

THE HOST-GUEST RELATIONSHIP: A NARRATIVE ON THE RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION AT GOKARNA, KARNATAKA

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Abstract

A destination which offers an ideal mixture of natural, cultural and spiritual offerings urges a distinctive management approach. The variance between the perceived usage of a resource by the tourist and the intended use by the locals could heavily impact the sustenance of the pristine offerings. Hence it is imperative to understand how the hosts' perception and attitude towards the tourists, vis-à-vis how the hosts intend to offer the destination to the guests.

The study is centered in the coastal town of Gokarna, Karnataka, India. The qualitative study adopting Interactional Narrative Analysis, coupled with participant observation of 32 informed locals at the destination demonstrates host community's concerns, perceptions and aspiration towards the visitors and the destination.

The study evidently restates the core of Indian hospitality – '*Athithi-Devo-Bhava*' (The Guest is God) while retaining spiritual, socio-cultural and natural sustainability of the place sans being urbanised. It also escalates the need to understand the perceived consumption and the actual consumption of the resources by the locals and the tourists to allocate resources and to develop the destination in symphony.

The study is one of its kinds in the Indian context projecting hosts' attitudes at a destination which is religiously significant and tourism has been introduced at a later stage. It extrapolates case of pro-tourism attitude by the hosts indicating conviviality at a destination which sometimes witnesses over-tourism.

Key Words:

Gokarna, Host Perception, Host-Guest Relationship, Resident Attitude, Over-Tourism

Introduction

Over the past six decades, tourism experienced continued expansion and diversification, becoming one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. Though every city embeds a distinctive pull factor in terms of architectural marvel, morphological patterns, the historic associations with personalities and events, the success of any tourism destination lies on harmonious association between the tourists, the people and the places they encounter, and the organizations and the businesses that provide tourism services (Zhang, Inbakaran, & Jackson, 2006). The research has time and again placed the significance on the host communities' perception and support for tourism for the success of any destination. The hosts not only contribute to the satisfaction of the tourist by offering the most sought experiences and the services but also evidently contribute to the sustainability of the sector (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004 & Perez & Nadal, 2005). It is imperative to consider the attitudes and

perceptions of the local residents to design a 'resident responsive' tourism planning (Vargas-Sánchez, Plaza- Mejía, & Porras-Bueno, 2009).

The development of a destination has varying degree of impacts on destination's economic, physical, socio-cultural environment and in particularly on the locals who act as hosts to the tourists (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). The feelings of the locals are often assumed to be of the secondary importance to that of the needs and comforts of the tourists. Owing to the economic benefits, the natives catered to the tourists with or without any inclination towards the tourists (Aspelin 1978; Lee, 1978). The perspective certainly could not achieve the desirable results in the long run as it demeaned the process of tourism (Pi-Sunyer, 1989).

The titled study is carried out in the vibrant coastal town of Gokarna, Karnataka, India. The beach town and a pilgrim centre has for long welcomed the pilgrims and visitors from every corner of the country. It has attracted many fold leisure tourists from around the world in the recent years. The destination offers an ideal mixture of natural, cultural and spiritual offerings in its most sought forms. A town of 13,000 residents annually hosts about 1.3 million visitors. While it could have been an easy victim of the mass tourism due to the tourist influx, Gokarna has held its core attribute intact. The residents have witnessed the place being transformed from a religious place to a tourist destination. The change in the characteristics of the tourists has made it an apt metaphysical, spiritual, New Age destination. The number of arrivals converts the cozy coastal town into a city with floating population yet, not commercialized into a coastal resort. The residents as well as the tourists have had their share of contribution in retaining the destination's peculiarity.

Gokarna being a religiously valued place alongside being offered as a rustic beach destination, the study endeavors to project the hosts' perceptions about the international tourists who are not necessarily visiting with the religious purposes or share the same cultural and religious background. Taking into consideration the constant changes the destination undergoes with continued influx, the study also would venture to illustrate the locals' aspirations towards the kind of development they consider is appropriate to be able to sustain the originality and religiosity of the place or their intent to diverge the offerings. Considering the various settings of encounters between the hosts and the tourists, the study highlights the distinctive paradigm of the Host-Guest relationship at Gokarna.

Accordingly, the paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the local communities' perception about the tourists?
2. What would be the ideal representation of the destination the locals aspire to offer for the multi-motivated visitors over the period of time?

