

Fostering Social Sustainability in Tourism: Exploring Tourism Through Culture and Heritage Lens

Ms. Neha Mishra,

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India, <u>neha.mishra1293@gmail.com</u>, ORCID id. 0000-0001-8654-7581

Dr. Anindya J Mishra,

Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India, <u>anindya.mishra@gmail.com</u>

Abstract

The paper explores the co-relation between tourism and culture, focusing on Mussoorie, a famous hill station in Uttarakhand state of India. It investigates how tourism influences the local tradition, and traditional way of life in Mussoorie, highlighting both positive and negative factors. Study was conducted through interviews with key informants, Mussoorie-primarily based authors, historians, and local residents. Secondary data was derived from writings, articles, books based on Mussoorie and government and international portals.

The findings reveal that while tourism has led to the protection of certain cultural assets and promoted cultural authenticity, it has additionally resulted in the commercialization and commodification of local traditions, arts, and crafts. The paper discusses the demanding situations faced via the local people, which include the decline of conventional occupations and cultural inauthenticity, along with the steps taken to hold the location's cultural history, which includes organization of various fair and festivals, conducting heritage walks etc.

Keywords: Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Social Sustainability, Culture, Heritage

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1. Introduction

Tourism and culture shared a symbiotic relationsjip, wherein tradition enhances the beauty tourist destinations, and tourism, in flip, can enrich and sustain the local lifestyle (OECD, 2009). According to UNESCO (2013), culture has the capacity to contribute up to forty% of global tourism revenue. The OECD (2009) highlights that fostering the connection among culture and tourism can boost a destination's competitiveness, making it extra attractive to tourists. The UNWTO (2001) notes that the evolving connection between tradition and tourism has been formed by way of creativity, changing lifestyles, new technologies, and cultural changes. These traits have made culture in tourist destinations much less tangible but more reachable, creating each possibilities and demanding situations in cultivating synergies between tradition and global tourism.

Wint (2002) emphasizes that attaining sustainable goals can aid in ecological conservation, local management, economic independence, and the preservation of local way of life. The UNWTO also factors out that whilst the convergence of culture and tourism, in conjunction with tourists' growing area in cultural studies, can open up unique opportunities, it additionally gives complicated demanding situations for host regions. Similarly, the OECD (2009) warns that nearby legends, crafts, rituals, and arts are liable to being forgotten via younger generations, but they can be revitalized when tourists develop a sense of interest. UNESCO (2006) underscores the role of local people as interpreters of traditions, custodians of cultural heritage, and resources of understanding that may be leveraged for diverse tourism purposes

Thus, the study explores how tourism has impacted the local culture and heritage and has led to the change in community's traditional way of life. The study throws light on whether tourism has influenced culture, art and crafts, traditions, and practices. Further, this work throws light on the various cultural initiatives that the destination Mussoorie has opted to build culturally sustainable tourism. Added to that, the study has tried to understand the impact also from the writings of native and famous authors and historians of Mussoorie, apart from other vernacular materials available in the local libraries of Mussoorie. The current chapter evaluates how local community preserve and celebrate their tangible and intangible culture while living in the tourist destination and how local people associate with culture in terms of identity and sense of place.



2. Literature Review

Existing literature has pointed out the effects of tourism on various aspects of culture of the tourist's destinations. Du Cros and McKercher (2015) has outlined the issues that arise pertaining to deterioration of assets, changing cultural and local values and asset preservation (Du Cros & Mckercher, 2015). Mc Kercher (1993) has mentioned that due to entertainment, tourists interfere with host culture may result in differences in terms of behavior, attitude, songs, arts, and social relationships and thus to protect the cultural values is of immense importance. Mason (2016) has further added that due to tourists, commodification and change in culture takes place. Literature has also stated that cultural aspects have often been overlooked by the stakeholders as it is subjective in nature and hence difficult to measure (Aref and Redzuan, 2009).

