based on the inherited indigenous knowledge of culture and nature.

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Indigenous tourism flourishes when indigenous people operate tours and cultural centers, provide visitor facilities and control tourist access to cultural events and home lands. According to Smith (1992), the four H's of habitat, heritage, history and handicrafts, define indigenous tourism as that segment of the visitor industry that directly involves native people whose ethnicity is a tourist attraction. Indigenous tourism is a means for cultural economic and social survival for many native communities at the destination and it offers a way to overcome social seclusion.

Indigenous Tourism Practices

The different practices come under indigenous tourism include:

(i) Revitalizing Traditional Arts and Crafts: Revitalization of traditional arts and crafts represents a critical dimension of indigenous tourism. Tourism-induced demand for handicrafts and cultural products creates livelihood opportunities for artisans, strengthens the rural non-farm economy, and contributes to the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems. By integrating traditional crafts into tourism value chains, indigenous tourism enhances market access while reducing the need for alternative livelihood strategies. In the villages there is no substitute employment for most of the craftsmen and the single possible way to improve their lot and indeed prevent a further deterioration in their living levels is to give them as much market protection as possible through the indigenous tourism and at the same time improve their productivity. These practice of connecting the traditional industry to tourism, help over the years, to traditional art forms and handicrafts to retain their demand in the market and artisans need not to find alternative means to support their families.

(ii) On-the-Job Training: It is a personal training located at the work sites, where somebody who knows how to do a job displays another how to perform it. In ancient times, the work done by most people did not trust on intellectual thinking or academic education. Parents or community members, who knew the skills necessary for survival, passed their knowledge on to the children through direct instruction. It is a frequently used method of training because it requires only a person who knows how to do the task and the tools, the person uses to do the task. It may not be the most effective or the most efficient method at times, but it is normally the easiest to arrange and manage and best indigenous practice to pass the unique knowledge. Because the training takes place on the job, it can be highly realistic and no transfer of learning is required. It is often economical because no special equipment is needed other than what is normally used on the job.

(iii) Use of Indigenous Resources: A strategy is suggested for the conservation of genetic resources whereby conservation efforts are linked to tourism development projects in destinations. The tourism projects that emphasize preservation of traditional

farming systems and succeed in sustain production by relying on the maintenance of biological and genetic diversity in these systems. Basing agricultural and other resources usage efforts on indigenous knowledge, technology and social organization can provide important guidelines for the design of cropping systems that allow low-income farmers and craft mans to produce subsistence and products without dependence on external inputs and supplies. By incorporating landraces and wild relatives of crops into these systems, major achievements in the conservation of genetic resources in the destination can be obtained.

(iv) Channelization of Resources to Benefit the Local People: Community participation in tourism development is successfully implemented in many destinations through different indigenous tourism initiatives. The initiative, implemented, has succeeded in mobilizing local community and channelizing the resources for strengthening the tourism activity in various destinations. Now requires mainstreaming the indigenous practices in tourism activities by taking the principles of sustainability to the whole spectrum of tourism and encouraging the tourism service providers to adopt the indigenous practices principles in their business.

(v) Sourcing Local Goods and Services: Local sourcing or buying local is an important component of healthy and sustainable communities and economies. Local sourcing represents an opportunity for organizations to ensure a sustainable supply of goods and services while building a more locally based, self-sustaining, economy and strengthening the social health of communities.

(vi) Traditional Knowledge in Designing and Production: The preparation and processing of tourism products in a broad sense, is an important component of tourism activities. The key point of the tourism product is the designing of product. New product development process begins by generating ideas, sorting and determining product design. After clarification followed by selection of natural and anthropogenic attractions choice of destinations and prepare for schedule product development. Relentlessly budding and increasingly distinguished requirements of existing and potential customers necessitate intensive development of various forms of tourism and respect for clients' individual requirements. Traditional craftsmanship requires dedicated and traditional techniques, skills and knowledge that are often of considered as ancient and transmitted from generation to generation. Handicrafts can be traditional cultural expressions in their design, appearance and style, and can also embody traditional knowledge in the form of the skills and know-how used to produce them.

(ix) Using the Residue in Plantations and Organic Farming: The concept of using the residue from tourism in organic farming benefits both human life

and sustainable tourism in the destinations. The fundamental point is that organic farming both as a tool for welfare of the destinations and their importance and potential for the upcoming future of healthy generations. These will facilitate to create potent economic strength to small villages. Besides, providing organic food is one of the most important attitudes and can highlight healthier and longer being to visitor. Organic product in tourism can targets tourists and organize tours for the purpose of health, relaxation activities, agriculture education, culture and gastronomy. This indigenous practice offers a practical help for farmers, local governors, local people (especially villagers), tour operators and visitors fleeing from the intensity of city life in the light of the findings.

(x) Sourcing Local Commodity and Specialty Products: Small and specialty farms and produces are often less able to compete in global markets than large commodity farms, but recently niche markets like community supported agriculture, farmers' markets, and agricultural tourism have emerged to reinforce many small farms. In addition, indigenous tourism practices provide on-farm gourmet meal programs connect with, nature, cuisine, and agriculture in innovative ways. Another recent alternative development strategy for rural areas is culinary tourism—tourism based on a desire to experience unique and/or culturally specific cuisine. Local food tourism networks are a growing component of culinary tourism.

