

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM – EVIDENCE FROM THE TOURIST DESTINATIONS OF KASHMIR

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Abstract *The study aims to explore the dimensions of responsible tourism practices (RTPs) incorporated in the context of Kashmir tourism destinations. Besides, the study aims to know the perception of residents towards these RTPs. Data were collected from 180 residents of Pahalgam tourist destination. The exploratory factor analysis technique was applied to explore the dimensions of RTPs. The findings of the study revealed that four dimensions were extracted for 17 items of RTPs that accounted for 73.46 per cent of the variance. The findings showed that residents perceive that RTPs have a significant role towards the economic upliftment of destination communities. Thus, the findings of the study suggest the successful implementation of RTPs in other tourist destinations of the Kashmir Valley.*

Keywords: *Responsible Tourism Practices, Local Communities*

INTRODUCTION

Due to the fact that travel and tourism have grown into a major business across a wide range of countries' economies, an increasing number of people around the world are reliant on it. Almost every country's economy relies heavily on the travel and tourism industry. Besides the direct economic impact, the industry has considerable indirect and induced effects. Including investment, supply chain, and induced income impacts, travel and tourism's overall GDP contribution was USD8,811.0bn in 2018 and is predicted to expand by 3.6 per cent to USD9,126.7bn in 2019. By 2029, it is expected to grow at a rate of 3.7 per cent per year to \$13,085.7 billion (11.5 per cent of GDP) (WTTC, 2018). There were 318,811,000 jobs created in 2018 as a result of travel and tourism as a whole (including investment, the supply chain, and induced income) (10.0 per cent of total employment). 328,208,000 jobs (10.1 per cent of total employment) are expected to be added in 2019 (WTTC, 2018).

As new destinations are developed and visitor power is increased, more and more destination towns are feeling the repercussions of this growth. Although many of these effects have a good impact on the host population, those in a position to influence the direction of progress can also have detrimental consequences if they become indifferent to the ability of such effects. If negative consequences are to be

avoided and benefits are to be increased, the effects of the travel sector on this line must be evaluated on a consistent basis. Additionally, this is important not just to secure local prosperity, but also to ensure that the quality and long-term viability of tourism sector products at specific destinations are not jeopardised by negative local reactions (Cooke, 1982; Getz, 1994; Hoffman & Low, 1981; Inskip, 1991; Woodley, 1993; Zehuder, 1976).

Tourism planners all across the globe have to give due consideration to the impacts of various tourism activities as the majority of activities at the destination are dependent on the natural resources. The environment all across the globe is witnessing a change and more drastic changes are being predicted, particularly climate change because of the rise in temperatures (Gossling & Hall, 2006). It is possible that these findings could have a considerable impact on all tourism sites. Tourist demand is fluctuating because of concerns about sustainability, resource management, and social and economic inequality. It is for this reason that locals should get benefit from tourism activities. To achieve this, the destination planners have adopted responsible tourism practices (RTPs) in order to minimize the detrimental effects of tourism. RTPs are incorporated to address all these issues and to improve present controllable tourist practices, RTPs have become a vital component in the field of tourism research (Spenceley, 2005).

This study explores the factors of RTPs implemented in the context of Kashmir tourism and examines the perception of residents with regard to these RTPs. Throughout the last few decades, the J&K economy has relied heavily on tourism. One of the State's key industries is tourism, which is particularly prominent in the Valley and Ladakh regions. A huge number of individuals, particularly those of the younger age, have been employed by this industry, which has produced economic activity in the state's primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors (GOI, 2001). Several studies claim that tourism is the lifeblood of Jammu and Kashmir, and as such, every effort should be made to ensure its retention, maintenance, and sustainability. Investment and revenue generation from tourism creates jobs and improves the socioeconomic well-being of the local population, which is a win-win for everyone (Zameer, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing in the travel business about responsible tourism has been around since the mid-eighties (Smith, 1990; Cooper & Ozdil, 1992). As early as 1992, De Kadt's and Krippendorf's fundamental writings on the subject of tourism and its environmental and socio-economic impacts sparked public outrage. Supportability activities, such as ecotourism, ethical tourism, green tourism, soft tourism, pro-poor tourism, and geo-tourism have evolved as a result of the increasing occurrences of social and natural issues in the travel industry. These are the elements that underpin what we mean by "responsible tourism". The mass travel industry's manageability-driven decisions to advance environmental preservation, social justice, economic development, and government assistance to locals, particularly the most vulnerable, who live in tourism destinations are aimed at promoting the well-being of locals, particularly the most vulnerable (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008; Oliver & Jenkins, 2003; Blackstock, 2005; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009; Weeden, 2002; Hall, 2008).

