

**Scope of Dark Tourism as a Revival Strategy for the Industry- A Study
with Special Reference to Rajasthan**

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Abstract

In India, almost any type of travel sector may be found. Although the existence of Dark Tourism in India is little acknowledged, there are numerous locations in India that fall into the category of "Dull Travel Industry". We can't ignore its truth or ability to propel the travel sector to greater heights. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the breadth of "dark tourism" in Rajasthan, as well as the role it may play in leveraging tourism in Rajasthan, which has traditionally focused on cultural, heritage, and adventure tourism. Since Rajasthan has experienced deaths, miseries, and conflicts, this study looks into the possibility for growing this type of tourism. It has been observed that people hold a fascination for Death and calamity. War-associated attractions, on the other hand, are a subset of entirety of traveller locales related to death and misery. The goal of this article is to give a content study of how niche tourism is represented by online travel media and professionals, as well as how it might be expanded, with a focus on Rajasthan, India. Finally, the study provides a thorough examination of how the internet-based travel media and its specialists approach this specialisation of the travel industry. Although India has made significant headway in promoting specialty tourism, one category remains untapped: dark or mourning tourism. Furthermore, there is an authenticity to the spots and locales, and the period has a stronger link to the event, calamity, or even death that occurred in that precise location, attracting travellers. According to the findings, future research into the concept will be highly important in the growth of dark tourism in Rajasthan, India. The findings of this article also show that there is a need to expand boundary or dark tourism beyond traditional disciplinary borders

and common dark locations, which will assist Rajasthan's tourism industry flourish, contributing to the country's GDP.

Keywords: Dark destinations, Dark tourism, Revival strategy, Tourism in India, Rajasthan

1. Introduction

Dark tourism, also known as black tourism or mourning tourism, is defined as tourism that involves visits to historically significant sites connected with death and misery. Glasgow, Scotland, was the birthplace of academic interest in the subject. In 1996, Lennon and Foley, two professors at Glasgow Caledonian University's Department of Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure Management, invented the phrase "dark tourism". The Religious travel industry, Wild life travel industry, Cultural travel industry, Recreational travel industry, Instructive travel industry, and other types of travel industries are the most well-known. Because of the diversity of cultures, festivals, religions, and other factors, India offers almost every sort of tourism. Although India has made significant headway in promoting specialty tourism, one market remains untapped: "Dark Tourism". It has become extremely popular all across the world in the twenty-first century. Changing tourist tastes and inclinations, as well as the evolution of the notion of special interest tourism, have compelled tourism policymakers around the world to include this segment in their goal and vision. Following several wars, poor countries who were unable to attract tourists due to a lack of tourism enablers have begun to welcome guests for dark tourism in order to gain a competitive advantage. Before selling dark tourism as a commodity, the Indian tourism industry must first test the waters. Although the presence of black tourism in India is seldom acknowledged, there are several places in India that fall under this category. Because dark tourism impacts on a number of scientific areas and their consolidation creates a unique product market, the importance and role of dark tourism in current society is indeed a critical issue.

2. Review of literature

Because of its rich legacy, religious sites, museums, snow-capped mountains, and cheerful festivals, India is a tourist's dream. Tourists travel for a variety of reasons, including recreation, adventure, religious, and educational goals. Although there are numerous factors that cause tourists to move from one location to another, these factors are referred to as "Motivators." Physical, interpersonal, prestige-type, educational, and cultural motivators can all relate to relaxation, meeting new people, building personal esteem, and learning about diverse cultures. It is a tourist's personal preference as to where he wants to travel for amusement, relaxation, vacation, business, and so on. By visiting and exploring a haunted

