

Creative Tourism: An Endogenous Approach to Developing Culturally and Environmentally Sustainable Tourism

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Abstract *In this current era of globalization most of the destinations across the globe have started to look like the mirror images of one another. Destinations visited by tourists are very easily interchangeable as tourists always seek novelty. Creative tourism brings out the uniqueness of a destination by focusing on its quaint culture and heritage and stressing on co-creation of tourism products and services. This form of tourism provides a very deep and engaging experience to the guests. Local community is the most important stake holder in this form of tourism as the whole concept of creative tourism revolves around them. Keeping in view the rich cultural diversity of the Himachal Pradesh, a hill state of India, the paper has attempted to find out the present status of creative tourism in Himachal and to what extent it has been practiced and promoted among tourists visiting the State. Through this paper an attempt has been made to gauge the awareness level of tourists about creative tourism in Himachal and also to evaluate their willingness to participate in this form of tourism. It has been deduced from the survey of tourists that majority of the tourists would be very keen to participate in this form of tourism.*

Keywords: Destination, Creative Tourism, Sustainable, Community

INTRODUCTION

Dynamism in humans exhorts them to be in a state of action from inaction. The zing to be in action motivates people to undertake travel and tourism activities to break the cycles of tedium. Taking cue from these inherent urges of people, the concept of creative tourism came into being in the year 2000. Creative tourism thrives on culture and heritage of a destination but it also differs from the latter in offering more knowledge related assets and intangible skills (OECD (2014)).

In this current era of globalization most of the destinations across the globe have started to look like the mirror images of one another. Destinations visited by tourists are very easily interchangeable as tourists always seek novelty. Creative tourism brings out the uniqueness of a destination by focusing on its quaint culture and heritage and stressing on co-creation of tourism products and services. According to the latest tourism trends - tourists are more likely to visit

those destinations where they get to experience the authentic local culture. The authentic experiences are difficult to emulate. These experiences in the form of tourism products provide an edge to the experience producer destinations compared to the other tourist destinations. A new term, creative tourism, has been coined to describe the kind of tourism where tourist is treated as an active member of the local community and their life style. This is a hyper active form of tourism. Tourists who participate in creative tourism activities are serious tourists. The emphasis shifts from ordinary to extraordinary and conventional to unconventional tourism experience. Being respectful of the ethnic cultural values of the destination visited and their art and craft, this category of tourists believes in 'learn by doing'. This form of tourism provides a very deep and engaging experience to the guests. Local community is the most important stake holder in this form of tourism as the whole concept of creative tourism revolves around them. Being participative in nature, this form of tourism exploits tourism as a resource

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for community and not community as a resource for tourism (Laws et. al, 2011).

Creative tourism is the tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken (Richards and Raymond, 2000:18). Creative tourism meets the desires of tourists for more meaningful and fulfilling experience. Creative tourism can also be equated with 'experiential' tourism (Smith, 2006). Creative tourism can prove to be culturally and environmentally sustainable as the main resource for developing this kind of tourism lies in ethnic culture and environment of a destination. The more culturally and environmentally rich a destination is, the more prospects it will have of developing creative tourism.

India has been projected and promoted globally as a cultural tourism destination. The country exhibits tremendous potential for creative tourism. To the international tourists India is shrouded in mystery and mysticism. All the states of India have the potential to be developed into creative tourism hub owing to their rich cultural heritage. Himachal Pradesh is a small Indian hill state famous amongst tourists for its salubrious climate and scenic beauty. The State is brimming with cultural heritage in abundance. All the twelve districts of the State have a unique ethnic culture, art and crafts. Himachal Pradesh has the potential to be developed as a creative tourism destination.