Literature Review

Paramount importance has been placed on the host perceptions and attitude towards tourism and the tourists. The earliest studies may be dated back to 1970s (Smith, 1977). The title has been researched profoundly and has contributed to the understanding in various dimensions. The studies have embraced descriptive stage to the explanatory stage and the works with theoretical framework. Majority of the studies focuses on the resident perceptions about tourism and development in all the volume and trajectory and not many on the tourists.

Resident Perception and Attitude towards Tourists

The review has shown that the perception of the host regarding tourism and tourism development is significantly influenced by the Extrinsic and Intrinsic Variables but not limited to. Extrinsic variables consist of stage of tourism development, nature/type

of tourists, density of tourists, seasonality and national stage of development. The Intrinsic variables consist of economic/employment dependency on tourism, community attachment, distance from tourism zone, interaction with tourists, personal values, social status and Demographics (Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997). One such variable which could heavily influence on the local's perception of the tourism development is the local's perception about the tourists on their individual level. As the attitude towards tourists influences the perception towards tourism development this evokes a dedicated research.

The earlier studies in the anthropologists and socio-psychologists perspective have lauded substantial importance of the impact of tourism at the interpersonal levels ascertaining acculturation theory and asymmetrical borrowing (Brewer, 1978; Pissunyer, 1977; Pearce, 1982). It is likely that the host population's culture gets more influenced than that of the visitors who are less likely to borrow. While no community is immune to this process, the ones who have been successful in retaining their originality have refrained themselves from the social contact by and large. The likely preposition has been that "Greater the ethnic and cultural distance between the host and the tourist personnel, the greater the confusion and misunderstanding the two groups are likely to encounter and the less natural they are likely to act" (Nunez, 1989: 271).

The patterns of interaction between local residents and the individual tourists or the group of tourists who share a different cultural and religious background heavily influences the travel behaviour as well as the host-guest interaction (Cohen, 1998). Understanding and appreciating the cultural differences will contribute for positive cross-cultural host-guest interaction, tourist holiday satisfaction and repeat visitation (Reisinger & Turner, 1998).

As observed by Deery et al., (2012) and Sharply (2014) the research so far describes what residents perceive, but does not necessarily explain why. Hence this calls for a qualitative exploration than that of the quantitative inquiries. While the destinations are dynamic (Butler, 1980), they tend to adapt and change over the period of time and the studies on specific aspects at a particular point of time would be less useful in the long-term strategic planning. It is therefore important to understand the factors which fall outside the framework of the tourism phenomenon that influences the resident's perception or may even supersede the same (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Andereck et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2013). The consciousness of the duties inherent in the role of host and an expectation that the guest fulfill his reciprocal obligations highlights the understanding of the host-guest relations. The study on resident attitude and not just perception is encouraged by the scholars (Carmichael's, 2000; Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2012) and the same is considered in the current study.

The early studies have attempted to model the structure and the settings of encounters between the tourists and the local population which served as a foundation to understand the dynamics between the host and guest. The settings vary from organized tourist spaces like resorts, hotels, restaurants, shops/markets, on the beach to the places where the encounters happen between the tourists and the people who are engaged formally or informally in tourism sector (Sutton, 1967; UNESCO, 1976). Sunyer (1989) argues that the attitudes the residents hold respecting tourists are not immutable. The study evidently states that form and the nature of the relationship between the host and guest differs depending on the encounters they have. The relationship heavily differs between 'structured, commercial exchange-based encounters to spontaneous, serendipitous meetings or even relations that involve no contact or communication at all (that is, limited to the sharing of space)'.

The response of the residents who provide the services to satisfy the demands of the tourists has received considerable attention in the works by McKean (1989) and Moufakkir & Reisinger (2013). Study by Brunt and Courtney (1999) captures the perceptions only of the category of the host population who are in continuous and direct contact with tourists. This is for the fact that those who have considerable encounters and are economically favoured by the tourists have positive perception and attitudes than that of the ones who have no contact with the tourists. The studies are evident on categorizing the residents into indifferent residents, rational supporters, optimistic supporters and blind supporters depending on the interaction level between the locals and

the tourists categorizing them into (Zeng, 2018). The perception studies of the residents who are not in direct contact with the tourists has not been ascertained which might heavily influence the sustenance and overall experience of the tourists in the longer run.

