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RESPONSIBLE TOURISM: A ROADMAP FOR SUSTAINABLE AND COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Responsible tourism simply means holidays that care about local communities & culture as well as wildlife conservation & the environment. As the definition of it is very general and easy to learn the work and effect of it is very vast large and difficult to cultivate over the people. Term responsible tourism depicts a thought that is fully based on awareness the tourist carries with them while they are on role. This hothouse or thought of responsible tourism is not only limited with tourist but with each and every stakeholders of entire community, society and environment. Researchers, academicians as well as bureaucrats too are believing that world id undergoing a great phase of transition that needs attention.

In a survey of The World Travel Market (WTM) 2014 Industry Report of 1,229 UK industry executives revealed that More than 60 per cent of respondents said that responsible tourism should increase in coming years, 30% say it should increase significantly, 86% perceived sustainability to be important to their business. 10% per cent said that sustainability is of central importance to their business, 40% responded that it is very important, 36% rated it as quite important, and only 14% said it was not very important, or not important at all.

Based on a survey of 1,011, one third of UK holidaymakers say they consider responsible tourism when booking a holiday. So from here we can say that responsible tourism can make better tomorrow, a healthier place for living, improved life style and recovering environment.

Key words: *Responsible Tourism, Sustainability, Regional Development*

INTRODUCTION

Responsible tourism simply means holidays that care about local communities & culture as well as wildlife conservation & the environment. Tourism that maximizes the benefits to local communities, minimizes negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures and habitats or species. From past many years tourism is continuously growing as one of the largest industry and it is having her own responsibility to groom all of the stakeholders. Stakeholders include economic, socio-cultural and environments. With continuing growth in travel, there is increasing recognition among both travel professionals and consumers of the importance of responsible travel—travel that minimizes negative impacts, brings economic benefits to host communities, and preserves the cultural and natural resources of the destinations. Fortunately for travel businesses and destinations, there is strong evidence that responsible travel is also good for the economic bottom line. As the statistics and

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survey given in this article are showing that along with the new trends and yet to evolve opportunities will generate income and employments.

Prime minister of India understands tourism as "Terrorism divides, Tourism Unites"- PM Modi - The vast untapped economic potential of the tourism industry was at the heart of an impassioned pitch that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made in Manhattan, when he said to a select, distinguished gathering of Indian-American community leaders, opinion-shapers, and long-standing friends of India in the U.S. government, that tourism could generate income for taxi drivers, auto-rickshaw drivers and "even tea-sellers."

Tourism plays a vital role in a countries economy - Reiterating his support for a scheme that he had mentioned in an earlier conversation Mr. Modi said to the nearly 700 Indian-Americans at a star-studded dinner at the Taj Group's Pierre Hotel overlooking Central Park that he did not need their dollars, rather he wanted every Indian-American to send five non-Indian friends to visit the country.

This way, even though India's current achievements in the tourism sphere were relatively low, they could increase substantially to tap into a global market worth nearly $3 trillion globally, he argued, and this would also bring benefits per the axiom, "Terrorism divides, tourism unites."

Tourism Terms

Responsible tourism is one of several closely related terms that are ethically based.

- **Ecotourism** - Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.
- **Geotourism** - Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, heritage, aesthetics, and culture and the well-being of its residents.
- **Pro-Poor Tourism -** Tourism that results in increased net benefit for the poor people in a destination.
- **Responsible Tourism** - Tourism that maximizes the benefits to local communities, minimizes negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures and habitats or species.
- **Sustainable Tourism** - Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments.
- **Ethical Tourism** - Tourism in a destination where ethical issues are the key driver, e.g. social injustice, human rights, animal welfare, or the environment.



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Economic Responsibility - Economic Responsibility criteria measure the efforts of the property in contributing towards the economic benefit to the local community including employment

- Tourism & Micro Enterprises – development means from roots. If the regional level development is not happening from tourism then there are some loop holes left the field of micro enterprises development. Micro industries are the link between regional and national tourism market.
- Tourism & Livelihood – tourism repost of WTO 2012 shows that there is big percentage growth in tourism employments. And yet through responsible tourism there are many job opportunity left to explore.
- Product Development & Marketing – many new product development in field of tourism is continuously developing. MICE, health, and interdisciplinary works are going on.
- Linkages & Leakages- linkages are between tourism products and services. For promoting the local culture we need cross cultural communication and tourism. And leakages should be managed by properly presenting our culture and works according to our standards.

Socio-cultural Responsibility - Socio - Cultural responsibility focuses on the efforts of the properties for community development, promotion of local arts and, culture, addressing social issues etc.

