

**A STUDY ON COMMUNITY TOURISM AND ITS IMPACT IN KERALA WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO ERNAKULAM DISTRICT**

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Ernakulam District, Kerala

Kerala, a state situated on the tropical Malabar Coast of south western India, is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country. Named as one of the ten paradises of the world by the National Geographic Channel, Kerala is famous especially for its ecotourism initiatives. Its unique culture and traditions, coupled with its varied demography, has made Kerala one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Tourism industry is a major contributor to the state's economy. Ernakulam District is a district of the state of Kerala in southern India. Ernakulam, the commercial capital of Kerala, served by an international airport, fine communication facilities, excellent accommodation, modern amenities and a lot of attractive tourist places gives a breath taking experience for its visitors and settlers. The district took its form on 1st April 1958, by carving out the areas of erstwhile Travancore, Kochi & Malabar kingdoms. The word Ernakulam was derived from a Tamil word 'Erayanarkulam' which means 'Lord Shiva's abode'. The commercial capital of Kerala and the most cosmopolitan of Kerala's cities, Cochin is a fascinating blend of cultures. From time immemorial, it has been the favorite destination of globe-trotters and explorers.

Key Words: Eco Tourism, Ernakulam, Commercial Capital, Fascinating

Introduction

Tourism is **travel** for **recreational, leisure** or **business** purposes. The **World Tourism Organization** defines tourists as people who "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four (24) hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited." Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity.

THE MARVEL CALLED KERALA

Wedged between the Western Ghats on the East and the Arabian Sea on the West, the narrow strip of land known as Kerala is a destination of a lifetime. The timeless beauty of the palm fringed beaches of Kovalam and Varkala, the majesty of the undulating hills of Munnar and Vagamon, the serenity of the pristine backwaters of Kumarakom & Kuttanad and the enchanting woods and forests of Thekkady and Silent Valley will have you bowled over. That such a small terrain can hold diverse geographical features and cultures is a wonder in itself.

TYPES OF TOURISM

All types of tourism in India have registered phenomenal growth in the last decade ever since the Indian government decided to boost revenues from the tourism sector by projecting India as the ultimate tourist spot. The reason why India has been doing well in all types of tourism in India is that India has always been known for its hospitality, uniqueness, and charm – attributes that have been attracting foreign travelers to India in hordes. The Indian government, in order to boost tourism of various kinds in India, has set up the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. This ministry recently launched a campaign called ‘Incredible India!’ in order to encourage different types of tourism in India. The result was that in 2004, foreign tourists spent around US\$ 15.4 billion during their trips to India. Being a country with tremendous diversity, India has a lot to offer in terms of tourism and related activities. The diversity that India is famous for ensures that there is something to do for all tourists in India, no matter what their interests. Some examples are.

OUTDOOR TOURISM

The Indian subcontinent is a geographically varied land form that contains dense jungle, pristine coasts and the highest mountain range in the world, the Himalayas. These mountains are among the most popular destinations on Earth for hikers, mountaineers and climbers, and they offer nearly endless possibilities for trekking adventures. In the lowlands, the forests of India are home to exotic wildlife, including the rare white tigers of Bandhavgarh National Park, and they are popular destinations for safaris and ecological tourism. The varied beaches of India are popular with surfers, divers, sailors and sun worshipers.

SPIRITUAL TOURISM

The birthplace of Buddhism and Hinduism and home to hundreds of monasteries and ancient temples, India may be the top destination in the world for spiritual tourism. The Tibetan Buddhist exile community in Dharamsala is home to the Dalai Lama and attracts soul seekers from across the globe. The holy city of Varanasi sits on the banks of the Ganges River and draws hordes of international tourists to its ghats and towering Hindu temples. Many modern international spiritual movements, such as Vipassana, are based in India and followers come to study and meditate with the masters in the home country.

