

OVERVIEW OF RESPONSIBLE TOURISM –IN CONTEXT TO TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN INDIA

Rohit Khadatkar¹, Mr. Ved Prakash Nayak², Mr. ShubhamYadav³

¹Student, Department of Master's in Urban Planning, University Teaching Department, CSVTU, Bhilai, Chhattisgarh, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Master's in Urban Planning, University Teaching Department, CSVTU, Bhilai, Chhattisgarh, India

³Head Of Department, Department of Master's in Urban Planning, University Teaching Department, CSVTU, Bhilai, Chhattisgarh, India

Abstract - Tourism plays a vital role in our lives because it allows us to travel to new locations, learn about new cultures, meet new people, and participate in new traditions and activities. It can be seen as a constructive link between travellers and communities, as it benefits both parties. Tourism is like a fire: it may either cook your food or burn down your house. Many local communities in tourist sites face the negative effects of tourism. Many of us, as tourists, prefer to visit sites that are clean, not overcrowded, and safe. Rather than inauthentic entertainment, we want to learn about real local cultures, traditions, faiths, and architecture. This paper is entirely a literature-based overview on tourists and their behaviour in Indian tourist destinations, the purpose of which is to highlight the growing need to adopt responsible and sustainable tourism practices in tourist destinations in India. This will help in making tourist destinations look more attractive and improve the quality of life and well-being of local communities. It will also help cities recognize the impacts of mass tourism and take the necessary steps to deal with it.

Key Words: Tourism, Sustainable, Responsible, Communities, Overcrowding

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an important factor in a country's economy. It brings in people from all around the world which helps in GDP growth and supports the business and trade of the hosts. Thomas Cook is called "The Father of Tourism", as he was the first person to use the idea of tourism in the 19th century. He took advantage of the rapid expansion of Railway in Europe and introduced

the idea of people going on long holiday trips to different places. The term "Responsible Tourism" was first used by Jost Krippendorf in the 1980s. It was based on his observations on the impact of tourism on the Alpine Plateaus in Switzerland, where tourism had many negative effects on the environment and the local communities. He urged "rebellious tourists and rebellious locals" to establish new tourism forms in his book *The Holiday Makers* (1987). "To create and promote new forms of tourism that will deliver the highest possible benefit to all participants - travellers, host populations, and the tourism sector - while avoiding unacceptably high environmental and social costs," he stated. Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism that has more benefits than disadvantages, especially in terms of the environment, economy, and communities. Tourism that is both sustainable and responsible should improve the quality of life in regions where people live and visit.

1.1. Defining Tourism

Tourism can be defined as the practice of visiting and spending some time in a place or site for pleasure and recreation. The term 'tour' comes from the Latin word *tornus*, which means a 'circle-making tool.' Tourism refers to the actions of people who travel and stay in areas outside of their regular surroundings for less than a year for leisure, business, or other reasons.

1.2. Definition of Tourists

Tourists are persons who travel to and stay in a location outside of their usual surroundings for less than a year for leisure, business, or other activities that may or may not be related to any past experiences.

1.3. Sustainable Tourism

“Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus-building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.”

1.4. Responsible Tourism

Responsible tourism is similar to sustainable tourism. Responsible tourism can be considered as a guiding principle to achieve Sustainable Tourism. Responsible Tourism can be referred to as any tourism which can be consumed in a responsible and sensible manner. It should reflect the good behaviour of a tourist towards any tourism destination and its culture.

“Responsible tourism is a tourism which:

- Has fewer impacts on social, economic, and environmental factors of the place.
- Improves the well-being of local communities and creates better economic opportunities for them.
- Helps in activities that give positive outcomes for the local residents and businessmen.
- Focuses on conservation of natural and cultural assets, so that the diversity in the world is maintained.
- Provides travellers many memorable experiences through creating a good connection with the local people, their culture, and environment. Travel programs must be crafted as more experience-oriented than materialistic-oriented.
- Provides easy access to a physically challenged person. The destination must have easily accessible travel options, extra care for those who need it, and avoid any kind of discrimination.
- Generates mutual respect between the tourists and the hosts. It should be culturally sensitive and build local pride and confidence.