Religiosity, Tourism and Hospitality

An impending variable apt to be discussed in the current paper is the impact of religiosity on the attitude of the resident communities towards tourism and the tourists. The tourism experience has been accorded as ideal setting for the spiritually driven endeavours of the travellers where one feels closer to the faith and place through religious observance, ritualized practice, reaffirmation of identity and cultural performance (Cheer, et al., 2017). In contrast tourism is perceived to be as threat to tradition and religion collectively though the communities heavily rely on the economic benefits of tourism (Christina & Kavoori, 2001). A study by Kirillova, et al., (2014) claims that the hosts' understanding of hospitality and the hospitable behavior demonstrated differs with the religious values. Though the communal understanding of hospitality is supported by religious texts, the commercial hospitality is mostly understood as a money making venture.

The studies have claimed that more extreme the religious group less affirmative are they towards tourism and the tourism is encouraged only by the ones who have economic benefits by the same (Ze'ev, et al., 2018). The researchers have argued that the paradigm of treating the guest as supreme by the hosts have induced unsustainable development at the destinations. It is also perceived that the wishes of the guest are often unsustainable. The study suggests the host to be more of a 'shepherd' than the servant which could contribute for sustainable practice (Rheede & Dekker, 2016).

The current paper elucidates the case of Gokarna, embracing all categories of the host population put forth by Krippendorf (1987) "Those in direct businesses with continuous contact with tourists; those in irregular contact in unrelated businesses; those in regular contact but only partially deriving their income from tourism; and those with no contact with tourists". Though the inputs of the host population who directly contribute to the tourist experience are of utmost importance for the planning, it is equally important to understand the perceptions of the host population who have no encounters with the tourists to understand the likely consequence at the later stage.

The study attempts to address that not only the service providers make a destination a hospitable one but also the collective vibe the destination emits, where every individual resident contributes to it. It highlights the depth of the hospitable culture of a religious destination towards non pilgrim tourists and its openness to tourism. It is also identified that no major research has happened in the developing regions of the world, predominantly at a religious destinations which also attract multi-motivational visits. Thus the current paper takes the cue from the gaps observed and attempts to project the distinctively positive host perspective about the guests at a destination which faces over tourism many times but doesn't necessarily result into inhospitable environments for the visitors. The conviviality between the hosts and the guests is presented rather than the conflict.

Area under Study – Gokarna

Gokarna is a religious coastal town situated in the west -coast of Karnataka, India (Map 1). The name 'Gokarn' in the destination's colloquial language of Kannada means 'ear of cow' as the place is said to be in that shape which is supported by the Sthala Purana, a scripture which describes the place identity and origin. Gokarna is geographically situated between two rivers, Shalmali Ganga or Gangavali on the North and Aghanashini which means the sin-destroyer in the South. Siddheshwara ranges of hillocks are on the East and it opens upto the mesmerizing Arabian sea in the West. The earliest reference to Gokarna is found in the major epics of India the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Every major Purana has extolled the religious and philosophical importance of Gokarna.

The combination of enchanting Western Ghats and enthralling Arabian Sea has made it the most scenic setting for the tourists as well. The town has welcomed the pilgrims and the domestic tourists since time immemorial but it was discovered by the foreign tourists only in the 1970s. Gokarna has always attracted millions of tourists from the domestic sources and it crossed the 10,000 mark of international tourists in 2018. Complimenting the destination offerings, majority of the international tourists are inclined towards philosophical learning or have been the spiritual or alternative lifestyle seekers. Though the concept of tourism is not new to the destination, the development of commercial establishments to cater to the needs of the diverging profiles of tourists is in its incipient stage.

Research Methodology

The research paradigm privileged is constructivism combined with interpretivism. Taking into consideration the context and the objective of the study, Interactional analysis approach for the narrative analysis is regarded. Interactional analysis emphasizes the joint participation of the respondent and the interviewer combining the techniques of thematic analysis, narrative structures, and observation as it happens in ethnography. (See Riessman, 2005) The narratives in the current study encompass long sections of talk – extended accounts of lives of the locals in the context predefined for the study developed through multiple interviews and meetings for further analysis. The dialogic process is emphasized between the teller and the listener who jointly participate in the conversation. As required, the documents, pictures and reference texts from other source were collected along with field notes and transcripts duly regarded through interpretation. The significant ones were identified by the researcher through purposive criterion sampling and the rest were interviewed through the snowball sampling. Though the choice of the participants was conceptually driven and not in terms of the maximum representation, the diversity in age, gender and occupational stances subsequently helped in assuring the quality and in strengthening the pattern of emerging beliefs and ideologies. The interviews were ceased at 32 as the extended interviews contributed no diverse theoretical learning.

