

Recreational Values of Tourism in Sustainable Development of Indigenous Landscapes in Sri Lanka

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Prehistorically and historically valued indigenous community, their landscapes and heritage have become significant resource base for sustainable tourism development in many parts of the world. Unexceptionally Sri Lanka is one of the great nations holding a number of indigenous community bases in this small island. The country has comprises with a number of ethnically diverse indigenous community villages in Uva, East, North-Central and Northern provinces. Indigenous community villages have been recognized as valuable resource bases to expand the tourism into rural regions and beyond while empowering the indigenous community and their local development. However, prevailing tourists visits to indigenous community villages do not show consistent and considerable contribution for sustainable development of indigenous community landscapes. Staged authenticated tourism in indigenous landscapes has led to misperception and misinterpretation of tourism among the tourists and hosts, indigenous communities. This study embraces with the objective of studying the consciousness and recreational values perception of tourism in indigenous community landscapes to ensure sustainable development. The multiple case study methods have been adapted to elucidate the naturalistic interpretation of the community members and tourists over the prevailing tourism. In depth semi structured interviews of indigenous community leaders in Dambana, Ppillebadde, Vakarai, Henanigala, Rathugala, Nilgala, Kuchchaweli and Kanniyai interpret history, habitats, heritage, developmental challenges and deprivation and tourism as panacea. The finding of the study revealed that the indigenous community in all the villages have failed to identify the recreational potential and generate the appropriate recreational values through their heritage, culture, habitats and livelihoods to ensure authentic tourist experience and enjoyment. Meanwhile, tourists also visit indigenous community landscapes without consciousness and appropriate recreational value perceptions. The study emphasizes the indigenous community to rediscover and repurpose their heritage, culture, livelihood and habitats through recreational values for tourists while preserving their socio-culture and environment. The marketing arm of the indigenous tourism should enhance the consciousness and appropriate recreational value perceptions among the tourists before they visit. This will lead to ensure the sustainable development in indigenous community villages, while enriching the authentic experience and enhance satisfaction.

Keywords: indigenous community, sustainable tourism, consciousness, recreation values