Resident Participation in Tourism Development: A Study of Kurukshetra Heritage Site

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Abstract:
One of the greatest difficulties to the sustainable growth of the tourism community is the tensions between tourism development and local inhabitants as more and more people flock to Kurukshetra's holy spots. Community involvement and locals' approval of tourist expansions at historic places are investigated. This research demonstrates that locals' enthusiasm for tourism expansion is boosted when they have a hand in shaping its future, and that this effect is mediated by people's views of internal disputes within the tourist industry. This research offers fresh theoretical insight as well as important practical consequences for the preservation and revitalization of historic sites.

Keywords: Kurukshetra, Heritage sites, community, resident’s participation, tourism development.

Introduction:
Increasing numbers of individuals are including tourist activities as regular parts of their lives. Tourism has been shown to have beneficial effects on local economies, societies, cultures, and environments, including the development of new infrastructure, the betterment of citizens' quality of life, and the preservation and revitalization of cultural traditions. Rapid and unchecked tourist growth, however, also leads to the emergence of mass tourism, which has the potential to have serious consequences in certain locations. Various negative effects brought on by tourist expansion have been documented in a wide number of researches. The environmental harm caused by tourist development, for instance, may outweigh the economic advantages in places with vulnerable habitats and community circumstances, as was observed by Archer et al. (2005) [5]. In their 2016 article [6], Saayman and Giampiccoli argued that traditional, mass tourism was ineffective in redistributing the industry's dwindling supplies. In addition, large numbers of visitors accompany this kind of tourism, and their presence may disrupt locals' quiet enjoyment of the area. Residents are one of the most essential groups of stakeholders in a tourist destination since they are directly connected to and affected by tourism's effects, for better or worse. The perspectives of locals about the good and negative effects of tourist development on the tourism community may be crucial in determining the industry's long-term viability.
How the effects of tourism affect residents' day-to-day lives and the quality of their living environment, and how they respond to the changes brought about by the burgeoning tourist industry all play a role in shaping locals' impressions of the impacts. Locals' favorable and negative impressions of the tourist industry may be explained by referring to social exchange theory (SET). The term "SET" initially referred to a sociological theory developed by Emerson (1976) [11] that posited the mutually beneficial interaction of two or more social groupings. In the context of tourist research, SET denotes a dialogue between locals and industry insiders. Residents assess the good and bad effects of tourist growth in their areas via comparison, an essential part of social interchange. The theory of expected benefits (SET) posits that locals' perceptions of the effects of tourism expansion have a direct bearing on their own attitudes toward and support for expansion. Locals may stop supporting tourist expansion if they believe the drawbacks of the industry outweigh the benefits. Many locals are opposed to new tourist attractions because of the damage they've seen from over tourism, which has sparked some violent clashes. While several studies have explored the ways in which tourism might have unintended consequences, very few have looked specifically at how growing numbers of visitors to Kurukshetra's historic sites have stoked tensions. In particular, research addressing significant tensions within the tourist industry is scarce. Many disputes that have arisen out of the tensions between the tourist community and tourism growth have given rise to legitimate public worries. Conflicts involving the tourist community at historic sites have been a main focus for several academics in the field in recent years. When locals have negative impressions of the tourist industry, they are less likely to support and participate in tourism development, which threatens the long-term viability of cultural landmarks. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore the connections between locals' involvement, their impressions of tourism-related issues, and their enthusiasm for the sector's expansion near historic landmarks. Its purpose is to serve as a guide for the preservation and revitalization of historic landmarks.

**Objectives:**

1. To determine the Resident participation in tourism development.
2. To determine the perception of conflicts in the tourism community.

**Research Methodology:**

Secondary data were employed to accomplish the study's aims. The studies, books, journals, papers, magazines, and the Internet that were consulted were all considered secondary sources. Yet, researchers are also doing fieldwork. Accuracy of the facts was confirmed by further investigation and observation on the ground, as well as through informal contacts with a few important persons. Many studies also make use of images to graphically communicate their results.

