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The long-term sustainability of tourism in Kerala depends on delivering a high quality tourism experience within our host communities. It depends as well on the wise use and conservation of our natural resources; the protection and enhancement of our environment; and the conservation of our cultural assets which includes heritage.

Trends and Patterns

The heritage tourists are growing at a faster rate than any other type of tourism. Beach tourism was the buzz word in the 80s, eco-tourism was in the 90's and now it is the turn of heritage tourism. Travellers are looking for experiences. As world gets more high tech, there is a growing demand for experiences that are "high touch." The tourists want heritage, culture, education and adventure which are authentic.

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Comprehensive Development Plans

Comprehensive tourist development plans are essential as the pre-condition for developing any tourist potential of a place. It should be a fundamental principle of any tourist development plan that both conservation, in its widest sense and tourism benefit from it. Heritage sites are important economic and cultural assets that they should be given publicity and be advertised and promoted.

When it comes to the overall



development of holistic heritage tourism of Kerala, the following objectives shall be followed:

- Kerala will practise and promote its heritage and culture in a sustainable way without affecting its unique qualities and its significance.
- The cultural assets of Kerala, their values and significance, will be conserved and safeguarded for this and future generations.
- Kerala will continue to be a developing area and will support and further the vitality of the local community.

The tourists will need hotels, hostels, restaurants and several types of transportation. They may want shops to meet their specific needs. Providing all of these is important for heritage sites for without them their culture will be inaccessible for many. It is not the normal function of the government but requires co-operation between public and private sectors.

Tourism is a commercial activity and the tourists look for fun and recreation. It is a bit difficult to control, but tourist experiences must be controlled.

All cultural assets are not equal in terms of attractions. A small number of tourists really seeks a deep learning experience. Not all cultural tourists are alike. Affluent tourists sensitive to local culture will stay in local

accommodations, have local food, and have basic facilities. This represents a tiny portion of the traffic.

Culture and Intangible Heritage

One of the important strategies on heritage tourism should be the conservation of intangible heritage. According to the definition agreed upon in the 2003 Paris Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Intangible heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

As far as possible, the intangible heritage should not be removed from its context or setting, to the extent that the authenticity is affected. The presence of traditional torch bearers is necessary to give life to the heritage. The integrity of the cultural space plays a major role in presenting an authentic experience, although it may not be traditional. Highly commoditised attractions by the tourism sector for easy consumption have a shorter lifecycle.

The intangible heritage helps the visitor to gain a deeper understanding about the place and the culture. Lot of questions can be raised whether the cultural performances organised for the visitors taken from its original context, can be considered as part of the intangible heritage.

Economic Growth and Tourism

There is a dichotomy between

satisfying the pressure for economic growth through tourism and protecting the cultural heritage sites and monuments that lie at its heart. Tourism and heritage management must be integrated to have an outstanding product having mutual benefits. Quality standards and authenticity should be maintained to sustain tourism as well as the cultural heritage.

The heritage tourism project should not be driven by tourism considerations, but managed by the principles and conventions of the international guidelines on cultural heritage management. The success of a project depends on how heritage



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assets are converted into heritage tourism products.

Access and proximity decide the potential number of visitors. Time availability decides the quality and depth of experience sought.

Role of Local Community

Local Community should benefit from the heritage tourism and it should not cause any disruption to the local

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