

Tourists Responsible Behavioural Practices At Mahavir Harina Vanasthali National Park Ecotourism Destination, Hyderabad, Telangana – An Analytical Study

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a global leisure activity and it is an integral part of social, cultural and physical development in all developing countries. It has the potential to contribute significantly to the socio-economic aspirations of people living standards in tourist destinations. Travelling to nature based tourist destinations with broad mindset to understand the local community people culture and as well as social & environmental issues is core activity of responsible tourism. Measuring tourist's responsible behavioral practices at ecotourism destinations is considered as a key indicator and exercise of assuring responsible tourism. The tourists need to abide local rules and regulations and avoid damaging the natural environment by exhibiting environmentally responsible behavior. The Mahavir Harina Vanasthali National Park is one among three National Parks of Telangana. It is also a popular ecotourism destination, located at Vanasthalipuram in Hyderabad district. This research paper aims at assessment how responsibly the tourists behave at this ecotourism destination for sustainable destination development.

Key Words: Tourism, Tourist Responsible Behavioral Practices, Ecotourism Mahavir Harina Vanasthali National Park.

INTRODUCTION:

The tourism industry has grown significantly in recent years and it is now considered as one of the World's largest industries. Ecotourism is a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural areas, intended as a low impact and often small scale alternative to standard commercial mass tourism. It means responsible travel to natural areas to appreciate the cultural and natural history of the environment, taking care not to disturb the integrity of the eco system, while creating economic opportunities that make conservation and protection of natural resources advantageous to the local community people. Ecotourism destinations are intended to offer tourists and visitors an insight into the impact of human beings on the environment and to foster a greater appreciation of natural habitats. Ecotourism emphasizes the natural conservation of a tourist destination and therefore builds on the environmental consciousness of tourists. In tourism industry, the responsible tourism focuses on assessing and monitoring the environmental, social, and economic impacts of tourism, maintain and encouraging natural, economic, social and cultural diversity and avoiding waste and over consumption, and promoting the sustainable use of local resources. According to (Sharply & Telfer, 2002; Swarbrooke, 1999, and Wood & House, 1992), a responsible tourist prefers a trip which is least harmful to the environment, least disturbing for the local community people and their cultures of the destinations.

National Parks are dedicated to conserving nations unique flora and fauna, distinct scenic and wildlife heritage for future generations. These parks are rich in plants and animal species, thriving in their indigenous natural environment and beauty. Mahavir Harina Vanasthali National Park is an asset to nature lovers and tourists, situated on the outskirts of state capital city Hyderabad. The wealth and variety of flora and fauna is marvelous in this ecotourism destination. This National Park is considered as one of the best wildlife cum ecotourism destinations of Telangana. This research made an attempt to assess, how responsibly the tourists behaves during their visit to this ecotourism destination. This research paper is brought into light the salient features of ecotourism destination and tourist behavioral traits. The uniqueness of this research paper is that, it is one of the first attempts that investigate the responsible oriented tourist behavioral practices at this ecotourism destination.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The aim of the responsible tourism is to mitigate tourism activity impacts that greatly benefit the host communities, enhance better working conditions, ensure the participation of the local community, preserving and promoting the sustainable environment and cultural resources (Leslie, 2012). Responsible tourism is defined as ‘tourism that promotes responsibility to the environment through its sustainable use, responsibility to involve local communities in the tourism industry; responsibility for the safety and security of visitors and responsible government, employers, employees, unions and local communities’ (DEAT, 1996, 4 cited in Merwe and Wocke, 2007,1). Responsible visitors are those who meet and make interaction with various people, native customs, and other visitors, explore authenticity by exercising cognitive and emotional effort, leave no negative impact on the local natural and cultural resources, contributes to the local economy, and respect and promote local resources (Shahzala, 2016). The involvement of local communities is particularly crucial to the success of tourism development and the implementation of responsible tourism and the resident’s attitude may directly affect the development of the tourism industry (Ling, Jakpar, Johari, Myint, & Rani, 2011). Martinez, Perez, and Rodriguez del Bosque (2013), suggested that Responsible tourism practice may come from social responsibility and an ethical dimension focusing on the local perspective.

The responsible behavioral traits make tourists act responsibly during their visit to any destination. The following Table 1 summarizes the most recognized by many of the scholars and a few numbers of new traits are identified and introduced by the authors of this research.