- Gender Equity in Tourism – with the awareness of gender equity in tourism the underestimation of females in some places are now stopped. And still we need to take in priority as a tourism for all.
- Conserving Culture and traditions through tourism – the conservation and promotion of local culture and tradition is the need of hour, because many of the traditions are about to vanish from the world. And our future generation will just see the information about it but not the scenarios.
- Nearby Tourism – every local stakeholder should know there responsibility towards their local tourism space.
- Social Entrepreneurship – the most important part is the local public involvement. And self-entrepreneurship is the most valuable and sustainable form to be connected with the local place.

Environmental Responsibility - Environmental responsibility focuses on energy and water conservation aspects, waste management, greenhouse gases etc.

- Waste Management in Tourism – while traveling us generally didn't take care of waste we spread around the travel journey and the destination. And management of these waste can lead to development of new employment opportunity.
- Energy & Water Conservation Techniques in Tourism
- Use of appropriate technologies in construction – to ensure the techs and engineering behind reconstruction and conservation of resources and monuments. Along with it the new constructions should follow the guidelines given by the authorities.
- Climate Change and Tourism – sometimes tourism becomes more beautiful when climate shows her beauty and at the same time it becomes disaster for many if it convert to hazards. So climate forecasting techniques and changes should be the first priority.



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Cape Town declaration 2002 says some of the guidelines for:-

Economic Responsibility

- Assess economic impacts before developing tourism and exercise preference for those forms of development that benefit local communities and minimise negative impacts on local livelihoods (for example through loss of access to resources), recognising that tourism may not always be the most appropriate form of local economic development.
- Maximise local economic benefits by increasing linkages and reducing leakages, by ensuring that communities are involved in, and benefit from, tourism. Wherever possible use tourism to assist in poverty reduction by adopting pro-poor strategies.
- Develop quality products that reflect, complement, and enhance the destination.
- Market tourism in ways which reflect the natural, cultural and social integrity of the destination, and which encourage appropriate forms of tourism.
- Adopt equitable business practises, pay and charge fair prices, and build partnerships in ways in which risk is minimised and shared, and recruit and employ staff recognising global workforce standards.
- Provide appropriate and sufficient support to small, medium and micro enterprises to ensure tourism-related enterprises flourish and are sustainable.

Social Responsibility

- Actively involve the local community in planning and decision-making and provide capacity building to make this a reality.
- Assess social impacts throughout the life cycle of the operation – including the planning and design phases of projects - in order to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive ones.
- Attempt to make tourism an inclusive social experience and to ensure that there is access for all, in particular vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and individuals.
- Be sensitive to the host culture, maintaining and encouraging social and cultural diversity.
- Endeavour to ensure that tourism contributes to improvements in health and education

Environmental Responsibility

- Assess environmental impacts throughout the life cycle of tourist establishments and operations – including the planning and design phase - and ensure that negative impacts are reduced to the minimum and maximising positive ones.
- Use resources sustainably, and reduce waste and over-consumption.
- Manage natural diversity sustainably, and where appropriate restore it; and consider the volume and type of tourism that the environment can support, and respect the integrity of vulnerable ecosystems and protected areas.
- Promote education and awareness for sustainable development – for all stakeholders.
- Raise the capacity of all stakeholders and ensure that best practice is followed, for this purpose consult with environmental and conservation experts.

Surveys and Statistics showing the customers demand for responsible travel:

- A 2013 Travel Guard survey of travel agents concluded “green travel is here to stay.” The survey found “24% of those who responded noted that interest in green travel is currently the highest it’s ever been in the last 10 years, and 51% reported that interest has remained constant throughout this time period.”
- 79% of travellers globally “think that it’s important that accommodation providers have eco-friendly practices,” according to a 2012-2013 Trip Advisor survey.