The interviews were conducted in different phases. During the first meeting the informed locals were first sensitized about the research purpose and to establish the familiarity with the researcher. Familiarity with the researcher and their background along with the underlying objective of the research would make the participant less hesitant making interviews more enriching and valid as the participant can speak their thoughts out.

The study encompasses Interactional Analysis. The categorical content approach was used where all the narratives were equally analyzed to understand the specific phenomenon with greater impetus to the content of the narratives than that of the structure. The transcripts of semi structured in-depth interviews with 32 informed locals coupled with tales and episodes from the religious scriptures and epics, pictures and participant observation were subjected to narrative analysis. The narrative technique privileged for the research benefited enough time and freedom of expression to the participants to bring forth the voice of the place. The technique regards both the narrators and the interpreters or the listeners who is the primary researcher in the present context.

Data Collection

The interviews (100%) were conducted in Kannada language which is the local dialect of Gokarna. Capturing the narratives from the locals in their mother tongue would give them more flexibility in terms of expression and diversity. The respondent was aware of the context in which the narrative insights were sought. The setting for the interviews was mostly decided by the respondent. The 80% of the interviews were at the respondents' home where the researcher was keenly invited. The rest 20% of the interviews were carried out at the temple premise or near the beach or the Kotitheertha tank where the respondents were

available. The researcher could read, write and speak Kannada and hence could interview, translate and transcribe by self. As translation immensely contributes for the interpretation, the researcher took field notes all through the data collection process. The narratives were simultaneously recorded using an electronic device. Taking into consideration the ability of the researcher to get the exact imprints of the locals' thoughts as even the researcher shares the common cultural background; the researcher's reflexivity is well presented. As a "Close reader" the researcher took account of the moments of silence, expression of involvement, enthusiasm, empathy and dissatisfaction to decipher and interpret the same. As the interviews were conducted in phases, the exact time frame could be hardly specified. Yet the main interviews specific to the research objectives took about 02 – 02.5 hours in total combining the multiple interviews which lasted for more than an hour.

The frequent confirmations with participants were sought by the researcher in terms of the interpreted views and in regard with the translated themes in English as and when necessary. Though there was little room for misinterpretation, the interpreted themes were discussed with the participants so that it should not sound offensive to the locals at the later stage. The participants were accessible away from the research area and could be contacted for any clarification at a later stage. The researcher would also acknowledge the co-authorship of the representation as it is produced based on the participant's discourse and the researcher's observation along with constant introspection about the researcher's "selves" (Hall, 2004; Mura, 2015).

Results and Discussion

The thirty two participants belonging to Gokarna had their families associated to the place for at-least 400-500 years. So as to understand the perceptions of all possible segments of the host population, the narratives were also recorded from indirect encounters and interaction due to family business and also from the ones who had no contact with the tourists who arrived at Gokarna. In total, the study observed 26 Male and 06 Female participants. The under representation of the female respondents was due to shortage of time with them as they were occupied catering the guests/pilgrims at home and the discussion would need significant time or they preferred the head of the family would provide more meaningful insight. Table1 below summarizes the participant characteristics.

Table 1 Participant characteristics

Participant	Gender	Occupation	Age	Encounter category
1	Male	Doctor-Agriculturist	87	Irregular contact with no income from tourism
2	Female	Home maker - Agriculturist	77	No contact with tourist
3	Male	Priest	42	Irregular contact
4	Male	Head Priest	52	Irregular contact
5	Male	Farmer-Beach shack owner	48	Continuous contact with direct business
6	Male	Farmer	68	Irregular contact
7	Male	Private Library Curator- Agriculturist	88	Irregular contact with no income from tourism
8	Male	Priest	94	Irregular contact
9	Female	Home maker - Agriculturist	83	No contact with tourist
10	Male	Farmer	65	Irregular contact