**Study Region Profile:**

Kurukshetra has been a pilgrimage destination for hundreds of years because of its reputation as a holy place. Land of the Bhagavad-Gita is in Haryana, India, around 160 kilometers north of Delhi and 91 kilometers south of Chandigarh. Located on National Highway 1, which links Delhi and Ambala the city has
convenient access to both rail and road networks. The city is home to two state-operated hotels, the Parakeet Complex and Neelkanth Yatri Niwas Kurukshetra also has an abundance of public and private hotels to house the city's many tourists and devotees. Kurukshetra is close to major highways, railways, and airports. There are three visitor centers in Kurukshetra, one each at Pipli, Braham Sarovar, and Jyotisar, so that tourists may get all the information they need. During busiest periods, extra measures are taken to ensure that visitors have access to medical care (Gita Jayanti celebrations and Sun Eclipses). Lord Krishna is supposed to have traversed the streets of Kurukshetra, making it one of the holiest towns in the world. According to the Mahabharata, the great battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, which lasted for 18 days, took place in the grounds of Kurukshetra. The Puranas teach that anybody who visits or permanently resides in this area is assured of a place in heaven once they die. Kurukshetra draws visitors due of its abundance of cultural and religious sites.

**Heritage sites of Kurukshetra:**

The legends surrounding Kurukshetra, a city from Indian mythology, are themselves works of epic literature. You may follow the threads back to the mysterious past of the Bhagavad Gita here. The Rigveda and the Samaveda were composed here by enlightened Rishis. The famous battle of the Mahabharata took place here. Some of the most well-known and controversial books in history, including the Manu Smriti, were recorded here. Kurukshetra is home to a staggering array of historical sites that are sure to fascinate any history lover who makes the trip there. The legacy of Kurukshetra predates the history of India itself. Some of history's most revered figures, including Buddha and many Sikh gurus, visited this city. Kurukshetra is now a significant Buddhist and Sikh pilgrimage site as well as a sacred site for Hindus. Discoveries at a number of archaeological sites in and around Kurukshetra have only added to the city's already extensive historical legacy. This fantastic metropolis, however, is not mired in antiquity. As a cultural hub, Kurukshetra is home to some of India's best museums, scientific institutions, and planetariums.

i) **ShaktiPeeth–Bhadrapali Mandir**

Many devotees visit the Shaktipeeth Shri Devikoop Bhadrakali Mandir while in Kurukshetra. It is said that when Devi Bhagwati saw how much her Lord Shiva's honor was being sullied, she committed Sati. Shiva's grief caused her to pace the whole cosmos with her body in tow. Vishnu, wanting to save Shiva unnecessary suffering, divided her body into 52 pieces using the Sudarshan Chakra. Her corpse was dispersed in various places throughout the globe. The locations where pieces of Maa Sati's corpse landed on the ground are now revered as holy 'Shaktipeeth' It is said that the spot where the Shaktipeeth Shri Devikoop Bhadrakali Mandir now stands in Kurukshetra was when she broke her right ankle. The Pandavas, it is said, prayed at the shrine before setting out to fight the great Mahabharata war. In addition, they gave the temple several of their horses as a sacrifice. As so, the custom continues to this day. Even now, devotees from all across the nation, depending on their financial situation, bring either silver or mud miniature horses to the temple as sacrifices.
ii) Jyotisar

The most sacred area in all of Kurukshetra is Jyotisar, also known as the site where the Gita was first read aloud. The war described in the Mahabharata supposedly started at a place called Jyotisar. Every evening at this holy site, visitors may enjoy a spectacular light and sound spectacle performed in both Hindi and English.

iii) Brahma Sarovar Kurukshetra

The Brahma Sarovar is a sacred lake dedicated to the Hindu god and creator of the universe, Lord Brahma. King Kuru, a progenitor of the Pandavas and Kauravs, first dug the tank. This holy site is one of the most photographed and visited destinations in all of Kurukshetra. In order to commemorate his triumph during the Mahabharata, tradition has it that Yudhistar built a tower in the midst of the Sarovar. On the northern shore of this beautiful island lies a temple to the Hindu god Shiva. Lord Brahma personally put in place the Shiva Linga at this temple. There's a stunning Draupadi Kupa on the island complex, too.

In the winter, the Sarovar is a sight to see. In order to refuel, many migrating birds pause in the Sarovar. During Gita Jayanti, the tank takes on a dreamlike quality as its waters reflect the Aarti's soft flames. Many people consider the Sarovar to be a place of extraordinary spiritual power. During a solar eclipse, a plunge in the Sarovar's pure waters is equivalent to doing a thousand Asvamedha Yajnas.

iv) Shri Venkateswara Swamy Tirupati Balaji Temple

Kurukshetra now has a shrine to the Hindu god Vishnu, called Tirupati Balaji. Those who worship Lord Tirupati Balaji in Haryana and North India commissioned its construction. North Indian worshippers of Lord Tirupati no longer have to go to Andhra Pradesh to do so.

