

# Mindset Change in Tourism People for Responsible Tourism Behaviour and Partnership with Academia

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## Abstract

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Governments in developing countries prioritize enhancing facility infrastructure in tourism, but neglect environmental considerations leading to negative impacts. The phenomenon of tourism is not problematic, but the conduct of stakeholders is. Negative perceptions arise from the lack of understanding of tourism among policymakers, local communities, and tourists. The Mindset Change of the Tourism People (MCTP) towards Responsible Tourism Behaviour (RTB) is crucial for Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) as these are directly involved with tourism. Partnerships with academia are necessary to inform policy and practice in the tourism industry.

Tourism is widely acknowledged as a vital driver of economic growth in developing nations (Rasool et al., 2021). Governments have thus made significant investments in and promoted tourism, typically adopting a tourist-centric approach in development policies. This approach prioritizes the enhancement of facility infrastructure to provide tourists with a seamless journey and satisfactory experience at the destination. However, the historical emphasis on infrastructural development, rather than the incorporation of environmental considerations, has led to detrimental impacts on tourism development over time.

The literature on tourism has extensively focused on its impacts, both positive and negative. However, the prevalence of terms such as "negative impacts of tourism" may create the false impression that tourism is inherently problematic, particularly for those who are not well-versed in the academic discourse surrounding the phenomenon. It is thus imperative to ensure that the general public, including local communities, have a clear and accurate understanding of tourism, as overlooking this issue may lead to negative perceptions and reactions towards tourism. A recent example of this can be seen in India, where a community strongly opposed the government's decision to open a pilgrimage site for tourism due to concerns regarding the perceived negative impacts associated with tourism. Therefore, there is a pressing need to clarify misconceptions and promote a nuanced understanding of tourism through academic research and knowledge dissemination.

The focus of tourism literature on the negative impacts of tourism has resulted in the normalization of the association between tourism and adverse consequences, thereby endangering the image of tourism as a whole. This, in turn, may impede the acceptance and support of tourism projects by local communities. However, it is important to recognize that the phenomenon of tourism itself is not inherently problematic; rather, the issue lies with the conduct of its stakeholders, including policymakers, travel trade, and tourists. While previous studies have explored the impacts of tourism (Ming et al., 2023; Pickering et al., 2003; Buckley and Pannell, 1990) and destination image (George, 2017; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Afshardoost and Eshagi, 2020; Oliveira and Huertas, 2019; Lou and Li, 2021), there remains a need for studies that emphasize the fact that negative impacts are a result of irresponsible behavior, not an inherent aspect of tourism itself. Therefore, it is recommended that headlines such as "Negative impacts of Tourism" be avoided, as they are detrimental to the image of the tourism industry.

To facilitate Sustainable Tourism Development (STD), it is imperative to initiate a paradigm shift in the mindset of individuals directly involved in tourism, hereafter referred to as MCTP, an acronym for 'Mindset Change in Tourism People', towards Responsible Tourism Behaviour (RTB). This change must be demonstrated through responsible behavior, serving as a model for others to emulate, thereby propagating sustainable practices within the industry. In addition, academic research should be conducted to establish evidence-based connections between MCTP, RTB, and STD, thereby providing a sound foundation for policy formulation and implementation in the tourism sector.

Reclaiming the positive image of tourism and promoting responsible behavior among key stakeholders is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the industry. This requires a mindset change among those who have the power to frame tourism policies, those whose livelihoods depend on the tourism economy, and tourists themselves. By integrating sustainable concepts into decision-making processes, tourism can be developed in a way that aligns with sustainability principles. This requires the knowledge and expertise of domain specialists to be applied, particularly in an era where environmental consciousness and harmony are critical for the present and future. The integration of sustainability principles at the bureaucratic level is essential to ensure that tourism development is carried out responsibly and sustainably, contributing to the well-being of local communities and the protection of natural and cultural resources. Therefore, partnerships with academia are necessary to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and to inform policy and practice in the tourism industry.

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