11	Male	Priest	42	Irregular contact
12	Male	Business - Related	66	Irregular contact
13	Male	Farmer	42	Irregular contact
14	Female	Home maker - Home stay co-owner	38	Continuous contact with direct business
15	Male	Priest	42	Continuous contact
16	Male	Priest	45	Irregular contact
17	Male	Business - Related	26	Continuous contact with direct business
18	Female	Home maker	40	Indirect contact
19	Male	Home stay owner	70	Continuous contact with direct business
20	Male	Priest	50	Irregular contact
21	Male	Business - Unrelated	55	Irregular contact
22	Male	Farmer	45	Irregular contact
23	Female	Home maker - Home stay co-owner	48	Continuous contact with direct business
24	Male	Retired Agriculturist	70	Irregular contact
25	Male	Priest	48	Irregular contact
26	Male	Agriculturist	70	Irregular contact with no income from tourism
27	Male	Retired Teacher	87	Irregular contact with no income from tourism
28	Male	Priest	42	irregular contact
29	Male	Priest	53	regular contact with partial income from tourism
30	Male	Farmer- Related Business	69	Continuous contact with direct business
31	Female	Farmer	65	regular contact with partial income from tourism
32	Male	Veda Teacher	88	Irregular contact with no income from tourism

Locals Perception of Tourists

India is lauded for its hospitality and it is the people with hospitable nature who make it happen. The Coastal Kannadigas are indeed warm by virtue as a host. One of the major indicators of it would be the number of arrivals and evidently the revisits. Though the domestic arrivals are quite normal for the religious motivations, it is interesting to understand what triggers the repeat visits especially by the foreign tourists. If the locals put forth inconsistent behavior it would certainly impact the tourist arrivals and especially the re-visits. The parallel study by the same researcher as part of doctoral thesis reveals that 42% of foreign tourists are repeat visitors.

The responses were sought from the respondents for the question “How do you feel about the tourists and how do you understand and cater to the needs of tourists who have different cultural backgrounds from across the globe?”

The respondents from all segments irrespective of the encounter level believed that “Gokarna is their home and tourists as their guests at home as a whole”. One of the mid aged participants states “*Irrespective of domestic tourists or the international tourists the first thing is to serve them well in our individual capacities*”. The respondents’ strong affiliation towards the guest and general desire to have a contented guest could be sensed during the interaction. To testify this, the first ones to successfully open up their space to accommodate and serve the foreign tourist, now popularly known as Mahabala house, could be placed on record as ‘traditionally prestigious individual’ as he took up the initiative of hosting foreign nationals at his residence even as he

belonged to the priest community contrary to the usual practice of hosting only the domestic pilgrims who frequented for religious purposes. He recalls no notable set back or lash back from the local community due to this gradual, orderly change. This emphasizes the community's integrity to embrace and cater to the diverse environment.

Responding to how the guests' needs are taken into consideration, one of the enterprising participants explained the affirmative co-creation stating "The *very first restaurants and eateries opened were later named by the western visitors like Refugee Camp and Spanish Place on Kudle beach*". A religious town opening up for the non-tangential purposes and with culturally different names highlights the harmonious nature of the town. The observation research identifies the hosts' consideration towards the guest's gastronomical needs. The eateries serving the local staple food have modified their menu with a range of English, Continental and Scandinavian breakfasts. "A guest is never satisfied if he doesn't eat well and sleep well. This is the only criteria to be met to have a contented guest. The native food of the visitor will make one feel better and welcoming. It is gesture to make the guest feel important. It is exactly the way one treats the guest at home" as described by one of the senior respondents.

The hosts also put forth the idea of giving tourists their 'space' as described by one of the participants. As a curious tourist might appreciate interaction likewise one may also rejoice secluded silence. The locals regard the needs of the guests by creating a platform for cultural/philosophical interactions and to acknowledge their curiosity in knowing the unknown.

To keep up the traditions and the practices of the place, it needs an austere nomenclature. Accordingly, the place has managed to retain its authenticity of its core offering though it is in constant friction with the multi-cultural visitors. Though Gokarna as a place is open for all, the temple sanctums are not allowed to be entered by the foreign tourists. It is due to the strict procedures of the obligations one needs to satisfy to enter the most sacred temple sanctum. Yet, they have been welcoming enough to let the visitors enter the temple's gathering hall or the outer courtyard. This is to let the ones who are keen to feel the temple environ and to get a sense of the positive vibe which is believed to be present inside the temple. It is interesting to note that the instruction board which informs 'Foreign tourists are not allowed inside the Sanctum' is also in Russian language considering the language barrier and the majority of Russian Visitors. With due regard to the norms, the visitors are seen waiting for their turn in the queues as long as 300 meters just to experience the vibe. They are widely encouraged to quench their philosophical or spiritual quest. One can often encounter a new age spiritually inclined tourist from across the globe who will be indulging in exchange of philosophical discussion or will be seen making the sand lingam and worship the same on the shore.