SIGHTSEEING TOURISM

India is a popular country for historical sightseeing, and the country's thousands of years worth of monuments and architecture are some of the world's most spectacular. The Taj Mahal was built in the 17th century by a Mughal emperor in Agra and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The 10th century Hindu temples of Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh feature carved stone walls that depict the decant life of those times, including sexual encounters.

YOGA TOURISM

A health phenomenon that has taken the world by storm, yoga is based on ancient Indian scriptures and practices, and many modern practitioners consider a trip to India the must-do trip of their life. The southern city of Mysore is home to several schools that teach Ashtanga yoga, and yoga ashrams can be

found all over the country. Tourists come to partake in week-long retreats, months-long certificate programs or even years of dedicated training.

LEISURE TOURISM

India is also a global hot spot for those who just want to party or relax. The seaside town of Goa hosts large parties and raves as well as a variety of festivals on its white sand beaches. Luxury resorts that offer all-inclusive holidays line the southern Goan coast and the idyllic Andaman Islands.

ERNAKULAM DISTRICT

Ernakulam District is a district of the state of Kerala in southern India. The district includes the largest metropolitan region of the state Greater Cochin. Ernakulam District is the highest revenue yielding district in the state and is called and known as the commercial capital of Kerala. It is surrounded by Thrissur District to the north, Idukki District to the east, Alappuzha and Kottayam districts to the south and Arabian sea to west. Its headquarters is located at Kakkanad, a suburb of Kochi city. The language people speak in Ernakulam is Malayalam which is the mother-tongue of the State of Kerala. English is widely used in business circles. From ancient times Arabs, Chinese, Dutch, British and Portuguese seafarers followed the sea route to Kingdom of Cochin and left their impressions in the town. The word Ernakulam was drawn from the words Erayanar and kulam means abode of Lord Shiva temple near pond. Ernakulam District was formed on 1 April 1958, from the taluks of Aluva, Kunnathunadu, Kochi, Kanayannur, and Paravoor, which were formerly part of Thrissur District. Initially the district headquarters was at Ernakulam, which gave the district its name; the headquarters was later shifted to Kakkanad. When Idukki District was formed on 26 January 1977, Thodupuzha taluk was joined with Idukki and Muvattupuzha taluk separated from Kothamangalam taluk.

The famous Sivarathri at the Aluva Manappuram (situated on the banks of river Periyar) in Aluva attracts people from different parts of the country. There are lots of old Siva Temples in Ernakulam. In Sanskrit "Siva" means kalyan (good wishes, doing good and taking care of all). Adi Shankaracharya was born in Kalady and considered as a major pilgrimage centre for Hindus around the world. Kallil Kshethram (Jain temple) near Perumabavoor is also very famous. The world famous Christian pilgrim center at Malayattoor is in this district. The festival here lasts for 10 days in April. St. George Church at Kadamattam is very old and was founded by Mar Abo Metropolitan in 5th Century A.D. He brought a cross from Persia, which is still preserved in the church. The festival at the church of Vallarpadam on

September 24 attracts people belonging to all religions. The icon of Virgin Mary in this church is credited with many miracles. St. George Forane Church at Edappally, which was founded in 593 A.D., is considered to be the oldest church in Kerala after the 7 churches founded by St. Thomas. St. Antony's church at Kannamaly is famous for the Feast of St. Joseph on March 19 where a large number of people are fed.