Ioan-Franc & Iştoc (2007) argue that in the tourist destinations, cultural resources consist of movable and immovable resources and by integrating immovable resources in the circuit of tourism, financial resources are collected for the purpose of safeguarding, conservation and development. In this way, tourism keeps alive ethical identity, cultural traditions so that future generations can also enjoy it.

Also, Delamere & Hinch (1994) in their study delivered the positive impact of tourism in the host region. They elaborated how the destination gets benefited in form of identity and community pride, social interaction, and togetherness.

Similarly, Beal et al., 2019 in their study indicated that cultural resources are one of the typical conditions for the development of tourism in any area or location along with natural resources. The cultural heritage includes historical sites, architectural masterpieces, artistic genres, customs, festivals, traditional occupations, economic, political, communal achievements associations, cultural and artistic institutions and museums. These are things that tourists can explore and take pleasure in. These resources determine the extent, type, quality, and effectiveness of tourist operations throughout a nation, region, or area, along with creating the atmosphere and conditions that allow tourism to emerge and thrive. Van (2020) reflected on how local communities and cultural heritage are interlinked and how heritage conservation is to be meant for local communities with the right to decide on how to manage the heritage. They also state that how community's relation with the existing heritage could create a wellbeing condition.



Social Science Journal

Craik (1995) stresses on the idea to acknowledge the built and the natural environment in the tourist destinations where he states that wherever cultural dimensions are acknowledged, it mostly takes place in terms of social impacts and analyzed in terms of cost and benefits. He elaborated on how tourism changes the culture of tourist's destinations by commodifying few elements and also introducing external elements in the tourist destinations which may undermine or enhance the traditional cultural attributes. He also developed sets of cultural attributes such as- public involvement, degree of commodification and commercialization, cultural identity etc. to assist the community groups and policy makers.

Angeloni (2013) asserted that in the wake of the globalization process, it becomes significant to preserve and protect the own identity which indirectly determines the touristic competitiveness and this will require the participation of various stakeholders such as local government, private companies, public institutions, and individual citizens. He further says that in order to derive maximum benefits, dialogue between state and national government should take place for developing long term strategies, participation of local communities and partnership between commercial and voluntary agencies are required.

In the case of India, a study conducted in the state of Kerala by Sebastian and Rajagopalan (2009) found that tourism not only preserves heritage but also leads to more recognition and an improvement in the standard of living. Another study conducted in Ladakh in India by Lundup (2013) examines how non -material culture plays a crucial role than the material culture in Ladakh as culture in Ladakh is not just about traditional dresses but more about people's belief, integrity and faith. Tourism commodifies these values by attaching the material value to the same. He also analyzes how local culture commodification in Ladakh loses its value through attaching the economic values to the existing cultural heritage.

3. Methodology

The paper is based upon the primary and secondary source of data. Primary data is collected from conducting indepth and semi-structured interviews with the 05 key informants such as – Mussoorie based famous authors -Ruskin Bond and Ganesh Saili, historian Gopal Bharadwaj, Mussoorie Heritage Centre Founder Ms. Surbhi Agarwal, Former Municipal Council President Mr. O.P. Oniyal and 48 local residents that included 22 women.



The secondary data is especially based upon the writings of native and famous authors of Mussoorie namely- Ruskin Bond, Ganesh Saili, and historians and artists. Apart from that relevant materials, books, and articles pertaining to the hill station Mussoorie, were collected from the libraries based in Mussoorie especially- Tilak library, Mussoorie Public Library, and Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) library, Mussoorie. Further data is also drawn from related articles, and governmental portals like- Ministry of Tourism, Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, Uttarakhand tourism policies etc.