Keeping in view the rich cultural diversity of the State the paper has attempted to find out the present status of creative tourism in Himachal and to what extent it has been practiced and promoted among tourists visiting the State.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cultural tourism is essentially travel directed toward experiencing the arts, heritage and special character of a place. Tourists have started questioning the sustainability of cultural tourism as this form of tourism has resulted in overcrowding at the cultural centers of various tourists destinations. Historic city centers have started to suffer from a "vicious circle" of cultural tourism development in which famous sites attract large number of tourists thus degrading the quality of experience and driving "serious" cultural tourists away (Russo, 2002). In the search for their uniqueness through cultural tourism, many places have followed similar strategies, which have resulted in making those places feel and look the same (Richards and Wilson, 2006). This has driven the 'serious' cultural tourists away from that particular destination. This category of tourists wants to explore and live the natives' ways of life. They are interested to acquire the skills of natives and are willing to learn their art and craft. According to Richards & Wilson (2006), in the cultural tourism context, tourists have become more demanding and seek holiday experiences that permit skills development as well as playing an active role, being

part of a community and experiencing the 'real culture of a place', while learning about heritage and local identity (Chambers, 2009; Fernandez, 2010). They want to have holiday experiences that will change them rather than simply filling them with loose experiences (Richards, 2001). As Poussin (2008) pointed out, tourists look for authenticity and unique experiences and hope to have a better understanding of the place or country visited. Tourism must be treated as a resource for community and not communities as a resource for tourism (Moscardo in Laws et. al, 2011). The essence of Creative tourism is in being pro community. This form of tourism is participatory in nature. Through this form of tourism an emotional bonding develops among tourists to visit the tourist destination more often. Tourists who take part in this form of tourism normally become more emotionally attached to the destination visited compared to other tourists. This form of tourism boosts the self confidence of local people owing to the new found interest of tourists in their culture, art & craft and life style.

Creativity combined with culture can work wonders to uplift the image of a destination. It can prove to be the unique selling proposition (USP) of a destination (Richards & Wilson, 2007b). Pearce and Butler in 1993 pointed out the interrelationship of culture and creativity. Smith (1998) mentioned, "the idea of culture as the main attraction for visitors is rapidly giving way to the idea that creativity is what counts" (Cited from Richards 2001: 64). In 2000, Richards and Raymond envisaged a new term, creative tourism. Richards (2008) argued, creative tourism is a new form of tourism that has the potential to change tourism development and make a significant contribution in differentiating and changing the tourism experience. With the increasing interest in intangible heritage, creative tourism is a newly emerging form of cultural tourism that satisfies the higher level need of self-actualization with a primary focus of active skill development (Richards and Wilson, 2006). Creative tourism in rural destinations suggests that tourists have the opportunity to experience local culture and develop their own skills based on the territory's endogenous resources (Fernandez, 2010). The shift towards creativity in tourism can be seen as part of an evolution on the basis of tourist experiences (Richards and Wilson, 2007).

The potential role of creativity as a driver of innovation and thus transformation of the socio-economic structure of a given place is irrefutable (Richards & Marques, 2012), as is its potential as a means for fighting 'serial reproduction of culture' (Richards, 2011; Richards & Wilson, 2006) through potentially more innovative, flexible, harder to copy forms of tourism experience (Alvarez, 2010). Creative tourism thrives on environment and culture of a destination as these are the indispensable resources for developing this form of tourism. Creative tourism may prove to be instrumental in preserving and protecting the ethnic culture and environment of the visited destination as questers of such type of tourism desire appealing, unique and memorable experiences, with an eye for authenticity, simplicity, nature and a context contrasting

with the urban way of life (Figueiredo, 2009; Frochot, 2005; Kastenholz, 2002; Kastenholz, 2004; Kastenholz & Lima, 2011; Molera & Albaladejo, 2007; Rodrigues & Kastenholz, 2010). With the increase in disposable income and increasing level of education, there has been an increase in the will to travel. Several studies have suggested that tourists desire 'a different holiday experience'. To satiate the needs of such category of tourists, destinations should develop and promote diversified integrated products, including both natural and cultural elements characteristics of rural territories that have maintained their individual identities (Chamber, 2009; Kastenholz & Lima, 2011; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1994; Poon, 1993; Todt & Kastenholz, 2010), despite the pressures of globalization (Pereiro & Conde, 2005). Creative tourists never look for spectacular experience; they are quite contented leading the natives' lives.