v) Gurudwara Mastgarh

Originally constructed as a mosque in 1630 by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, the Gurudwara Mastgarh is now a Sikh holy site. The mosque eventually became a Gurdwara. Although its minarets were destroyed, the dome and Mehtab were preserved. In order to complete the change, the Guru Granth Sahib was brought inside and the Nishan Sahib (the Sikh flag) was raised above the building.

vi) Sheikh Chaheli's Tomb

The interesting Sheikh Chaheli Tomb Complex has not one but two graves, a Mughal Garden, and a Madrasa. Sheikh Chaheli, a Qadiriyya Sufi teacher in the court of Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh, is buried in the main tomb of the compound. The mausoleum is built in a style evocative to that seen in Persia at the time. It is perched on a man-made terrace with a view of the madrasa. The tomb's façade is composed of sandstone, and it has a white marble dome in the form of a pear. In the upper room, the saint is buried, while in the bottom chamber is a tribute to him. Two little museums housed inside the Madrasa include artefacts discovered at Harsh ka Tilla and Bhagwanpura.
vii) Shri Krishna Museum
One of the most interesting sights in all of Kurukshetra is the Sri Krishna Museum. The museum aspires to reveal the mysterious side of Krishna. The book is an attempt to decipher his many guises and exploits as described in the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Purana.

There are six galleries in all, three in each of the museum's two wings. The stone sculptures, leaf etchings, tiny paintings, bronze castings, clay ceramics, and terracotta antiquities on show are some of the more interesting pieces.

viii) Raja Harsha ka Tila
When visiting Kurukshetra, be sure to check out Raja Harsha ka Tila. Several ancient city sites have been found by archaeological diggings in this region. Cities as early as the 1st century AD are attested by artefacts unearthed thus far. The artefacts unearthed at Raja Harsha Ka Tila have helped historians better understand six distinct time periods. In all of Kurukshetra, this is one of the most interesting spots to check out.

ix) Kurukshetra Panorama and Science Centre
Kurukshetra Panorama and Science Centre is a forward-thinking educational facility that brings together the finest of both scientific and religious knowledge. Its epic depiction of the Battle of Kurukshetra is a major draw. We intersperse the Mahabharata's narratives with explanations of how certain scientific discoveries corroborate the historical accuracy of the stories inside. The full eighteen-day conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas is shown on 34-foot-tall canvases. Background chanting of the Gita and shifting light effects enhance the overall immersion.

A fascinating exhibition titled "India: A Heritage in Science, Technology, and Culture" can be seen on the center's bottom floor. There are hands-on installations here that explore how ancient Indians saw geometry, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and surgery, as well as the nature of matter and the atomic structure.

x) Kalpana Chawla Memorial Planetarium
Dr. Kalpana Chawla was a renowned Indian astronaut who perished in the 2003 Columbia space shuttle disaster. Her memory is honored at the Kalpana Chawla Memorial Planetarium. The planetarium was created as a means of informal astronomical education. Haryana's governing body for R&D, the State Council for Science & Technology, founded the organization in 2007.

There is a fantastic Science Park just outside the downtown area. The park's captivating displays make learning about science an enjoyable experience for people of all ages. Not only do families visit the park, but adults do so as well.

Astro Park, the planetarium's interactive astronomical display, is a huge draw. It is essential in stimulating young people's interest in science. The beautiful learning facility is one of the most motivational spots in all of Kurukshetra.
xi) Thanesar Archaeological Site Museum

Thanesar, not far from Kurukshetra, is an ancient site of significant archaeological significance. There has never been another museum like the Thanesar Archaeological Site Museum in all of Haryana. Exhibits in the museum include everything from ceremonial artifacts and coins to clay and terracotta sculptures and decorative arts.

Discussion:

Sustainable Development of Heritage Sites

Heritage sites, which were formerly only used to preserve a particular style of traditional architecture, have recently emerged as a valuable commodity to the tourist industry. A heritage site is a historical location rich in cultural and social values that are often vulnerable due to their age or location. The contemporary period has seen the rapid destruction of cultural landmarks all across the globe, particularly in India, as a result of industrialization and urbanization. Heritage places may be effectively preserved via sustainable development. As significant examples of human cultural history, historic places provide ideal environments for cultivating cultural tourism. New worries about historic site preservation are being sparked by the increasing incorporation of cultural assets into the tourist sector. As a result, there is an immediate need for research on the good and negative effects of tourism on local resources and the local community, as well as the sustainable development of tourism in historic site.

Increasing tourism to religious sites is often seen as an effective strategy for ensuring the long-term survival of such sites' cultural traditions and architecture. Kurukshetra's tourism growth may seem quite different from that of urban or environmentally focused tourist hotspots. Kurukshetra's historical features should be both protected and put to good use as the city's tourist industry grows. It is also important to think about how the historic monuments of Kurukshetra might contribute to the local economy.