4. Impact of Tourism on Mussoorie: Understanding Through Cultural Aspect

Viewing Mussoorie as a tourist destination reflects the landscape's deeply humanized nature. Mussoorie has several heritage buildings that remind the town's colonial past and its role as a popular hill station in the 19th and 20th centuries. In this respect, for more than 30 years, Ganesh Saili, a Mussoorie-based author, has written several books related to Mussoorie that depict its changing facets. He researched this hill station and captured it in his words, reflected in his statement "*Yes! Our Mussoorie and Landour are still special places* (Saili, 2010). He mentions that Mussoorie still has a distinct colonial aura attached to it. The famous British authors like - Ruskin Bond and Stephen Alter live here. Further, the old bungalows in Mussoorie bear their names. Typically, roll-calls that are included are- Alyndale, Lodge, Firs, Seaforth, and Oakville, revealing its colonial nature. However, tourism has significantly impacted the traditional way of life of the local community in Mussoorie. One of the main impacts can be seen in traditional crafts and practices, as reflected by him. While interviewing Ganesh Saili, he narrated the impact of tourism on the cultural aspect of Mussoorie. He states-

The commercialization and urbanization of Mussoorie have resulted in the construction of hotels and resorts, and such tourism-related infrastructure often does not align with the traditional architectural style of Mussoorie. As a result, the traditional character of the place has been altered, leading to a loss of cultural authenticity in Mussoorie. The preference of tourists for readily available, mass-produced souvenirs has played a role in the success of certain traditional crafts like weaving and embroidery, but pottery and other crafts are encountering challenges. Additionally, the increase in tourist arrivals has influenced the



local food industry, leading restaurants to prioritize international cuisine over local delicacies.

Similarly, interviewed Mr. Gopal Bharadwaj, who has a collection over the past 25 years that includes Mussoorie of colonial times, Landaur Bazaar, old postcards, etc. He said the town's history is his passion, and he wishes that others, too, could get a taste of the history of Mussoorie. His only regret is that, even after several reminders, he has not found a permanent place where the collection can be safely secured and displayed. Historian Gopal Bhardwaj engages himself in displaying pictures and paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries. For 30 years, he has added rare images from libraries, archives, friends, and others (Livemint, 2016). While interviewing, he stressed on presentation part in the context of Mussoorie. He describes how Mussoorie's cultural depiction in the travel and tourist sectors may be both accurate and clichéd in various ways. He says-

Both accurate and stereotyped cultural representations of Mussoorie are being employed by the tourism sector. For instance, when a tourist travels to a temple or church in Mussoorie and learns its significance and history. Additionally, they meet with a priest in the area to learn about its faith. An example of artistic representation is this. On the other hand, a tourist in Mussoorie could pick up an apparel item with a photograph of a mountain with the imprint "I love Mussoorie" on the shirt. That is a stereotypical representation, for instance. Additionally, tourism can occasionally result in homogeneity. The local traditions and customs may be diluted or replaced with more universal or mainstream practices as tourists bring their own cultural practices and ideals. The local community may suffer a loss of identity as a result.

Hence, Gopal Bhardwaj's account of the cultural portrayal elucidates the intricate nature of Mussoorie's representation in the tourism sector. On the one hand, there is an apparent attempt to commodify and stereotype the local culture. This is evident from the numerous gift shops that offer mementos and attire featuring representations of traditional Indian culture and the various eateries that serve Indian cuisine. Although there is nothing wrong with such businesses as such, nevertheless, they may worsen the sense of cultural inauthenticity. Yet, there are also many attempts to offer a more precise representation of Mussoorie's culture and heritage. This is



demonstrated by the number of cultural events that take place throughout the year and the numerous museums and galleries that showcase the area's history and culture. Such efforts are crucial in ensuring that visitors have the chance to discover and experience the true Mussoorie. Similarly, interviewing Ms. Surbhi Agarwal, the owner of Mussoorie Heritage Centre on cultural authenticity of Mussoorie, she stated -

The annual and summer festivals that are held in the hill station highlight the history and legacy of the region, which represents cultural authenticity in Mussoorie. Additionally, the history and culture of the area are displayed in museums and galleries. Also, in some circumstances, it appears that locals are eager to introduce tourists to their culture. However, there is also a negative side that is associated. The town has become more commercialized than before, with a large number of businesses attracting tourists. The town's unique character has deteriorated as a consequence. Traditional habits, practices, and artistic forms are frequently reduced to simply commercial products as a consequence of tourism, contributing to local culture commercialization. As a result, the residents in Mussoorie might alter their traditions and rituals as a way to meet the demands and preferences of visitors, which might result to the disappearance of authentic cultural expressions.