It is evident from the review of literature that creative tourism can emerge as an alternative form of tourism. This form of tourism provides authentic and real tourism experience to the tourists. This form of tourism does not put unnecessary burden on the fragile resources of a destination as this form of tourism thrives on culture, heritage and environment. Considering the tourism resources of the state of Himachal this paper is an attempt to find out the awareness of this form of tourism amongst the tourists visiting the State and also to investigate their willingness and keenness to experience creative tourism. With these objectives the exploratory study attempts to answer the following research questions:

R.Q. 1. What is the awareness level of international tourists on creative tourism in Himachal?

R.Q. 2. How willing the tourists would be to experience creative tourism in the State?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To find out the awareness level of tourists about creative tourism in Himachal and also to evaluate their willingness

to participate in this form of tourism, a sample of 100 international tourists visiting the study area i.e. Shimla (India) was selected on judgment cum random basis. They were administered close ended questionnaire. The sample was collected within the time frame of 6 months i.e. from October 2016-March 2017.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from the demographic profile of the respondents that 33% foreign tourists visiting India belong to 25-40 years age group whereas majority of international travelers (43%) belong to above 40 years age group and majority of them are working in a private set up. It is also evident from the findings that 36% tourists are from the higher income group (5000\$ and above), whereas 45% belong to 1000-5000\$ income bracket. It can be deduced from the findings that foreign tourists who visit India, generally belong to the middle income group. For majority of international travelers the purpose of their visit has been rest and relaxation. Purpose for which tourists have been visiting Himachal largely revolves around rest and relaxation. People visiting India, generally do not travel alone. This is evident from the fact that majority of international travelers prefer to travel with their partners (50%), whereas 30% of the tourists travelled in groups. Repeat visits to India are very few. This is apparent from the findings. 47% travelers were on their first trip to India as opposed to 23% repeat travelers. Travelling decisions of international travelers are influenced a lot by word of mouth promotion. Foreign travelers choose a tourist destination on the basis of recommendations of their friends and relatives. This is obvious from the findings that 35% travelers have chosen to visit India under the influence of their relatives and friends. Travel guides and tourist offices have also emerged as important tools of promotion. 20% foreign tourists decided on the basis of information provided by travel guides and tourist offices.

Section A-Social Demographic Profile of International Tourists Visiting India

Variables	Categories	Numbers	Percent
Age	Below 25	25	24
	25-40	43	43
	Above 40	33	33
Occupation	Public sector employee	19	19
	Private sector employee	45	45
	Student	19	19
	Any other	17	17
Monthly Income	Below 500 US\$	09	09
	500-1000 US\$	10	10
	1000-5000US\$	45	45
	5000 US\$ & above	36	36

Variables	Categories	Numbers	Percent
Purpose of visit	Business & official	07	07
	Education	03	03
	Sports & events	0	-
	Visiting friends & relatives	04	04
	Holiday/relaxation	64	64
	Health	0	0
	Religious	12	12
	Voluntary work	10	10
Are you travelling as	Single/independent	10	10
	Couple	50	50
	Family	10	10
	Group	30	30
It is your	1 st visit	47	47
	2 nd visit	23	23
	3 rd visit	17	17
	More than 3 rd	13	13
Who has influenced you to visit India	Tourist offices	20	20
	Travel agents	05	05
	Friends & relatives	35	35
	Travel guides	20	20
	Web sites	11	11
	Electronic media	09	09
What is your length stay in of the State	1-3 Days	32	32
	4-5 Days	19	19
	6-10 Days	43	43
	More than 10 Days	06	06
What has motivated you to visit India?	Culture and heritage		
	Good climate /Scenic	70	70
	Adventure	14	14
	Buddhism	08	08
	Inexpensive Holiday	08	08
	Proximity/accessibility	-	-
	Any Other	-	-
	(Please Specify)	-	-
What type of accommodation you prefer during your stay?	Luxury Hotels		
	Medium Price	25	25
	Budget/Dharamshalas	22	22
	Rest House/ Guest House	09	09
	Friends and relatives	06	06
	Home Stays	08	08
	Any Other (Please Specify)	30	30
		-	-
What is your choice of destination in India? A place which very well known		73	
		73	
	Moderately known destinations	21	
	Un explored / off beat places	06	
	Any Other.....	-	