location, a person interested in learning about what happened to the victims of a doomed incident or at haunted locations may figure out the realities associated with it (Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research (IJIR) Vol-2, Issue-9, 2016 ISSN: 2454-1362, accessed from <http://www.onlinejournal.in>). In 2000, the authors elaborated, “The interpretation and re-telling of events surrounding death have shaped perceptions of reality. In projecting visitors into the past, reality has been replaced with omnipresent simulation and commodification” (Foley and Lennon, 2000). The literary sublime has been studied as a historical relationship between dark places and emotions, as 'the sublime' relates sensations of dread and intrigue to space and place (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009). Destinations related with natural disasters, according to Kang et al (2012), have become not merely places of remembering, but also dark tourism sites and attractions in and of themselves. Such tourism is frequently adopted in the name of historical awareness and social justice; visitors claim to go on dark tours in order to learn about violence in the hopes of preventing future savageries (Robb, 2009). In his study, Seaton (2009) emphasised the management of dark tourist sites. Cohen (2011) mentioned the importance of location by considering geographical authenticity, whereas Biran et al. (2011) talked about the advantages of dark tourism. Jamal and Lelo (2011) looked at the concept of dark tourism from a societal standpoint. In reference to these studies, it can be said that Rajasthan in India has immense scope in developing as dark tourism destination.

3. Research Gap

The main draw to dark locations is their historical value rather than their associations with death and suffering and in this context if we think about Rajasthan, it really has an immense scope of study. Though several international studies can be found on dark tourism, there is very little research work done in India from the perspective of the dark tourism especially in reference to the states of India in specific. The paper aims to assess the scope of dark tourism in Rajasthan and the role it may play in leveraging tourism in Rajasthan, which has largely relied on cultural, heritage and adventure tourism in the past.

4. Objectives of the study

In this paper, an attempt has been made to assess whether Rajasthan has the scope of becoming a destination of dark tourism in India. Thus, the paper titled ‘Scope of Dark Tourism as a Revival Strategy for the Industry- A Study with Special Reference to Rajasthan’ seeks to address the following objectives-

- i. To understand the concept of dark tourism and its prospects in Rajasthan, India.

- ii. To highlight different places of Rajasthan as “dark spots” and discuss about their scope to become potential tourist spots for promoting dark tourism and as a revival strategy for the industry.
- iii. To suggest some measures that would help in development of dark tourism in Rajasthan.

5. Research methodology

This study is a work of descriptive and exploratory research. It solely relied on secondary information collected reviewing available literatures. After collection of the required information relevant to the concerned study, findings have been interpreted and the conclusions arrived therefrom have been structured as required. Several working papers and reports of renowned authors and institutions on tourism in India and articles published in reputed journals and by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Rajasthan have been referred to for this purpose.

6. Scope of Rajasthan for dark tourism

Rajasthan has a flourishing tourism industry. It is one of the most popular tourist destinations in India, for both domestic and international tourists. Rajasthan attracts tourists for its historical forts, palaces, art and culture. Besides, natural beauty, culture and heritage Rajasthan can also be developed as dark tourism hub.

Table 1: Number of Tourists in Rajasthan Over the Years

YEAR	NO. OF TOURISTS (IN MILLIONS)	GROWTH
2010	26.82	1%
2011	28.48	6%
2012	30.06	6%
2013	31.73	6%
2014	34.60	9%
2015	36.66	6%
2016	43.00	17%
2017	47.52	11%

Source: Report by Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, 2018

Clearly visible from above table, Rajasthan is one of the most important destinations of India for tourism and day by day it is becoming more favourite destination for the people longing for travelling. Looking into the percentage increase in number of tourists in Rajasthan in near

past, specially from the year 2015, it can be said that it has a good potential to grow its tourism industry. In fact, Government of Rajasthan has of late taken some very important steps including attractive advertisements and innovative promotional techniques for developing the tourism industry. Every year not only people from different parts of our country, but also tourists from different foreign countries come to visit various sites of Rajasthan. Thus, expansion of tourism sector does not only contribute in generating income to the Government of Rajasthan, but it also adds foreign exchanges in the treasury of Government of India. 2018 also saw 50.23 million domestic and 1.75 million foreign tourists but amidst the pandemic situation the state registered a total of 16, 05,560 tourists in 2019 which were again reduced to 4, 46,457 numbers in 2020, a steep fall of -72.19%. Similarly, in terms of domestic tourists, 522,20,431 visited the desert state which were reduced to 151,17,239 recording -71.05% dip in 2020 as compared to last year figures. Overall, the Rajasthan tourism industry witnessed a steep fall of -71.50% in tourist numbers in 2020 compared to the corresponding year (Source: IANS). In this scenario, earmarking some of the tourist spots as dark spots can create a niche of its own within the tourism sector in Rajasthan and may result in more footfalls of the tourists in these places and shall help in combating with the crisis caused due to the pandemic. The following are some of the sites that can be recognized as locations for dark tourism in Rajasthan –