She also states how the local food has changed as a result of tourism. Here, she mentions-

Change in local cuisine has taken place in response to the demand from travelers seeking international/national standard food. The homogeneity of culture is a risk of tourism. Along with traditional Indian cooking, several eateries in Mussoorie now serve a variety of international cuisines. As a destination sees an increase in visitors, they could start to want familiar services and goods. This may result in the growth of tourist traps and the disappearance of regional cultural identity.

Tourism in Mussoorie has also led to change in occupation. One of the most visible impacts of tourism in Mussoorie has been the loss of traditional crafts and practices. As locals adapt to the demands of the tourism industry, traditional skills and livelihoods such as farming, handicrafts, and traditional arts normally suffer, leading to a loss of cultural heritage and knowledge. In the



past, many people in Mussoorie made their living by producing handicrafts, such as woodcarving, pottery, and textiles. However, as tourism has increased, these crafts have become less popular, as tourists are more interested in buying souvenirs from large corporations. As a result, many people who used to make their living from handicrafts have been forced to find other jobs.

The same was reflected while interviewing Mr. Suresh who runs an antique shop in the Kulri market of Mussoorie. He stated-

My forefathers have been involved in the traditional occupation of the handicraft business of wood carving. However, in recent times, we have shifted our occupation from selling wood carving crafts products to selling apparel items that are preferred by tourists as they are more affordable and eye catching. Products made out of wood are often costly and attract limited tourists.

Few respondents also mentioned the positive impact of culture on tourism. For instance- Ms. Suneeta who works in the tourist Information Center of Mussoorie mentioned the positive impact of tourism. She said-

Tourism has acted as a catalyst for preserving the heritage of Mussoorie. While on one hand to attract tourists, the local authorities and communities have recognized the value of preserving historical landmarks, colonial architecture, and natural sites. For instance, landmarks like- Mall Road, Landour Bazaar, and Christ Church have been maintained and restored to showcase the rich colonial heritage of the town. On the other hand tourism has facilitated cultural exchanges between tourists and locals. Tourists learn about the local culture and customs, and they share their own culture with locals. This helps to promote understanding and tolerance between different cultures.

Similarly, commenting on the positive effect of tourism on the culture of Mussoorie, local art and craft seller, Mayur stated -

Tourism has led to the promotion of local culture by generating awareness. Nowadays, tourists are interested in learning about the local culture and customs and undergoing cultural experiences. Local artisans and craftsmen have also benefited from tourism by selling their handmade products, such as wooden



handicrafts and woolen garments, to tourists. This indirectly supports the local economy and encourages the preservation of traditional cultural practices. Also, tourism has also influenced the culinary scene in Mussoorie. The town offers a variety of restaurants and eateries serving not only traditional local cuisine but also a range of international dishes to cater to the tastes of tourists. This diversification of food options has influenced the local culinary practices and created a fusion of flavors.

5. Steps Taken to Preserve Culture and Heritage

Mussoorie, a popular hill station in India, thrives on the symbiotic relationship between culture and tourism. Mussoorie has undertaken a few initiatives to preserve its culture and heritage which are given below-

Festivals and Events: Mussoorie hosts various cultural festivals and events throughout the year, attracting tourists and promoting local traditions. These festival showcases local art, music, dance, and cuisine. This cultural extravaganza not only entertains tourists but also fosters a sense of pride and belonging among the local community. Details of such festivals are as follows-

a. Mountain Festival

Mussoorie based author Stephen Alter founded 'The Mussoorie Mountain Festival' in 2005 in association with Mussoorie Writers. Initially, it was established to celebrate the literary heritage of Mussoorie. Later on, it was redefined to make it a broader Mountain Festival. The Mountain Festival depicts the community celebration of natural history, Himalayan culture, and exploration. Mountain Festival has represented a unique kind of event which brings many visitors to Mussoorie and it also serves the Mussoorie community. Hanifl Centre host the festival in the month of December.