Majority (43%) of the international foreign tourists stay in the State for 6-10 days, followed by 32% tourists who stay for 1-3 days in Himachal Pradesh. It has been found through interviews that tourists can be motivated to increase their duration of stay in Himachal if efforts are made to create event based tourism or participative tourism. Indian culture and heritage have always intrigued foreign tourists. Tourists have been fascinated by the quaint ways of Indians. This is evident from the fact that for 70% of foreign tourists culture and heritage have been a source of motivation to visit India. Creative tourism thrives on culture and heritage of a destination. India being a culturally rich country can benefit tremendously from this particular form of tourism. Himachal Pradesh, a small Indian hill state is normally frequented by tourists for its salubrious climate and scenic beauty. Though the State is very rich culturally and boasts of its fascinating art and craft, melodious folk music and dances, delicious and sumptuous cuisines, vibrant fairs and festivals, but this

aspect of tourism is yet to be explored and promoted among the international tourists. Tourists visiting a destination would like to have an authentic, participative experience which could make their visit a memorable one. This fact is highlighted from the fact that a majority of tourists (30%) would like to stay in home stay units operated and managed by the local ethnic community. This would give the tourists a chance to mingle with the locals and imbibing their life style and learning their unique customs. Majority of the foreign tourists (73%) would prefer to visit a destination which is very well known. It can be inferred from this data that international tourists are apprehensive about visiting a lesser known or moderately known destination as the fear of unknown lurks large in their minds. Safety and security issues are always assigned upmost priority by the tourists. Many unexplored destinations are not well marketed from tourism point of view.

Section B-Experience Assessment of International Tourists on Creative Tourism

Sr. No.	Opinion Statements	Responses		
		Agree	Disagree	Can't Say
1	Creative tourism is a form of tourism where onus is on participation. (RQ1)	54 54%	29 29%	17 17%
2.	Your reasons for participating in creative tourism would be to know native's life style and for acquiring new skills and to establish a strong bond with the locals. (RQ2)	69 69%	18 18%	13 13%
3.	Tourism and culture have a close association. (RQ1)	77 77%	13 13%	10 10%
4	Your preferences for creative tourism in Himachal would be living with locals and learning their handicrafts and agro/orchard tourism. (RQ2)	84 84%	09 09%	07 07%
5.	You would like to visit the country again to experience creative tourism. (RQ2)	89 89%	02 18%	09 09%
6.	You would recommend the Country to others on account of creative tourism. (RQ2)	95 95%	01 01%	04 04%

It is evident from the experience assessment of international tourists on Creative Tourism that majority of tourists i.e. (54%) are familiar with the concept of creative tourism as they have opined that this form of tourism is participative in nature. 69% of tourists would like to participate in creative tourism for acquiring new skills and to establish a strong bond with the natives. It is clear from the above statement that tourists are appreciative of the fact that by indulging more with locals, they would be able to connect with the destination visited and the natives' in a stronger and more significant manner. Tourism actually thrives on culture. 77% tourists agree to the statement that tourism and culture are closely linked. Whopping 84% tourists have preferred to participate in creative tourism in Himachal learning the handicrafts and getting involved actively in agro/orchard

tourism. This close involvement with natives would prove beneficial for the destination's economy and this will also inculcate a sense of pride and achievement among the locals for their culture and heritage (both tangible and intangible). It may also lead to preserving natives' handicrafts, culture and customs. Creative tourism has the power to attract tourists to a particular destination again. Majority of tourists (89%) were of the view that they would like to visit the country again to experience this unique form of tourism and 95% tourists would gladly recommend the country to others on account of creative tourism. It is apparent from the experience assessment of international tourists that they would be keen to experience creative tourism as this would give them an opportunity not only to learn and live the natives' ways of life but give them a chance to develop a strong bonding with the destination visited.