Sustainable development of Kurukshetra's historic monuments is without a doubt an organized effort that calls for much thought from both theoretical and practical angles. Environmental carrying capacity, excessive commercialization, and an uneven distribution of earnings are just a few of the topics that have been the focus of research. Travelers to Kurukshetra's historic landmarks, regional businesses, local inhabitants, and tourism management firms are all essential to the city's long-term success in the industry. One of the most important aspects of long-term preservation of Kurukshetra's historical landmarks is the involvement of local citizens.

Residents Participation (RP):

The public has a right to be involved in decisions that will affect their life on a daily basis, such as urban planning. As a catch-all word, "resident participation" (RP) gives the green light to a wide range of resident involvement when certain conditions are met. The topic of RP has been heavily discussed in the literature of the tourist industry, particularly as it relates to the topic of sustainable tourism at the Kurukshetra cultural sites. It's a crucial part of Kurukshetra's efforts to restore and preserve its historic landmarks. Incorporating locals' perspectives into tourist planning is key to meeting people where they're at and ensuring that the
benefits accrue to everyone. The use of RP in the tourist industry and municipal administration has been shown to have positive effects on local economies and quality of life. Incorporating RP into tourism planning is essential for both community growth and catering to visitors' wants and requirements. The local community's desire to retain its traditional way of life and values may be strengthened, and the local community's support for tourist development can be bolstered, when citizens are included in the decision-making process.

**Perceptions of Conflicts in the Tourism Community (PCTC):**
Conflict is a dynamic process involving several participants, who may be people or other groups. There is a high potential for conflict when two or more parties engage since they likely have divergent interests and objectives. Conflicts arise when differences of opinion are not handled in a timely manner. Disputes stemming from economic, political, and moral differences both inside and outside the society are common sources of conflict. Even in a society centered on tourism, conflict is a fact of life. The government, locals, visitors, and business owners are all essential members of the tourism industry, and everyone has a stake in its growth and success. One of the difficulties is likely to be disputes between them, especially if their interests and ambitions are at odds with one another. As was previously indicated, there are both good and negative effects of tourist development on the tourism industry as a whole. Social exchange theory (SET) suggests that when communities see the negative effects of tourist development, some of its members may react impulsively in order to combat such effects, leading to conflicts.

**Conclusion:**
For the people who live in the tourist community, the process of tourism growth is more than just a financial one; it has psychological, social, and cultural consequences as well. This research used secondary data collection techniques to inquire into the mediating effect of PCTC in the relationship between community participation (RP) and residents' support for tourist development (RSTD) in the context of sustainable tourism development in historic sites in Kurukshetra, Haryana. This research suggests that PCTC may pose a difficulty in rallying locals behind tourist expansion efforts. While many researchers have looked into the ways in which tourism may go wrong, less attention has been paid to how locals see the conflicts that arise as a result of the industry, and how that could affect whether or not they're willing to back plans to expand tourism in their area. Furthermore, the disagreements among the tourist community at Kurukshetra's historic sites are mostly ignored. This research adds to the existing body of knowledge in the field of tourist studies since it provides a more thorough and explicit explanation of the connections between RP, PCTC, and RSTD. The locals of Kurukshetra's historic districts may be relegated to the position of bystanders as tourism grows and the city's landscape changes. This is due in part to the fact that the majority of Kurukshetra's populace—the people who actually live in the areas designated as historic sites is farmers with less education and few resources. Residents' social resources may be better used and their potential to contribute to tourist development can be increased via empowerment. The competitiveness of local inhabitants may be increased, which can help reduce tourism-related disputes. Some initiatives may be put into place to
encourage locals to take part in growing the tourist industry. As a first step, enhancing locals' capacities is essential. To better adapt to tourist expansion and assert their own interests, locals, for instance, might benefit from increased training opportunities provided by the government or destination management. Second, governments and destination management need to make it easier for locals to take part in tourism-related activities by providing more employment and other opportunities to do so. For instance, the time and effort required to register a firm with the government should be reduced. In addition, the government should encourage locals to take part in the decision-making process of tourist development, since doing so is likely to increase people' feeling of being a host and, in turn, inspire their positive attitude towards tourism's growth. Third, when disputes arise throughout the course of tourist development, the groups or organizations affiliated with locals in the tourism community should be given more influence so that they may be the conduits through which locals can voice their opinions and requests.

References:


Websites: