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PEDAGOGY DESIGN IN RESPONSIBLE TOURISM VIS-À-VIS CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT- A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON REPORTS AND CASES OF RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY ORGANISATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Responsible tourism has become a buzzword in tourism industry in the 21st century and refers to conscious travel to natural areas with the core objective of preserving the environment resources, while both the promoters of tourism and the local communities are being utmost sensitive to the ecological and cultural aspects of the destinations. The quality of the environment is basic for tourism development. The environment has to be examined from various dimensions, mainly in terms of its physical characteristics. It is saddening that tourism activities are negatively impacting the environmental resources. The deterioration of a host area will defeat the purposes of tourism development. The concept of responsible tourism has indeed revolutionized the dynamics of tourism across the globe. The core objective of responsible tourism, which has ushered in a paradigm shift in sustainable development approaches world over, is the motive to conserve the eco-cultural resources and increase the value of local culture and tradition. In consonance with the changing patterns, practices, and propositions of responsible tourism, the pedagogy has not been quite progressive. In this backdrop, the present article carries out a qualitative study on the case studies and reports of select research and advocacy organizations in south India which are striving to enhance the educational contents and structure as regards responsible tourism with a view to achieve sustainable development of tourism destinations. Moreover, the recommendations, dossiers, and study results published by the premier tourism consultancies are evaluated and the concrete points which surfaced so as to be included in the RT pedagogy have been confirmed by interviews with the experts.

Keywords: Responsible tourism, Sustainable development, Destination management, Ecology, Culture, Resource management.

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Contribution/ Originality

This study contributes to the existing literature on the educational imperatives and perspectives of responsible tourism and is expected to enhance the pedagogy of an important area in tourism that redefines the paradigms. This study uses new estimation methodology by reviewing and analyzing the reports and dossiers of premier consultancies and NGO's known for their comprehensive studies and surveys on responsible tourism and sustainable development in potential destinations. The outputs were codified in terms of pragmatic approaches and the officials and researchers of the consultancies were interviewed for formulating the inferences. This study originates new formula as a participatory approach in tourism research and also creates a base for setting the responsible education paradigm. This study is one of very few studies which have investigated educational aspects of responsible tourism. The paper contributes the first logical analysis in chalking out a definitive plan on how responsible tourism education should be. The paper's primary contribution is finding that responsible tourism has a cultural dimension. This study documents the roadmap for responsible tourism education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Natural Environment and its Quality hold the basis for tourism activities at a destination. Pedagogy on Responsible Tourism needs to redesign itself so that the budding tourism professionals improve upon the roles of tourists and stake-holders over the Natural Environment of a destination. Both the natural and cultural resources have to be examined from various dimensions, mainly in terms of the tangible and intangible characteristics, by the developers and designers of theoretical constructs in responsible tourism. It is very unfortunate that tourism activities are negatively impacting the environmental resources and not much attention is given to sustainable tourism while setting-up the tourism projects. The concept of responsible tourism has indeed revolutionized the dynamics of tourism world over, thanks to the academic bodies and research and advocacy organizations. This paper delves on the capacities and ideals of responsible tourism that are stressed by research organizations to offset the ill – effects and overcome the challenges as regards the environmental aspects of tourism destinations.

2. STUDY OBJECTIVES

This Study has been conducted with the following objectives:

- i) To analyse the reports and study recommendations of select research and advocacy organizations working in the area of responsible tourism.
- ii) To examine how far the academic inputs of the organizations under study contributes to enriching the pedagogy of responsible tourism.
- iii) To conduct an expert opinion study to validate the analytical output.

3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The attempt of this study is to evaluate the studies on responsible tourism conducted by premier agencies and consultancies in India and examine how far it can contribute to the pedagogical design. In the current context of overuse and misuse of tourism resources and the unplanned and uncontrolled development of tourism destinations, all the stakeholders shall be the beneficiaries.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Responsible tourism is the buzz word in tourism industry today. The paradigm change in tourism academia must be open to it and take due efforts to update and enrich the pedagogy in such a way that the insights and inputs deliberated by higher education institutes in tourism shall address the ecological and cultural sensitivities of tourism destinations.