One of the ancient mosques in Kerala is at Kanjiramattam. Chandanakkudam Festival in Kanjiramattom Mousque is very famous. Thrippakudam Temple- Ana Kallaya Kulam -PARVATHIMANGALAM is the famous pooja in this temple. Arayankavu Thookkam- Otta Thookkam and Garudan Thookkam is very famous. Cherai Pooram is famous festival in island. Celebrating this full moon day having two purposes. Fields are ready for cropping, Start cropping with prayers and some auspicious puja. Next reason is People are ready to go in to sea. So on this day women of India generally having fasting of full day and pray for her brothers, father, husband and Nation's victory. Famed for its natural harbour, one of the finest in the world, Cochin has earned the sobriquet "Queen of the Arabian Sea." Cochin is one of India's most interesting cities. Here we can see the oldest church in India. The ancient temples, churches and synagogues in this district are of special interest to the archaeologists and historians. Cochin port is one of the largest in India. The entire Island i.e. Wellington, Bolgatty, Gundu, Fort Cochin and Vypeen are connected by ferry. Bridges and road connect Ernakulam with Wellington Island, Vypeen and the fort cochin/Matte chery. The sea along the entire coast of the district and the backwaters abound in fish of various kinds offer enormous natural facilities for both marine and inland fisheries. Kochi is an ideal place that supports fisheries in its various aspects like education, research and development.

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TOURIST PLACES

Bastion Bunglow

Built in the Indo-European style way back in 1667 AD, Bastion Bungalow get its name from its location on the site of the Stromberg Bastion of the old, Dutch fort

Bhoothathankettu

Scenic dam site with boating facilities is situated in a vast virgin forest. It is a popular picnic spot with Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary nearby.

Bolgatty

Bolgatty palace built by the Dutch in 1744. Later it became the seat of the British Resident of Cochin. Today it is a hotel run by K.T.D.C. The grounds have a small golf course & several vantage points for lovely views of the harbour & the sea

Chendamangalam

This land was once the abode of the Paliath Achans, the prime ministers of the Maharajas of Kochi. Their residence, the Paliam Palace represents the architectural splendour of Kerala. The Palace houses a collection of historic documents and relics.

Cherai Beach

Cherai Beach offers a unique combination of sea and backwaters rimmed by lush green coconut palms.

Children's Park

A high-tech children's Park with Non-Conventional Energy Museum and Musical Fountain. The Children enjoy a lot with the facilities available here.

Chinese Fishing Nets

A legacy of the trading connections between China and India many centuries ago. The long rows of Chinese nets silhouetted against the sunset present a spectacular sight of Cochin's waterfront.

Chottanikkara Temple

Mother Goddess worshipped in three different forms - as Saraswati in the morning - draped in white, as Bhadrakali at noon draped in crimson, and as Durga in the evening decked in blue

Dutch Palace

The Dutch palace or Mattancherry palace was originally built by the Portuguese and presented to the Raja of Cochin, Vera Kerala Parma in 1555. It was later taken over by the Dutch who improved it through extensions and repairs in 1663.

Hill Palace

The largest archeological museum of Kerala. Paintings, carvings, etchings and other trappings of royalty like majestic beds, weapons and samples of epigraphy.

Historical Museum

Important scenes of Kerala history are portrayed through through Sculptures. Greeting the visitor outside is a statue of Parasurama, the mythological safe who is said to have created Kerala.

Iringole Forest Temple

Iringole Kavu, a temple in tropical rain forest in the middle of a town

Jewish Synagogue

The Synagogue at Mattancherry built in 1568 is the oldest Synagogue in the Common Wealth Countries. It was partially destroyed in the war of 1662, but was rebuilt by Dutch. In the mid 18th century the clock tower was added.

Kalady

Kalady is the birth place of Adi Shankaracharya the great Indian Philosopher who lived in the 8th century. There are 2 shrines in memory of Sankaracharya - one for Dakshinamoorthy and the other for the Goddess Sharada.

Kallil Temple

A 9th century Jain temple shaped out of from a huge rock on a small hill in a picturesque surrounding. The visitor has to climb 120 steps to reach this rare historic temple.

Kanjiramattom Mosque

It is believed that the mosque was erected over the mortal remains of a Muslim saint, Sheikh Parid. Another great Muslim saint, Baver is supposed to have prayed here and attained salvation.