The locals who had no actual interaction with the guests responded to the question, "What do you feel about the foreign tourists who visit Gokarna?" stating that "A guest is always a guest" irrespective of involvement in hosting. While most of the respondents had limited response, one of the senior female respondent expressed her concern indicating that local knowledge has to be used to caution the visitors regarding the prospective dangers and wrong doings at the place according to the local customs, scriptures and calendar such as suggested time and months of extremity or voidance which affects the usage of sea. This was stated referring to some of the mishaps caused due to usage of sea during high tides or ill planned hiking or trekking costing lives of the tourists which were reported by the media. The response explicitly highlights the sense of belongingness the locals have towards the ones with whom they have no direct interaction. Having an access to local knowledge and adhering to it would certainly benefit the enthusiasts to better their experience.

The research reveals that the way the hosts have built up the environment for the guests, reciprocating to the same the visitors have equally kept the zeal alive. To testify this, few of the respondents placed on record a pictorial work dedicated to Gokarna compiled by a Swedish photographer and a regular visitor for the past 30 years. The work pictorially celebrates the life of people at Gokarna. Likewise, one of the other respondents gladly reminisces how the foreign tourists who are termed as westerners

volunteer by themselves to clean up the beaches and some make it a routine. As they jog or walk by the shore in the morning, they just collect the visible trash and clear the shore. This sense of attachment to place is unlikely if the host or the environment hasn't been hospitable enough.

Locals' aspiration towards the destination image

The studies have illustrated all the potential dimensions of residents' change in attitude over a period of time. The factors which contribute to this change have most evidently been over-development or over-tourism.

While the resources are similar as compared to other beach destinations, the destination persona which Gokarna projects is unusual and unparalleled. Taking into consideration the aura the destination offers, it is therefore necessary to understand the locals' aspiration towards the destination image. The understanding would determine an appropriate course of action for the destination developers or the tourism officials who are most likely the outsiders. It is of paramount importance that one consults the host to better understand how the destination has to be positioned so as to take up the marketing activities. The unplanned, mass marketing efforts would dilute the core offerings of the destination.

Accordingly, the locals were asked to project their aspirations towards how Gokarna has to be positioned as against some mass-appealing resort-culture beach destinations.

As the residents perceive Gokarna to be predominantly "*religious, mythological and philosophical*" destination and equally compelling "*leisure destination*", locals aspire for the same image to be projected in the promotional materials and also by the efforts taken up by the tourism department. To support the same, the parallel study conducted by the researcher to examine the characteristics of the tourist arrivals indicated the arrival of 'New Age Spiritually Inclined Tourists' in large numbers to Gokarna. Therefore, it could be evidently stated that Gokarna as a dynamic destination has majorly attracted the pilgrims, the contemporary pilgrim-tourists as well as the new age spiritually inclined responsible tourists.

The locals recalled how they strongly revolted the arrival of rave tourists and were made to shift their base way back in 2014-15. Since then, there have been limited visible encounters of ill-motivated arrivals. The locals also suggested that the marketing efforts from the tourism personnel should be indicative of the religious sensitivity of the place where it covertly dismisses the unpleasant atmosphere. While it is always encouraged to get away with the misfit, the locals also feel that everything good and what is perceived as not good is all part of the society and one's values and beliefs should be strong enough to get through it while one has limited control in occurrence of the ill happenings. This outlook by the residents may be accounted as a contributing factor to sustain the rustic, natural, religious sanctity of the place against urbanization.

One of the major reflections made was that of the fact that though tourism has immensely uplifted the lives of people in Gokarna individually, there has been no visible effort from the concerned authorities to pass the benefit to Gokarna collectively to better the public resources or infrastructure. Gokarna as a town attracts maximum footfalls making it a city with floating population! Yet, the local administration takes into account the number of permanent residents while facilitating the town. This affects the sanctions dedicated for the water supply, electricity supply for a place. The contradiction between the perceived consumption and the actual consumption was very much highlighted by the locals as well as the temple administration in Gokarna. Thus, the destination calls for a holistic planning taking into consideration the level of consumption in a place together by the residents and by the tourists.