A. Bhangarh Fort

When the most beautiful princess Ratnavati, whose beauty was unrivalled, turned eighteen, suitors from various states begged for her hand in marriage, according to folklore. Of all these suitors was a sorcerer named Singhia who was once conscious of the truth that he was no match for the princess. However, he decided to entice her with the magical powers he possessed. He used black magic to enchant the oil that the princess's servant bought from the market with the hope that on using it the princess will be enchanted. However, his try was futile as Ratnavati somehow understood his trick and poured the oil on the floor which then morphed into a rock, rolled in the direction of the magician and crushed him.

Before dying, Singhia cursed the metropolis of Bhangarh to dying and as a result, it by no means witnessed any rebirths. Moreover, in the warfare between Ajabgarh and Bhangarh, princess Ratnavati was killed, adding more weight to his malediction. Hopes, however, never die as several locals believe that she has returned in an exclusive structure and will sooner or later return back to cease the unlucky spell on Bhangarh.

B. Ajabgarh

About 100 years ago, the jinxed village of Ajabgarh had its honest share of spooky experiences. Due to its proximity to one of the most haunted places in India, the castle of Bhangarh, Ajabgarh village became deserted. Furthermore, sorcerers and black magic practitioners cursed the village, thereby, forcing the residents to abandon their dwellings out of sheer fear. For their incapacity to feed their hearth with fire, cattle with fodder, and the fields with water, the villagers left the villages in search of livelihood in the metropolitan areas.

C. Ajmer

Raja Alan Singh belonged to the Chanda clan of Meenas. He was the first to make way to Ajmer and to build his palace. Previously where his palace was built now stands the Amber fort. He called his city “Khogong.” One day a girl with a child approached the king searching for refuge in his kingdom. Raja gave shelter to the child and took care of him. The child was named Dhola Rae. Later, Dhola Rae disobeyed the king and with the small army of Rajputs slayed every person belonging to the clad of Meenas. This massacre took place on “Diwali” when the clan was celebrating “Pitra Tarpan”; the day when it was common to set aside all weapons. The Rajputs who were aware of this custom took the advantage.

D. Natni Ka Bara, Alwar

Place where a Natni (Female artist) said to have been danced on a yarn, tied on two hills. One day she realized that she is walking too high and died out of fear.

E. Haldighati-Mountain Pass

Maan Singha’s treacherous plot against Rana Pratap took shape in the war of Haldighati, Rajputs fought against Rajputs.

F. Nahargarh Fort

Nahargarh imply ‘abode of tigers. Legend says that the castle used to be named as Nahargarh after the spirit of a Rathore, Nahar Singh. When the development of the fort started out atypical phenomenon occurred. Every morning the workers would find the previous day’s work destroyed. On finding the land haunted, then Maharaja, Jai Singh developed a shrine and named it Nahargarh. The castle was constructed by Sawai Raja Man Singh along with Amer Fort and Jaigarh Fort. The king was obsessed about this fort that he had constructed for his queens and even after his death, it is said he resides in the same.

G. Rana Kumbha Palace of Chittorgarh

It is this place where on being attacked by the sultan of Delhi, Alauddin Khilji Maharani Padmini carried out the Jauhar (self-immolation) along with seven hundred Rajput women.

From that day this place became haunted. People have heard screams of women asking for assist.

H. Kuldhara

This village is cursed. The villagers abandoned the village in 1800. A sinful minister forcefully wanted to marry a lovely villager and threatened her household to take hold of her. The villagers left the place leaving a timeless spell.