This festival provides immense opportunity and platform to teachers, students and mountain lovers to come, interact and participate with the leading and prominent figures in Himalayan studies, literature, arts, and exploration (Mussoorie Writers, n.d.). This festival provides a platform for literary discourse, and environmental action and artistic expressions through sponsoring



Social Science Journal

workshops, on-line resources, publications and films of celebrating Mussoorie's literary heritage and encouraging an interest in books and natural history (Mussoorie Writers, n.d.). They are also in collaboration with the '*Hanifl Centre for Outdoor and Environmental Study*' and committed towards focused attention on the Himalayas, which is viewed as a source of inquiry and inspiration for readers and authors from India and abroad. Fascinating performances showcase and portray the richness of the Himalaya, specifically the art, culture and the landscapes of Uttarakhand. Singers and poet perform in the event. Naturalists speak on various topics such as biodiversity, Himalayas etc. During the COVID times, festival was celebrated virtually considering the pandemic situation in the county.

b.Winter Carnival

The government organizes the Winter Carnival in Mussoorie mostly in December. Events like folk dances and songs, *Kavi Sammelan*, and cultural performances, a marathon, a nature walk, magic shows, street plays, a fancy dress competition and fashion show based on the local art and culture of Uttarakhand, bird watching, and a photo exhibition that shows Mussoorie's history took place. Along with this, local dishes were served at the food festival. Local citizens, homestay owners, and shopkeepers were encouraged to participate in the food festival. The food festival is also organized by Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDBZ) as part of the Mussoorie Winter. It has been organized for women for the past ten years. Women of Garhwal Sabha also participated by preparing many dishes during the festival. Jhangore Ki Kheer, Sesame Chutney, Pumpkin Raita, Sweet rice, *Kulath dal*, and *Guluga* are few dishes that were part of Uttarakhand Food Festival.

c. Landaur Mela (Fair): The Landour *Mela* is normally held during Christmas every year since last decade. This Mela is an attraction for both locals and tourists alike. Stalls of freshly baked cakes, jewellery; home-made candles; knitted clothes; local cuisine add to the festivities.

d. **Mussoorie Summer Carnival:** The Mussoorie Summer Carnival is an annual event held during the summer season, usually in the months of May and June. It is a colorful extravaganza that attracts a large number of tourists and locals alike. The carnival aims to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Mussoorie and provides a platform for artists, performers, and artisans to display their talents. During the Summer Carnival, the streets of Mussoorie come alive with



various cultural activities, live music performances, dance shows, street plays, and art exhibitions. Traditional folk dances and local music performances and adventure sports like paragliding, trekking, and rappelling are performed in the festival. The carnival also features food stalls offering local delicacies and handicraft stalls where you can buy traditional artifacts and souvenirs. Such programmes in both carnivals based upon the rich culture and heritage of the places contribute significantly to creating a unique identity and preserving its distinct character and also helps in developing a feeling of pride amongst locals. It will help in promoting the local culture and cuisine.

e. <u>Mussoorie Heritage Centre and Sonam Heritage and Art Centre</u>- Mr. Sameer Shukla, owner of Sonam Heritage stated that it was set up in 1996. The Center showcases the collection of culture and heritage of the Mussoorie from paintings to instruments and ornaments. To celebrate the heritage of Mussoorie.

Step	Description
arts and crafts and conducting heritage	The Mussoorie Heritage Society and Sonam Heritage Centre works to promote Mussoorie's traditional handicrafts. In addition to selling traditional handicrafts from its Landour shop, the group also hosts demonstrations and seminars in traditional craft techniques.
	A number of Mussoorie's historic structures are preserved by the municipal administration. It makes efforts to get the public talking about how important it is to preserve historic structures and to get people in the community involved in protecting their own history.