These practices thus help maximize the positive contribution of tourism to biodiversity conservation and also poverty reduction and the achievement of common goals towards sustainable development. Sustainable tourism provides crucial economic incentives for habitat protection. Revenues from visitor spending are often channeled back into nature conservation or capacity building programmes for local communities to manage protected areas these can be attained through indigenous tourism.

Indigenous Tourism for Eco-Friendly and Livable Society

Indigenous tourism has increasingly been recognized as a viable development strategy for rural and resource-dependent regions. By promoting low-impact tourism activities and community participation, indigenous tourism contributes not only to income generation but also to environmental stewardship, cultural continuity, and social cohesion. The following discussion outlines key ways in which indigenous tourism supports the development of an eco-friendly and livable society.

(i) Employment Maintenance: Indigenous tourism assists job retention in services such as retailing and conveyance, hospitality etc. It can also provide additional income for farmers and in some cases, for foresters and fisherman. Job maintenance is not as ethically glamorous as job creation, but, by helping the viability of small groups, it is essential to the survival

of remote rural areas. Studies of rural Austria, Sweden and Ireland have documented the role of tourism in job retention.

(ii) New Trade Opportunities: Indigenous Tourism generates new opportunities for local and traditional industry. Even those rural businesses not directly involved in tourism can benefit from tourist activities by creating better associations with tourist facilities. Unique local foods can be used as part of the tourism offering in a locality. Indigenous tourism facilitates expansion of complementary businesses such as service stations, hospitality services, recreational activities arts/crafts etc.

(iii) Opportunities for Youth: The tourism industry is often promoted as an exciting and growing industry suited to the energies and passion of young. Living conditions are enhanced with the opportunities for training and direct involvement in management of tourism businesses, particularly those within small communities.

(iv) Community Diversification: Community diversification is an important activity in many highlands and climatically marginal areas. Forest regions have suffered serious socio-economic problems in recent years, partly because of the mechanization of tree felling and processing, and partly because of falling prices following reduced timber demand and strict regulations. Indigenous tourism assists forestry by diversifying income sources for forest communities if the special features of the forest atmosphere are realized for recreational and developed for tourism.

(v) Enhances and Revitalizes Human Capabilities: Indigenous tourism encourages conformity to an ideal image of community which can result in expansion of personal relations and community harmony. Thus, the basis for community solidarity shifts from shared cultural background to shared image. Infrastructure plays a fundamental role in shaping a community's identity and self-importance and so the potential of tourism for improvements to facilities and amenities has positive implications for community pride, particularly rural attractions as an important repository of rural culture.

(vi) Preservation of Rural Culture and Heritage: In indigenous tourism, the sense of location is a fundamental element in both the tourists and host community. The outlook makes the region attractive to visit and live in. This sense of surrounding is maintained partially through rural sittings which play a vital role in preserving heritage.

(vii) Increase Arts and Crafts Sale: Arts and crafts of regions have a special place in the indigenous tourism and nations. Many advocates have noted that tourism can assist arts and crafts, both by recognizing their importance and by supplying craft products. Income

flows from these activities. Support between the arts and tourism can be a two-way process. Many communities now use crafts and arts feast as a promotion device to encourage visitors to come to their areas.

(viii) Ecological Improvements: Infrastructure improvements such as village footpath and traffic rules, sewage and litter disposal can be assisted by revenues generated from tourism and political pressures from tourism authorities. These help develop pride of place, retain existing community and businesses, and in attracting new enterprises and families. The demand for better environmental condition gets better recognition as it supports income and welfare of the family.

Thus, maximizing indigenous tourism marketing efforts is needed to create and leverage potential partnerships with cultural/heritage segments. It helps to provide value-added services for consumers, including providing directions and creating awareness for indigenous tourism destinations and historical/cultural activities—productively differentiating them from other destinations.

Conclusion

Indigenous tourism represents a sustainable development pathway that integrates environmental conservation with socio-economic and cultural objectives. By drawing upon indigenous knowledge systems, local resources, and community participation, indigenous tourism contributes to biodiversity conservation, livelihood enhancement, and cultural preservation. The growing global demand for indigenous tourism experiences underscores the relevance of this tourism form in achieving broader sustainability goals.

The study highlights that successful promotion of indigenous tourism requires well-defined policy frameworks that safeguard indigenous rights, support community ownership, and ensure equitable benefit sharing. Experiences from countries such as Australia and New Zealand demonstrate that structured policy support and institutional mechanisms are critical for the long-term success of indigenous tourism initiatives. In the Indian context, greater emphasis on indigenous tourism can strengthen rural development, promote eco-friendly practices, and enhance destination resilience.

Overall, indigenous tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to the creation of an eco-friendly and livable society. However, its success depends on inclusive planning, respect for indigenous sovereignty, and alignment with sustainable tourism principles. Strengthening indigenous tourism within national tourism strategies can support balanced development while preserving cultural and ecological heritage for future generations.

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