5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The researchers chose the qualitative method by reviewing and analyzing the research outputs and dossiers of select consultancies and NGO's working in the field of responsible tourism such as Equations, Dhan Foundation, Aranyaka, ATREE, and INTACH. The officials and industry practitioners were consulted to reinforce the analytical insights framed by the researchers and to take their advance views on the topic by conducting one- to- one interview. In this work, thematic and content analysis were used to analyze the data acquired from the interviews conducted in person, over e-mail and phone.

6. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Charles *et al.* (2006) categorically stated that responsible tourism works on the ideals of sustainable tourism development. The authors deliberated on the responsibility of all stakeholders for sustainable development in the field of tourism and highlighted the four areas to be addressed which can be summarized as: 1. The sustainable development policy framework 2. The critical areas of sustainable development as applied to tourism; 3. Allocation of responsibility amongst tourism stakeholders; and 4. Development of an agenda for suggested sustainable development actions for the tourism sector. As regards marketing of responsible tourism, Manjula Chaudhary (2010) opined that the long term impacts of promoting tourism must be taken into account. It emphasizes preservation of tourism attractions and resources and associated environments for prospect and involves responsible behavior by the participants. The marketers, tourists, society, host populations, and government are active participants in socially responsible marketing. David Leslie (2012) argues that responsible providers of tourism products and services may be considered liable for the conduct and outcomes of their operations and trustworthy in their intent. (Harold Goodwin, 2011) maintains that for the future progress of tourism, those who sell tourism

services and those who consume them have to take the responsibility. The author asserts that strategic thinking holds the key in this perspective. Therefore the policy makers must strongly consider the measures to avoid over commoditization and make the tourism and related businesses utmost responsible to the indigenous natural and cultural resources. Emphasis is also laid on the role of the academic community including students for their responsible involvement and diligent preparation by understanding the nature of tourism development. [Mara Manente \(2014\)](#) has stressed fair business dynamics in the field of tourism which heralds responsible tourism practices. In the words of the authors: “Responsible tourism includes all those forms of travelling that pay attention to the environment (preservation and safeguard of natural resources) socio-cultural (central role of the host communities in decisions regarding local tourism development and planning; understanding of local culture and promoting cultural exchange between tourists and local community, etc.) and economic issues (fair relationships with the local providers, support to local development, etc.)”.

7. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable tourism is a kind of approach in tourism to make the progress of tourism ecologically viable and supportable in the long term. Sustainable tourism development ensures conservation of resources and accentuates the value of local culture and tradition. Sustainable tourism is indeed a responsible form of tourism planning to create employment and income along with mitigating any deeper impacts on environment and local culture.

According to [World Tourism Organization \(WTO\) \(1996\)](#) “Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunities for the future.” It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled, while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems.

8. IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study analyzed the pragmatic as well as academic contributions of four select consultancies and NGO's working in the field of responsible tourism with an objective of achieving sustainable development. The responsible tourism pedagogy of premier institutions was examined and gap areas identified. The summary of the analytical insights are presented below which can bridge the gap as well as make the responsible tourism pedagogy at most progressive.

i) One of the complaints on Tourism Industry is the attempt to make a culture as a commodity. The problems of commoditization and practical ways to offset that like shedding museumisation, generating awareness campaigns, empowerment of locals, synchronized decision making, community participation and holistic involvement, skills development workshops, etc.,

have to figure in the academics. Further, the learners must be offered hands-on training to impart the technicalities.

ii) There are other issues like displacement of host population to give way for establishing tourism projects, infringement of rights, violation of social and cultural codes and exploitation in manifold ways. Responsible tourism pedagogy must lay stress on the legal opportunities which can be ideally tapped to curtail any form of exploitation of the local communities.

iii) Presenting the tourist attractions in an authentic fashion is of profound significance as regards responsible tourism. Training of tourist guides to be sensitive and also sensible while disseminating vital ecological, historical, and cultural information about a locale should be figured in the responsible tourism pedagogy. Local people with a comprehensive know-how of the ecological, historical, and other aspects of the places around will be more ideal to act as tourist guides.

iv) A strong and supportive entrepreneurial community can provide an ideal setting to implement and practice responsible tourism. The ways and means of setting up ventures to promote tourism responsibly and also form NGO's and other socially and environmentally sensitive movements can do a world of good for tourism destinations. This necessitates a very special approach in entrepreneurial vision and management which can be envisaged in the pedagogy of responsible tourism.