Section C-Opinion Survey on General Perception on Creative Tourism

S.N.	Statement	SA	A	NC	D	SD
1	Creative tourism uplifts the economy of the place visited without exploiting the natural, cultural and personal/social resources	85	14	01		
2	Creative tourism has the potential to become major tourism motivator	68	26	06		
3	Creative tourism connects tourists with the hosts more strongly	89	11			
4	There is a close linkage between culture, tourism and creativity	90	10			
5	Creative tourism should be equated with quality tourism	92	08			
6	Creative tourism means living and manufacturing the whole tourism experience	63	14		13	10
7	Creative tourism provides a very unique and authentic experience	93	07			
8	Creative tourism boosts the self confidence of the local people on account of guests showing interest and participating in their culture and ways of life.	64	06	25	05	
9	Creative tourism helps in preserving the local heritage	65	07	27	01	
10	Creative tourism can be instrumental in ensuring year round tourists' inflow	69	17	4	10	
11.	Creative tourism can highlight the uniqueness of a destination, thereby clearly distinguishing one tourist destination from the other	70	15	9	4	2
12.	Tourists are co-producer of tourists services and experience in creative tourism	76	12	10	2	

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NC = No Comments, D = Disagree,

SD = Strongly Disagree

Tourists surveyed have agreed to the fact that creative tourism uplifts the economy of the place visited without exploiting the natural, cultural and social resources. Creative tourism can prove to be the main tourism motivator. This fact has been emphasized by over 90% of tourists. It is evident that creative tourism could emerge as the main pull factor for tourists if it is developed and promoted in a well planned manner. This form of tourism establishes a much stronger bond with the hosts compared to any other form of tourism. All the respondents agreed to the statement that culture, tourism and creativity are very closely linked and should be promoted as an integrated package. All the respondents were of the firm belief that this kind of tourism should always be equated with quality tourism. Therefore planners and decision makers should stress upon the quality and not the quantity of tourists. Mass tourism should be avoided in such destinations as this form of tourism fosters on a very intimate contact with the hosts which may convert into a lifelong association of visitors with natives. The concept of creative tourism is well understood by the tourists visiting the State as 77% visitors agreed to the statement that this form of tourism meant living and manufacturing the entire tourism experience. All the tourists agreed that creative tourism provides a unique and authentic experience. Creative tourism boosts the self confidence of the local people on account of guests showing interest and participating in their culture and ways of life. 70% tourists have felt that living with locals and learning their art and handicrafts would inculcate a sense of pride among the hosts for their heritage. This form of tourism would prove instrumental in preserving natives' heritage and would also ensure year round inflow

of tourists. More than 80% tourists believed that since creative tourism thrives on culture and heritage, this form of tourism would definitely help in preserving, conserving and promoting heritage and would also be helpful in ironing out the seasonality factor. Tourism destinations are very easily interchangeable. There is a homogenization of cultures taking place (Ritzer, G. 1993). All major tourist destinations look replica of one another. One destination can be replaced by another. Destination's uniqueness can be highlighted with the help of its unique culture, heritage and handicrafts. 85% tourists have agreed to this statement that creative tourism helps in distinguishing one destination from the other. Nearly 90% tourists have agreed that creative tourists are co-producers of services and experiences.

CONCLUSION

Mankind has the inherent need of 'becoming' rather than just 'being'. There is a paradigm shift in tourists' trends. Tourist of today seeks more authentic experience. Therefore rather than being a mere observer or a passive participant in tourism activities, tourists want to engage very actively in all the tourism related activities.

From the above findings it can be concluded that creative tourism harbors on indigenous culture, art and handicrafts. This form of tourism lays the foundations of a long lasting relationship between the hosts and the tourists based on mutual respect and understandings.

Himachal Pradesh is synonymous with quaint culture, customs, rituals, handicrafts and scrumptious ethnic cuisines.

The State has a great scope for developing and promoting creative tourism. The art of pottery, painting, leather craft, embroidered silk handkerchiefs, wooden articles, woolen articles, unique mouth watering cuisines, local music, rustic life style, all this and more could be learnt by tourists in Himachal Pradesh through creative tourism. This fact has been well supported by majority of foreign tourists visiting the State. This lesser explored tourism resource can prove to be very beneficial not only for the revival of the State's heritage and art but also enrich tourists' experience visiting the State in the more satisfying and fulfilling manner.

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