Conclusion

Understanding and appreciating the importance of host-guest relationship in tourism development is vital as they both form the nucleus of the whole experience. The current paper attempted to put forth the dimension of host perceptions about the actors than that of the activity. The study presents the qualitative findings on hosts' perception about the tourists and their aspiration towards the destination which evidently guides the destination planning and management. The study encompasses residents' actual attitude towards the tourists and not the perception which are conditioned only by the commercial exchange between the hosts and the guests. The current study supports the preposition that it is unlikely that great numbers of tourists making the guest-to-host population ratio more than closer may be drawn to inhospitable environments. When the guests are served with utmost care and passion, the deliverance has neither been affected by the external influences nor by the guests. While the studies have claimed that commercial hospitality is more of an economic affair, the case at Gokarna showcases a synthesis of indigenous hospitality, contemporary reach and a well-paced development of the tourism related facilities. There are also certain instances wherein the visiting strangers over the period of time have built a sound base of a friendly relation with the locals with their continued visits. Their initial motivation of pleasure has ideally transformed into Visiting Friends in a land where they actually have no familial bond otherwise. This dimension portrays the distinctively positive outlook of the host towards the visitors with whom they share neither ethnic roots, cultural values nor any religious attitudes.

The religiosity of the place or the hosts has created no barrier for tourism development individually or collectively in contrary to the previous studies. It has furthered the influx of niche tourists who compliment the destination's mixed characteristics. Consequently, the destination is closely associated with the beach. The perception the hosts share about the beach is unparalleled and no studies elsewhere are available for comparative analysis enabling a whole new dimension of understanding the beach use pattern.

The interaction rendered a cohesive atmosphere between the host and the guest over the period of time. The hosts seem to have conveniently categorized the tourists on interpersonal basis developing their own cognitive frame based on tourist encounters and characteristics. While the increased visits may probe loss of individuality, an important human attribute, the residents of Gokarna in turn have catered to the needs of the guests by creating a platform for cultural/philosophical interactions and have time and again acknowledged their curiosity in knowing the unknown. Some studies in this regard have prepositioned that the cultural borrowing between the extremes results in confusion and dilution of the host's natural behavior. In contrast to this finding, the current study presents a case of cohesive existence of the host and guest, along with retaining the instinctive behavior of the host.

A sea change from a limited number of outsiders to the massive influx of the short-term tourists has hardly impacted the core offering of the destination and the destination feel, contradictory to the earlier studies. However, the potentiality of poor monitoring here making the destination fall prey to the mass category can't be ruled out, that which may later result into dreadful irreversible damage. As Gokarna is in its initial stages of the development, the influx instead cautions and highlights the role of local administration, where the consumption has exceeded the actual supply of the resources in the destination. Study alludes that it is imperative to consider the actual consumption statistics than that of the resident statistics for the supply of utilities and resources.

The study reflects the strength of spiritual, cultural and natural offerings of the place which makes it one among the top visited destinations and yet has retained its charm due to the continued support and vigilance of the hosts as well as the guests with an equal participation in the local management. It is imperative to acknowledge the residents' aspirations towards the destination image and position. If the marketing activities are aligned with the same then there would be negligible friction

between the residents and the tourists even as they would be sharing common values with the destination. This also guarantees the tourists what to expect from the destination and covertly avoids any unpleasant happenings during their stay. Else the mass marketing efforts if applied to a quaint destination like Gokarna would tarnish the destination essence. The proposed dimension thus contributes for a healthy spatial co-existence of locals, tourists and the pristine resources. Gokarna not only demands sustaining the natural offerings of the place but exclusively calls for sustaining the values of the locals, the religiosity of the place, the prevailing philosophical space and faith of the adherents too contributing to the sanctity of the place.

Limitations

The current paper is part of the doctoral thesis thereby limiting the extent of the study to the hosts' perception towards international tourists who do not share common historic and cultural background. The case being specific to Gokarna, there is no attempt of generalization in the study.

Future Research

The comparative study of the hosts' perception and attitude towards the domestic tourists and the international tourists would deepen the understanding benefitting the destination managers. Cross-cultural understanding of how destination and its natural resources are perceived would be insightful, forming the base for sustainable development.

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