I. Sudhabay

Sudhabay is not a haunted place. It is located in the Pushkar ship, Rajasthan. But if one comes here on a specific day in the year, this region is genuinely going to supply the character nightmares. A 'Ghost Fair' is held here. People from all over the country visit Sudhabay to get rid of the evil spirits that have possessed them. To get rid of the evil spirit, one has to take a bath in the holy well.

J. Brijraj Bhavan, Kota

Brijraj Bhavan is now a heritage hotel. Formerly it was the dwelling place of Major Charles Burton who got killed during the Indian Mutiny of 1857 by Indian sepoys. It is popularly believed to be one of the haunted palaces in India where resides the ghost of Major Charles Burton.

7. Findings of the study

The findings indicate that future of research associated to the notion will prove worthy. Finding of this paper also witnessed that promoting dark tourism will help tourism enterprise in Rajasthan to develop which in turn will add to the GDP of our country. As a revival approach department of Tourism can encompass insurance policies for promoting darkish tourism sites. Proper services for tourists have to be developed at these places. These places have to be nicely promoted and made reachable for tourists. Awareness and know-how with recognize to the notion of darkish tourism has to be developed and effective facet of the locations and the sites has to be portrayed.

8. Limitations of the study

- Scarcity of literatures- Though enough literatures are available on leisure, religious tourism there is lack of useful literatures on the development of dark tourism sites in the state of Rajasthan because dark tourism is relatively a new concept here in India.
- Use of secondary data- Validity of the data could not be checked as the only source of data for this study is secondary source.
- Selection of specific state-The study is based on Rajasthan only. It does not give an overall picture of dark tourism in India as a whole.

- Failure to use of primary data-Primary data could not be collected for the purpose of this study. Surveys relating to the perception and views of the tourist could add a better shade to the study.
- Deficiency of information- In many cases there was lack of reliable information. So even when the information was relevant it could not be incorporated in the study.

9. Suggestions

Following are a few suggestions which the authorities may consider for development of Dark Tourism in Rajasthan-

- Destination development-To promote dark tourism, spurious destinations have to be built from the scratch. If calamities or time has ruined the destination authorities must artificially organize the destination so that the tourists can have the same feeling as if they are time travelling. Unexplored locations have to be recognized by the policy makers and developed into dark tourism destinations.
- Marketing destination- The destinations should be market ready. Quality service and facility should be provided in all these locations. Honouring the thoughts that are associated with the place infrastructure has to be developed. Local people having knowledge of the place must be educated, trained and employed as guide. In this way problem of unemployment will also be answered to some extent. Markets must reflect the tragedy of the place; artefacts, images, paintings must illustrate the same. This will help to attract the emotions of the tourists.
- Popularising dark tourism among tourists- Thoughts play a big role in dark tourism. Authorities can promote dark tourism among those communities or local people whose ancestors were part of the tragedy. Infrastructural development is necessary to promote the destination among domestic and international tourists.
- Efficient use of destination branding- Marketing death is not easy. It is the biggest challenge in case of dark tourism. Company positioning and branding can help in solving this problem. A photo of the destination has to be created and communicated among preferred audiences. Commercials should be fascinating. Commercials should be able to attract one's emotions. But advertisement must not emotionally exploitative. They should not promote trauma.

10. Conclusion

As far as tourism is concerned, Rajasthan has always been in the limelight. Many travel agencies and groups offer packages on Rajasthan. But most of the Indian tourists are not aware of the concept of dark tourism. It is so because authorities have not taken the due steps

for popularising the same. But again, India has both destinations and infrastructure to support the concept of dark tourism. Within the tourism market, there are many segments or niches including dark tourism and to make tourist familiar with the concept a long term plan is required. To increase publicity, awareness has to be created among the domestic tourists first. Authorities have to maintain dark tourism websites where all can have easy access. In the near future, supportive governmental insurance policies and co-operation from local people can help further to develop Rajasthan as a popular “dark tourism destination” for the vacationers. This can prove to be a superb method for revival of the tourism industry.

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