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- A 2013 TripAdvisor.com survey of 1,300 U.S. travellers shows that nearly two-thirds "often" or "always" consider the environment when choosing hotels, transportation and meals.
- 67% of U.S. consumers are now "looking for 'greener' products," according to the 2012 study by MIT Sloan Management Review.
- 50% of global consumers are willing to pay more for goods and services from companies that have implemented programs to give back to society, according to a 2013 Nielsen Global Survey on Corporate Social Responsibility poll of more than 29,000 online consumers in 58 countries. This represents a 5% increase over a similar poll in 2011.
- "Tourist choices are increasingly influenced by sustainability considerations," states the World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) 2012 Tourism in the Green Economy Report. Ecotourism, nature, heritage, cultural and "soft adventure" tourism are predicted to grow rapidly over the next two decades, and global spending on ecotourism is expected to increase at a higher rate than the tourism industry as a whole.
- "A significant number of international travellers seek out nature and culture-based experiences, such as visiting historic sites (40 percent of overseas travellers), cultural sites (23 percent) and national parks (20 percent)," according to the U.S. government's 2012 National Travel & Tourism Strategy.
- The 2012 National Travel & Tourism Strategy found similar trends among Americans traveling abroad: "Nature-based, culture based, heritage and outdoor adventure travel represent a significant segment of the outbound tourism market as well."
- Surveys and studies "consistently find that between 10% and 15% of discretionary travellers want the unusual," states a 2011 study by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). These are the "alternative" or "new tourists" and "growth from these groups is out-speeding that of mainstream segments." These tourists are "typically highly educated, mature, affluent, well-travelled, environmentally aware and sensitive to the social and cultural traditions, systems and mores of the destinations they visit."
- More than 90% of U.S. travellers surveyed by the online travel publisher Travel Zoo in 2010 said that they would choose a 'green,' environmentally conscious hotel if the price and amenities were comparable to those at a non-sustainable, non-green hotel.
- The 2010 TUI Travel Sustainability Survey of almost 4000 holidaymakers in seven European countries and the U.S., found that "the most interesting sustainability issues" are: pollution issues (71%), biodiversity and animal protection (64%), climate change and carbon emissions (63%), fair trade and labour standards (62%), and social and community issues (61%).
- 93% of Conde Nast Traveller readers surveyed in 2011 said that travel companies should be responsible for protecting the environment, and 58% said their hotel choice is influenced by the support the hotel gives to the local community.
- 47% of business travellers prefer staying in a green-certified hotel, according to Timetric's Global Business Traveller Survey 2013.
- 95% of business travellers surveyed believe the hotel industry should be undertaking 'green' initiatives, and sustainability will become a defining issue for the hospitality industry in 2015 and beyond, according to Deloitte's Hospitality 2015 report.
- In 2012, 35% of adults said they would like to try a holiday involving a voluntourism component, and 6% said they had already done so.

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"Kumarakom"- a case study of Indian village for responsible tourism –

Kumarakom is situated on the banks of the Vembanad Kayal (backwater), 10 km. west of the Kottayam District Head Quarters in Kerala, Kumarakom has a bird sanctuary home to 91species of local and 50 species of migratory birds. Kumarakom has become a very popular tourist destination in a short period. The setting in the backdrop of Vembanad Lake, the largest freshwater lake in Kerala, has gifted the destination with panoramic views. Besides the tourism activities in the backwaters, the Kumarakom bird sanctuary which extends over 14 acres is a major tourist attraction. Agriculture, fishing and tourism are the major economic activities of Kumarakom. Kumarakom is declared as a Special Tourism Zone by Government of Kerala in 2005.

Ownership by the local body

- To set up selling outlets of local produces. Though this is not confined to tourism sector alone, when the targeted customers are visitors and the stakeholders in tourism, the attempt has to be seen as an effort to improve the economic responsibility of Responsible tourism.
- Dredging and deepening of canals in the village. The decision if implemented in the true spirit would help in improving the quality of environment in the destination.
- To train tourist guides. This can be categorized under economic responsibility, which would help in improving the quality of tourism services and reduce leakages.
- For a wider and even spread of Responsible tourism. This decision is perhaps the most encouraging one and reflects the acceptance of Responsible tourism by the local body as a guiding principle for tourism development in Kumarakom.

Benefit to the local community

- As a result of the Responsible Tourism movement, the bird sanctuary area is declared as a plastic free zone.
- The RT movement has attempted to convert uncultivated land back to cultivated land
- The RT has helped in the development of entrepreneurs. Responsible tourism destination cell has developed three souvenirs in Kumarakom - a houseboat model, a snake boat model and a depiction of traditional angling of the fishermen in Kumarakom
- A number of people in the destination actively associates with Responsible Tourism. Since there is no intermediary, the benefits of RT movement go straight to the local community who produce perishable and non-perishable items for the tourism enterprises.
- Tour packages like "Village life experience" and "A day with the farmer" give opportunities to tourists to experience the village life. The participants of the package are also the direct beneficiaries of tourism.

The diagnoses of responsible tourism that one should keep in mind while deriving the policies and regulations. Some the valid points may include:

- Content documentation of attractions and activities of the tourism places for the conduct of proper responsible tourism.
- Preparation of holiday calendar along with description of shrines, holy places and allied attractions, myths and legends associated for the development of local regional circuits.
- Tourism resource planning that would help in preparing tourism action plans employing the local properties.
- Preparation of a handbook on local, regional, national cuisine that could help in creating demand for local, regional and national produces in the hotels and restaurants.

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- Identification of locations for providing public signage, tourism information counters and awareness counters.
- Assessment of energy, water and waste management practices of the hospitality industry.
- Production of eco-friendly items of sightseer demands.

The Contribution of Responsible Tourism

- Reduces 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 chances
- 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
- Provides access for physically challenged people
- Is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

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