Steps taken to preserve the culture and heritage

Summer and Autumn Festival and Winter Carnival	Mussoorie has several festivals all year round. The cultural heritage of the town is preserved via these events. Festivals aim to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Mussoorie and provides a platform for artists, performers, and artisans to display their talents.
Promoting traditional arts and crafts	Mussoorie has a large selection of regional handicrafts at the Mussoorie Heritage Centre and Sonam Heritage Centre. This contributes to the preservation and promotion of the town's traditional knowledge and abilities.
Publishing books and articles	Books and essays on Mussoorie's history and culture have been published by the Mussoorie Heritage Society. These publications do a great job of showcasing Mussoorie's rich history and encouraging eco-friendly tourists to respect the town's cultural and natural treasures.

6. Conclusion

Tourism has added diversity, interconnections, struggles, and meanings between 'identity, place and space' (Van der Duim et al. 2006). Response from the community clearly indicates the issue of how tourism in the hill station often leads to exploitation of local culture. It is important to be aware of both the positive and negative impacts of tourism on culture. Culture can contribute significantly to the lives of both tourists and local communities if support is received from the local government. Although the local government and community have taken various initiatives to preserve their culture and heritage but a lot has been commodified. The cultural representation of Mussoorie in the field of tourism has likely been commodified and depicted in a stereotyped



way based on the literature on cultural tourism and heritage tourism (MacLeod, 2006). Tourism producers and hosts may package specific aspects of culture and develop staged depictions and performances to meet expectations for authenticity, which may result in cultural commercialization (Yang Li & Wall. G., 2009). As cultural objects become commodities for tourists, this could lead to a loss of their cultural value and importance for people in the area (Lonardi, 2022). The tourism sector needs to consider the probable downsides of cultural commercialization while striving to provide a more precise representation of the local culture. Engagement with local communities, promoting sustainable tourism, and adhering to the host community's customs and cultural norms may all accomplish this (Yola, 2016).

Tourism can have a symbiotic relationship with culture in which lifestyle can beautify the appeal of the visitor locations, and tourism, in flip, can decorate the area's lifestyle (OECD, 2009). UNESCO (2013) mentioned that culture has substantial potential to make a contribution about forty percentage to the sales of global tourism. The report by way of the OECD (2009) displays that by way of fostering the connection among culture and tourism, host regions boom their competitiveness and come to be greater appealing. UNWTO (2001) has said that the existing courting among subculture and tourism has been converted by way of creativity, changing lifestyles, new technologies, and changes in culture, because of which way of life in traveler locations has emerge as less tangible and more on hand, which has led to new opportunities and challenges internationally in phrases of growing synergies between tradition and tourism. Highlighting the significance of sustainable goals, Wint (2002) argues that achieving sustainable desires can contribute to ecological conservation, local control, financial independence, and preserving network subculture. Further, UNWTO has also pressured that the convergence among lifestyle and tourism, at the side of the hobby of travelers in cultural reports, may additionally cause precise opportunities but at the same time also convey complex challenges to the tourism quarter within the host areas. Similarly, the file of OECD (2009) also displays that the legends, crafts, rituals, and arts are prone to being forgotten via the younger generation, which can be revitalized while travelers show a keen interest in them. Further, UNESCO (2006) has referred to the area people as interpreters of traditions, types of expertise, and cultural history keepers that could be used for various functions of tourism. Thus, the look at explores how tourism has impacted the neighborhood subculture and history and has brought about the exchange in network's



conventional way of life. The examine throws mild on whether or not tourism has stimulated subculture, artwork and crafts, traditions, and practices. Further, this work throws light on the diverse cultural tasks that the vacation spot Mussoorie has opted to build culturally sustainable tourism. Added to that, the observe has attempted to understand the impact also from the writings of native and famous authors and historians of Mussoorie, apart from different vernacular materials available within the neighborhood libraries of Mussoorie. The cutting-edge chapter evaluates how local community maintain and have a good time their tangible and intangible way of life while dwelling in the traveler vacation spot and how local humans companion with culture in phrases of identification and feel of place.

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