Smith (1990) defined responsible tourism as "*a form of tourism that respects the host's natural, built, and cultural environments and the interests of all parties concerned*". There will be a corresponding increase in negative consequences for any increase in the travel sector volume. Responsible tourism, then, necessitates a reduction in the industry's size and scope. Responsible tourism, according to Wheeler (1995), is a "a pleasant, agreeable, but dangerously superficial, ephemeral and inadequate escape route for the educated middle classes unable, or unwilling, to appreciate or accept their/our own destructive contribution to the international tourism maelstrom". The term "responsible tourism" was coined in 2002 in conjunction with the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Cape Town. When the World Travel Market endorsed this concept for World

Responsible Tourism Day in 2007, it received widespread support. Making better places to live and visit is at the heart of responsible tourism. Tourism operators, hoteliers, governments, local residents, and tourists all have a role to play in greening the sector. The Cape Town Declaration recognises that responsible tourism can take many forms; it is defined by travel and tourism that are environmentally friendly:

- "minimises negative economic, environmental and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life changes;
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- provide access for people with disabilities and the disadvantaged; and
- is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence".

In conjunction with the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, the first International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations was held, and the Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism in Destinations defined the principles and recognised that harnessing tourism for sustainable development required a whole-of-government approach. Responsible tourism is defined as "the practice of utilising tourism to enhance the quality of life for those who live in and visit destinations".

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the factors of RTPs.
- To know the perception of residents about the RTPs implemented at tourist destinations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study incorporated both primary and secondary data. Secondary data from various journals, research papers, and reports published by various agencies have been used. The primary data has been collected from respondents of tourist destinations.

Instrument

It consists of two sections, one is related with the demographic profile of respondents and another section is related with the main variable of the study. The items for RTPs have been taken from previous studies like Merwe and Wöcke (2007) and Debicka (2014). It consists of 17 items and has been measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

For this study, the researcher considers the community tourist destination of Pahalgam. A total of 234 questionnaires were distributed among the respondents using convenience sampling. However, only 180 responses (76 per cent) were found to be usable for the data analysis. To extract dimensions from RTPs, *exploratory factor analysis (EFA)* was carried out.

Data Analysis

First, the study used SPSS version 22.0 to process the descriptive statistics and reliability analysis of the collected data. The reliability of each construct was assessed by using Cronbach's alpha (α) and the results revealed that the Cronbach coefficient was above the threshold level of 0.60 (Nunnally, 1978) for each construct (Table 1), thereby measuring the internal consistency.

Table 1: Results of Reliability Test

Dimensions	No. of Items	Chronbach's α Value
Economic Practices	05	0.845
Social Practices	03	0.834
Cultural Practices	04	0.800
Environmental Practices	05	0.890
RTPs	17	0.880

Note: Chronbach's α for all the constructs are above the threshold level 0.60.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Percentage (Per Cent)
Gender	Male (n = 104)	57.77
	Female (n = 76)	42.23
Age	18–28 years (n = 58)	32.22
	29–38 years (n = 78)	43.34
	39–48 years (n = 34)	18.89
	48 and above (n = 10)	5.55
Marital status	Married (n = 143)	79.45
	Unmarried (n = 37)	20.55

Variable	Category	Percentage (Per Cent)
Occupation	Local Business (n = 98)	54.45
	Government Job (n = 43)	23.89
	Private job (n = 29)	16.11
	Others (n = 10)	5.55
Annual income	Less than Rs. 1,00,000 (n = 56)	31.12
	Rs.1,00,000–Rs. 2,00,000 (n = 105)	58.3310.55
	Above Rs. 2,00,00 (n = 19)	
Length of residency	10–20 years (n = 43)	23.88
	20–30 years (n = 89)	49.4526.67
	Above 30 years (n = 48)	
Involvement in tourism	directly employed (n = 98)	54.45
	indirectly employed (n = 67)	37.22
	not employed (n = 7)	3.88
	Employed in the tourism industry other than my village (n = 8)	4.45

Factor Analysis Results

Principal component analysis and VARIMAX Rotation with Kaiser Normalization were performed to extract the factors of the RTPs. The scale consisted of 17 items for RTPs. The 17 items of RTPs got converted into four factors, namely Economic (05 items), Environmental (05 items), Cultural (03 items), and Social (03 items) and accounted for 73.46 per cent variance. The value of Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) for RTPs was 0.810 thereby indicating the sample was adequate for EFA. The value for Bartlett's test of Sphericity is 2541.78 for RTPs (0.000 significance with degree of freedom 75) thereby indicating factors are related to each other. Table 3 shows the results of exploratory factor analysis results.

Table 3: Factor Analysis Results

Attributes	Factor Loading	Mean	SD	VE
Factor 1: Economic Practices				
Local products are consumed	0.880	3.92	0.967	
Brings income to the community	0.834	4.02	0.942	34.82 per cent
Contributes to income and standard of living	0.810	4.19	0.981	
Creates a new market for local products	0.774	3.84	0.924	

Attributes	Factor Loading	Mean	SD	VE
Diversifies local economy	0.771	3.88	0.912	
Factor 2: Environmental Practices				
Community environment is protected	0.865	4.11	0.900	
The diversity of nature is valued and conserved	0.815	3.99	0.914	18.76 per cent
Unnecessary wastes are avoided	0.802	3.89	0.813	
Wildlife and natural habitats are protected	0.800	3.81	0.923	
Public transport is used	0.794	3.95	0.922	
Factor 3: Cultural Practices				
Helps to preserve the cultural identity and restoration of historical buildings	0.882	4.12	0.890	11.26 per cent
Builds awareness/ appreciation of cultural heritage	0.863	3.89	0.953	
Helps in the preservation of culture and heritage	0.824	4.01	0.864	
Local dresses are respected	0.810	3.86	0.989	
Factor 3: Social Practices				
Increases residents' pride in the local culture towards the community through their participation in the decision making	0.861	4.16	0.802	8.62 per cent
Respect social and cultural diversity	0.820	3.93	0.990	
Local development and conservation programmes are supported	0.816	3.86	0.869	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As revealed by the results of the study 57.77 per cent (n = 104) of respondents were male while as 42.23 per cent (n = 76) were females. Approximately, 50 per cent (n = 89) of households are residing there for the last 10–20 years. Majority of the participants were associated with the local business (54 per cent, n = 98), and only 5 per cent (n = 10) were involved in other activities. Also, most of the respondents were in the age of 29–38 years (43 per cent, n = 78). The major chunk of the respondents was involved directly (54 per cent, n = 98) in the tourism activities at the destination. The majority of the respondents were married

(79 per cent, n = 143).

The findings revealed that there were positive impacts of RTPs as perceived by the local communities. The fundamental components of responsible tourism are catering to the requirements of both tourists (visitors) and host communities, as well as safeguarding and enhancing the appeal of tourism destinations for future generations, which benefits national economies. Tourism benefits and improves the livelihoods of local communities in three ways: employment and direct sales of goods and services to tourists via craft and guiding; indirect employment in businesses that sell, for example, local food or uniforms to tourism businesses, whether hotels or restaurants; and infrastructure gains, which include roads, water supplies, improved transportation links, and the internet – all of which benefit local communities.

The study's findings indicate that responsible tourism activities have a positive effect on the lives of local communities. This conclusion bolsters the case made by earlier researchers that responsible tourism activities from the perspective of local residents may result in increased benefits to communities. Empirically, this study demonstrates similarities to past research, thereby significantly contributing new findings and bolstering the current body of knowledge in both conceptual and empirical research. As a conclusion, this study demonstrated that RTPs benefit destination communities' economic, social, cultural, and environmental well-being. As a result, people, authorities, and other tourism stakeholders (government, tourism industry, investors, and others) should play a proactive role in promoting responsible tourism in their current and future national tourism growth.

CONCLUSION

To summarise, residents' perceptions of responsible tourism development place a premium on economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors that have a direct impact on their standard of living. The majority of tourism studies concluded that tourism development benefited local communities. These included economic benefits such as employment, consumption of local goods and services, and support for local education, health, transportation, and conservation initiatives. Additionally, residents believe that responsible tourism has a positive effect on their way of life. Responsible tourism policies should incorporate responsible destination planning and environmental stewardship.

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