v) A multitude of micro enterprises can stabilize the tourism destinations and in such a stable environment the ideals of responsible tourism can be practiced. Featuring the dimensions of micro financing is definitely a value addition to advance education in responsible tourism.

vi) Documentation of destination resources is a key aspect of sustainable development. It will enormously benefit posterity. Moreover, that should become an integral part of responsible tourism practices. Since responsible media can complement a responsive tourism industry, the basic operational aspects of media, both print and electronic, have to find a place in responsible tourism pedagogy.

vii) While chalking out the educational contents of responsible tourism, the planners must take into account the fact that, increasingly, destinations and tourism operatives are endorsing and following 'responsible tourism' as a pathway towards sustainable tourism. Responsible tourism and sustainable tourism have an identical role, which is sustainable development of destinations. The pillars of responsible tourism are therefore the same as those of sustainable tourism – environmental integrity, social justice and economic development. Most importantly, the emphasis on responsibility in responsible tourism means that everyone involved in tourism, governments, tour operators, entrepreneurs, transport operators, community based organizations, NGO's, tourists, local communities, and industry associations are responsible for achieving the goals of responsible tourism. The education system must be open to this.

viii) If the environment is to be cared for while being exposed to tourism activities, the ventures of the industry should adopt ethical practices. In this context, the perspectives of business ethics will solidify the pedagogy of responsible tourism.

ix) Responsible tourism becomes fruitful through synergized approaches of all stakeholders. Joint ventures and pro-active co-ordination forms the order of the day. The art and science of Public Relations aids to amalgamate the varied and vivid efforts. Therefore, the principles, practices, and philosophies of PR may be included in the educational contents of responsible tourism.

x) The developers and destination planners of tourism destinations have to put forward many innovative ideas to sustain the growth by linking ecology, planning, and protection. This is vital for sustainable development of tourist spots. Therefore, the basics of ecology and environmental auditing can enrich the contents of responsible tourism education.

xi) At times, protected areas such as Wildlife Sanctuaries, National Parks, and Bird Sanctuaries etc experience great tourist influx. More footfalls result in pressure on the destination. In this case, visitor management which can be described as attracting and hosting visitors and offering good information, services, and amenities and the opportunities to experience the natural features of the areas, while respecting the nature conservation objectives may be imparted as part of the responsible tourism pedagogy. Visitor management strategies are a must taught for responsible tourism academic programmes. Moreover, the learners of responsible tourism must be equipped to devise innovative mechanisms in the area such as introduction of permit systems to regulate visitors to monuments.

9. INFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Responsible tourism takes place in various landscapes such as protected areas, cosmopolitan cities, deserts, rural villages, islands, towns etc. The geographical overview of these landscapes enriches the pedagogy of responsible tourism.
- Education on responsible tourism is incomplete without the inclusion of the appropriate legislations to protect wildlife and habitats.
- An in-depth awareness of Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA) is a critical factor is the advancement of responsible tourism education.
- Learners of responsible tourism educational programmes must be encouraged to devise new concepts for controlling tourist inflows in fragile tourism areas.
- Some crucial aspects related of Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) are mandatory in responsible tourism studies as per the consensus of experts' opinion.
- A strong education base in responsible tourism can initiate campaigns towards pro-sustainable forms of tourism. It can profoundly influence tourism policies and ensure quality and

elevated touristic experiences. Moreover, it can help envision forms of tourism which are non-exploitative.

- Responsible tourism education can enhance the capacity building endeavors of tourism organizations.

10. CONCLUSION

To achieve the objective of sustainable tourism, there is a dire need that tourism businesses, visitors and most importantly the destination planners and host communities take cautious strides towards achieving sustainability in its management, operations, and even in simplest of actions that are taken to support tourism in destinations. Responsible tourism initiatives help a great deal to achieve the objectives by adopting a 360 degree approach to sustainable tourism that includes all aspects of effective sustainable planning, maximizing social and economic benefits for the local communities, preserving cultural heritage and reducing negative impacts to the environment. Premier educational institutions offering courses in tourism at various levels have identified responsible tourism as the most essential ingredient in the contemporary perspective. This study has attempted to bring to light certain aspects of sustainable development that can enrich responsible tourism pedagogy and thereby address the gap areas and challenges.

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