2. IMPACT OF TOURIST BEHAVIOUR ON TOURIST DESTINATIONS OF INDIA

India is a culturally rich country with a diversified population. Incredible India is a term used frequently to describe the country. It is known globally for beautiful and breath-taking tourism destinations. The beauty of a place somehow somewhat also depends on the behaviour of the tourist visiting it. Some tourists behave responsibly by taking it upon them to keep the place clean and not cause any trouble for the local communities; whereas some find it thrilling and exciting to unnecessarily create problems for the other tourists and local communities as well. This careless and troublesome behaviour has compelled many communities and authorities to take disciplinary actions and restrict some tourist activities in some places. Many practices such as Elephant riding, Wildlife hunting, Jungle Safaris etc. have been reduced and disallowed by the local authorities so as to protect and preserve the flora and fauna of the region. Mumbai, as we know is a coastal city and therefore, has a lot of sea beaches. However, many beaches have been closed and restricted public entries because they are covered in large heaps of waste materials such as plastic bottles, polythene bags, snack packets etc. This has also disturbed the aquatic life in that area. Many sea turtles used to come to the shore to lay eggs at the Versova Beach in Mumbai. But, this cannot be seen anymore as it is covered with waste materials. A clean-up project is being carried out by the locals so that the beach becomes clean again and the sea turtles start nesting there again.



Fig1: Versova Beach in Mumbai

Some tourists also create problems by dressing inappropriately in the places of cultural importance such as temples, monasteries etc. Many destinations don't allow using cameras or mobile phones inside the campus. Even though, many tourists take pictures and selfies here and there. Many tourists also scratch the walls of historical places. Some maniacs are also seen causing damage to the statues and idols in sacred places. The Taj Mahal in Agra also receives a lot of tourists. There are times where this place becomes overcrowded due to large number of visitors. Many cases have been reported about tourists causing damage to the gardens

and water works in the destination.

3. TIPS FOR BEING A RESPONSIBLE TOURIST

Being responsible simply means being a sensible, well-behaved, and open-minded traveller. A responsible tourist is well aware of his actions in a tourist place, has a sense of cleanliness of his surroundings, and does not litter by throwing garbage here and there.

Following are some tips which may help you in becoming a responsible tourist:

- Respect the local culture and customs.
- Shop at local markets for handcrafted things manufactured in the area.
- When you are not in your room, turn off the lights and the air conditioning.
- Instead of replacing your towel after every wash, reuse it.
- Watch your waste, don't litter here and there. Avoid using plastic bags. Use natural and plastic-free products.
- Give back by donating money for local programs and social causes. Also provide any kind of help, if needed by them.
- Try using more public transportation than personal vehicles for travelling.
- Avoid overcrowding at destinations.

4. RESPONSIBLE TOURISM MODELS IN INDIA

4.1. Kabani Community Tourism, Kerala

Since 2005 this community has been promoting a model that benefits local communities and reduces the negative impacts of tourism, mainly by promoting village walks, agriculture and fishing activities, local craft workshops for tourism activities. They are focused on programmes that benefit both hosts and guests.



Fig. 2: Kabani Tour

4.2. The Blue Yonder, Kerala

This is an internationally awarded organisation, which focuses on daily activities, storytelling trails, and rural stays.

4.3. The Tons Valley, Uttarakhand

Popularly known as Tons Trails, their responsible tourism activities are linked with community help systems, village after schools, and sustainable village initiatives. They are providing customised home-stay experiences, festivals and farm tours for guests.



Fig. 3: The Tons Valley

4.4. The Grassroutes, Maharashtra

Grassroutes is on a mission to create one million rural livelihood opportunities. They are taking initiatives to revive local arts and crafts cultures.

4.5. Buda Folklore, Karnataka

They offer students a study tour to experience simple organic living traditional skills and knowledge of the local community.



Fig.4: Buda Folklore

5. CONCLUSION

After thorough research and study, we have reached the conclusion that even though tourism is a flourishing industry, it has many negative impacts on the local communities, their cultures, and people. A sense of responsibility should be inculcated in tourists so that there are more positive outcomes than negative ones from tourism in all the tourist destinations. The actions of today will inspire the results of tomorrow. If a tourist is responsible, he/she will contribute towards the sustainable development of tourism in that region. The local community should not be disturbed by the actions of the visitors at any cost. There are many organisations and individuals that intend to save the beauty and spirit of tourist destinations in India as well as around the world. They should be given more recognition, which would inspire more people to join them and act similarly. We, the citizens of India, should act maturely and think of it as our responsibility to help preserve the essence of any tourist destination we visit or live nearby. The tourism policy should be more strict towards in-disciplinary actions.

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