

Historical Aspect of Tourism and Its Socio-economic Phenomenon

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Abstract

History reveals the harsh realities of travel in ancient times and civilizations. The search for basic necessities of life-water, food, shelter and safety kept early hunters constantly on the move from one settlement to another. In the absence of any organised roads, people travelled by foot or on animal backs over open fields, forests and marshy lands often facing great dangers. Thus, it was a virtual adventure that required caution and skill. Trade and Commerce was, however, the strongest force in the ancient times. Gradually, opening of the new trade routes gave a big boost to travel. Trade relations matured into cultural relations and better understanding of each other's way of life.

Keywords: Historical, Tourism, Ancient Civilizations, Trade, socio-economic phenomenon.

Sporadic travels by the nomads in earlier days has now turned into world's most slow flourishing industry, namely tourism. In this research paper I will discuss the nature of tourism through ages, because the history of tourism is as old as the history of human civilization. Hereunder, we pen a brief account of historical development of tourism.

Travel in the prehistoric times Paleolithic age (30,000 BC – 10,000 BC) suggests that all human activity, as also moments, reward upon day to day survival. Gradually, when the regions were explored, fire was discovered and tools were made, people were able to settle down in shelter. The ability to make and use of tools and build shelter enabled prehistoric man to travel to new hunting grounds even in very extreme and inhospitable weather. Subsequently, during the Neolithic age, which begin about 10000 BC, primitive people settled in more permanent regions and formed themselves into some kind of agricultural communities.

During the Neolithic age, several innovations in the field of transport changed the very nature of travel. This resulted in conscious travel in order to explore and see the world. The invention of wheel and money marks the beginning of the modern era of travel. All the above factors and innovations greatly affected travel. Now many traders could pay for transportation as well as accommodation either with money or by exchange of goods. These were forerunners of modern day tourism.

Much of what we know of travel this early period is due to the writings of Herodotus, who is the world's first significant travel writer. India attracted great traveller like – Vasco-da-Gama. The great explorer, Christopher Columbus, set out to find a new route to India and in the process discovered the new world. Chinese traveller also travelled India to quench their thirst of knowledge. India always held a great fascination for foreign travellers. Mark Twain describe it as fabulous world of “Splendor and sages”, the one country under the sun with and imperishable interest, the one land that all men desire to see.

The habit of travelling is inherent and attached to the human being from the very beginning. With evolution, growth and development of human civilization it gradually developed into a pleasure but it was only after the advent of industrialization, people started moving in large numbers of places away from their home with the desire for leisure and pleasure, which continued till tourism became a socio-economic phenomenon and this phenomenon today have evolved into one of the largest and fastest growing industries of the world.

Apart from economic benefits, tourism has multiplier effects in terms of employment generation, income generation and development of infrastructure in tourist destination areas along with conservation of our heritage and cultural deposits. Hence, the importance of tourism as an employer, as a contributor to the improvement of socio-economic, socio-political and politico-economic understanding as well as means of promoting cultural exchanges and international understanding and cooperation; paved the way for its fastest growth.

It is true that now some of the negative aspects of tourism or over tourism have come to light, which demand careful consideration and regulations to stop the negative impact of tourism and sure full benefits of tourism to the tourists as well as the places of tourist destinations and inhabitants residing at and around tourist destinations. After all, tourism takes place within political and social context. It is, however heartening that current pressure for sustainable responsible tourism will give a different emphasis containing debate amongst the various groups in society, and main change the perceived balance of the positive and negative effects of tourism in the future. Over the years, however the scenario changed, the growth of modern technology, rising income and improve facilities contributed to the emergence of modern tourism.

In the early days, pilgrimage or pilgrim travel assumed great importance. Ashoka The Great, traveled a great deal in his eagerness to spread the doctrines of Buddha. Throughout his travels, from Patliputra to Lumbini onto Kapilvastu and Sarnath and finally to Gaya, emperor Ashoka had special memorial set up at each spot and also rest houses where travellers could rest. Trees were planted along the roadside so that the traveller would be protected from the harsh sunshine. Harsha Vardhan was another great emperor who gently influenced by the Buddhist scriptures, built institutions and dharmshala for the travelers. Rest houses were built in towns and villages and number of monasteries were also built for the pilgrims. This shows that travel facilities were much improved and travel was not a cumbersome experience.

The Arthshastra reflects the protection given to merchants and their high status in the Indian society. Hieun-Tsang journeyed to India and described in his manuscript that trees for shade, well, rest houses and security were also well organised for travellers. Travelers were accommodated in overnight places of stay, known as sarais at the city gates where all services were provided to them. Travelling for pleasure on the rivers and to the hills was a tradition started by the royal courts. Even today the remains of the past like milestones, sarais and a new network of roads and paths that make all corners of this vast country accessible.

Tourism was emphasized with development of Buddha Centres and heritage monuments in India through master plans. Now National and State government also focusing on tourism through constituting of Department of Tourism. Government also called for effective coordination of public and private efforts so as to achieve synergy in the development of tourism in India. Tourism has been used as an instrument of regional development policy. The state has to intervene to regulate the production and delivery of tourism services. Tourism can be used as an instrument of political legitimation. Historically, the creation of package holidays is associated with Thomas Cook.

The main attraction of tourism for national policymakers is that it is an agent of economic development. International tourism offers and added attraction of earning foreign exchange. For these reasons most governments have become involved in the promotion of their tourism attractions. Importantly, sustainable development is advocated by specialists and economists. Therefore perspective planning regarding tourism destination development is called for. Presently, India is trying its best to become one of the top destinations in world tourism because we have great potential for tourism development and adopting environment friendly approach.

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