Kodanad

One of the largest elephant capturing centres of South India. In 1977 the elephant capturing came to an end, but the elephant kraal and training centre are still there intact

Kottayil Kovilakam

Kottayil Kovilakam at Chennamangalam, which was the seat of Kshatriya chieftains of Villarvattom is situated near the ancient Kunnathali temple. Chennamangalam is an important center of handloom weaving and coir manufacturing.

Malayattoor

A place of prayer and pilgrimage; made rich by the footsteps of St. Thomas the Apostle, who sowed the seeds of Christianity in this part of the world.

Marine Drive

Marine Drive is considered to be one of the most beautiful parts of Kochy city. The marine walk is the main hangout for the local populace as the view of the backwaters and the harbour from here is excellent.

Pallipuram Fort

Pallipuram fort was built by the Portuguese in 1503. It is one of the oldest existing European monuments in India. The Dutch captured the fort in 1661 and sold it to the State of Travancore in 1789

Parikshit Thampuran Museum

This museum features collections of the 19th century paintings, Pre-historic monuments, Old coins in a numismatic gallery, Scriptures in stone & Plaster of paris, Copies of mural paintings etc & the collection from the Cochin royal family.

Santa Cruz Basilica

This Roman Catholic church is situated near the St. Francis church and is worth a visit. It is a specimen of portugese architecture built in 1503. 'Frescoes' and mural paintings decorate the ceiling and interior parts of the church

St. Francis Church

The first European church in India. Originally built in wood and named Santo Antonio in the 16th Century. Vasco da Gama was buried here in 1524.

Thrikkakara Temple

The "Vamanamoorthy" temple has notable inscriptions dating back to the 10th-13th century

Willington Island

A manmade island named after Lord Willington a former British Viceroy to India. Cochin Harbour, Southern Naval Command, Best hotels in the city, Port Trust head quarters, major trading centers etc. are situated at Willington Island.

COMMUNITIES

This district is listed as the "most advanced" district in Kerala .It is urbanised 47.55%. Hindus accounts for the largest community followed by Christian and Muslims. A small population of Jains, Jews and Sikhs are also residing in Kochi. Also, Ernakulam district has the highest number of Christian Population in India (More than 12 Lakhs).

Festivals and traditions

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COMMUNITY TOURISM

Tourism that benefits local people

Community tourism (sometimes called community-based tourism) is a form of tourism which aims to include and benefit local communities, particularly indigenous peoples and villagers in the rural South (ie 'developing world'). For instance, villagers might host tourists in their village, managing the scheme communally and sharing the profits. There are many types of community tourism project, including many in which the 'community' works with a commercial tour operator, but all community tourism projects should give local people a fair share of the benefits/profits and a say in deciding how incoming tourism is managed.

Tourism that benefits tourists

These tours open up a world of adventure and opportunity. Visit the Amazon trek through the Andes or the Sinai experience the magic of the central Australian desert Good community-based tours take you beyond mainstream tourism. You'll meet people from different countries and learn far more about them and their culture than on conventional tours. You'll feel better knowing that your visit is genuinely helping your hosts. And if you want to simply lie on a beach. well, there are tours here that feature some of the best beaches on the planet.

Community tourism should.

1. Be run with the involvement and consent of local communities.
(Local people should participate in planning and managing the tour.)
2. Give a fair share of profits back to the local community.
(Ideally this will include community projects (health, schools, etc).)
3. Involve communities rather than individuals.
(Working with individuals can disrupt social structures.)
4. Be environmentally sustainable
(Local people must be involved if conservation projects are to succeed.)
5. Respect traditional culture and social structures.
6. Have mechanisms to help communities cope with the impact of western tourists.
7. Keep groups small to minimise cultural / environmental impact.
8. Brief tourists before the trip on appropriate behaviour.
9. Not make local people perform inappropriate ceremonies, etc.
10. Leave communities alone if they don't want tourism.
(People should have the right to say 'no' to tourism.)

IMPACT IN ERNAKULAM DISTRICT

Presenting the potential visitor and / or a proposed tourism development or activity to the community as a positive occurrence is crucial. In effect, in relation to tourism and community development, the key to marketing and to community development centres in Ernakulam on understanding our markets and our people. Marketing encompasses the entire business. It is the whole business seen from the point of view of the final result that is from the customer's point of view.

After finding out what the customer wants or needs, the product (or service) is developed to satisfy those needs and then it is promoted at prices mutually acceptable to both producer and consumer. There are various genres or fields that marketing is involved in, all of which take a different approach. These include direct marketing where individual customers are contacted personally, public sector marketing (political parties are the clear leaders in this area of marketing, but other public sector agencies run marketing programs to promote their services), relationship marketing (building loyalty such as through frequent flyer programs), social marketing (including educational

programs such as the 'drink drive' programs where an attempt is made to alter behaviour) and destination marketing (getting people to visit places, keeping them there and getting them to come back again). A core component of the modern economy is that of service provision. Services are intangible in that they cannot be tested without using them being inseparable from the provider / producer and they have a strong people presence in any transaction. Being intangible, services cannot be seen, tasted, felt, heard or smelled before they are purchased, so we need to provide some type of tangible evidence or representation (such as brochures). In order for a service to be delivered, the provider and customer must both be present, making them inseparable. Tourism and many aspects of communities are intangible and inseparable services. Apart from intangibility and inseparability, services are also variable and perishable. The quality of the service depends on who provides the services, what mood that person is in, what state of mind the customer is in and where they are provided, making each service provision a new and different transaction. Because of all these points, a service cannot be stored to be sold later – once the aircraft has taken off, that particular (empty) seat on that flight cannot be sold. It is perishable. These points are important, as tourism and tourists' encounters with communities are essentially service-based experiences elements that visitors most recall are not the physical things they saw, but the emotions they experienced through the interactions they had with community members, their tour hosts or others. This does not necessarily mean that every visitor wants a deep and meaningful encounter with every community member – some may simply want to have some peace and quiet and be left alone.

WHAT ERNAKULAM HAS TO FOCUS ON?

If the current market is suitable and desirable, strategies to continue to support and develop them can be developed. However, if the community wishes to broaden or even change the type of visitor; they need to understand the nature of different markets segments and niches. The marketing basics of supply and demand have to be taken into account – there is no point in trying to attract a certain type of visitor if you cannot provide what they want. There are many ways to segment visitor markets, from simple demographic segmentation (by age, income and so on – such as the Baby Boomers, Generation X etc.) or by their behaviour and psychological needs (looking to rest and relax, to be challenged, meet others and so on). Understanding market segmentations

is a continual process, but some of the more common segments that many communities are interested in attracting include:

- Nature or eco travellers

Focus on learning, experiential activities and efforts that support conservation

- Outdoor enthusiasts

Active holiday-makers Natural, healthy food

- Heritage travellers

Once the community's assets (supply) and the potential tourist's interests and needs (demand) are established, short and long-term projects can be identified and prioritized according to their value to the community, value to the tourist and their advantage over competing communities

CONCLUSION

Once the group is gathered, a Vision Statement is required that identifies what is really valued and desired for the community. Under pinning the statement will be a set of goals that need to be articulated and agreed upon, such as the number of jobs, for whom, at what pay scales, for what seasons, or to encourage new residents, retain young members of the community and so on. While agreeing on this is important, there also needs to be a commitment from the community to work to achieve the vision. Now that the community knows who is visiting them and what they want for their future, they must understand what they actually have in their community by undertaking a Product Inventory. This is primarily a list of all existing attractions and tourism-related facilities that is then rated on their value to the tourists and their competitive advantage. In addition, the community's infrastructure needs to be assessed so that the capacity to support an expanding tourism industry can be determined. Of particular concern are water, sewerage, and waste disposal and transportation systems.

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