Table – 1

Categorization of Different Behavioral Traits of the Responsible Tourists

Traits Theme	Statement	Sources
Environmental Behavioral Traits (EBT)	I do not destroy any plants and animals	Chafe (2005), Tearfund (2000); Weeden (2014, pp 71-72), Shahzalal (2016), SNV Netherlands Development Organization (2009).
	I don’t create noise by playing music	
	I used the usual tourist path	
	I properly bin for waste plastics and others	
	I do not purchase souvenir made from any elements of local animals and plants	
Development and Promotional Behavioral Traits (DPBT)	I post beauty of ecotourism destination in social media	Shahzalal (2016).
	I volunteer for the conservation of destination environment, animals and plants	
	I request someone not to destroy any plants and animals	
	I make positive word of mouth about destination	
Legal and Ethical Behavioral Traits (LEBT)	In case of emergency, I like to take help from tourists police or security guard	Tearfund (2000), Shahzalal (2016).

	I obey the local customs	
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Dr. E. Siva Nagi Reddy (2001), has mentioned about the unique features of this National Park in his book Andhra Pradesh Tourism, Vanarulu-Avakashalu. Dr. P. Siva Shankara Reddy (2002), has highlighted the attractiveness of this ecotourism destination in his book 'Perspective of Tourism in Andhra Pradesh'. According to his view, this National Park is one of the prime ecotourism destinations in Telangana.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To study the potential ecotourism destination Mahavir Harina Vanasthali National Park
2. To analyze the fulfillment of tourists expectations.
3. To find out different tourists behavioral traits.

METHODOLOGY:

This research paper was developed with the support of both Primary and Secondary data sources on the grounds of quantitative research method. This research work is basically exploratory in nature. The primary data was collected by using the structure questionnaire from 320 tourists. The respondents were identified through a method of convenience sample method. The researchers was approached the tourists with the support of open-ended questionnaire to gain more insights into this study. Randomization was incorporated into the times of the days and days of the week to avoid bias in data collection. To assess the responsible tourists behavioral practices, this study used 11 behavioral traits which are designed by a five-point Likert scale, where, 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree with statements. The researchers have also taken the support of descriptive statistical tools such as Percentage and Chi-square Test in the research. The secondary data was collected from News Papers, Journals, Government Reports, Magazines, Conference Proceedings, and Books.

HYPOTHESIS:

The study was designed to test the following hypothesis.

- H01: There is a positive relationship between the practices of Environmental behavioral traits and responsible tourist behavioral practices.
- H02: There is a positive relationship between the practices of Development and Promotional behavioral traits and responsible tourist behavioral practices.
- H03: There is a positive relationship between the practices of Legal and Ethical behavioral traits and responsible tourist behavioral practices.

UNIQUE FEATURES OF NATIONAL PARK ECOTOURISM DESTINATION:

The Mahavir Harina Vanasthali National Park (17° 360" N, 74° 470" E) is nearly 18 km away from Hyderabad city towards outskirts, nearby Hyderabad – Vijayawada highway. It is spread over 3,758 acres. The park was named after Mahavir, a Jain saint, in commemoration of his 2500th nirvan anniversary in the year 1975. This park was once a private hunting ground for the Nizam rulers. In the year 1994 it was declared as National Park, it is an isolated patch of natural forests. It has rich bio-diversity of flora and fauna. The main species of fauna found here is the endangered Black Buck. A park is farmed as preserve of the endangered blackbuck and deer. There are also Chitals and herds of Wild Boar, Partridges, Quails, Peacocks, Doves, Pond Herons, Egrets, Kingfishers and Cormorants are found here, as well as birds of prey Kites and Vultures. A variety of migratory birds of over 80 species can also be seen round the year.

This park is under the maintenance of Telangana Forest Development Corporation Limited, Hyderabad, which is part of forest department. There is the entry fee of Rs. 30/- and for Guided Safari Tour Rs. 50/- for tourists and visitors with shuttle bus service facility. The Forest Corporation authorities have constructed a nice tourist bungalow with restaurant for nature lover and tourists. An Environment Education Centre was setup in the park to educate and bring the awareness on responsible practices. In this centre, there is an exhibition hall displaying exhibits explaining intricate problems of wildlife conservation. The park timings are morning 9.00 A.M to evening 5.00 P.M. The forest authorities have fixed the Do's and Don'ts' sign boards in the park for the tourist

to remind the responsible practices in the park.

Images – 1
Deer's and Black Buck



Source: Self taken Photo

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF VISITORS:

The tourists demographic profile particulars are presented in below table 2. This research has done the research between June to August months, 2024. The researcher has collected the data from the tourists during these three months time with the support of open ended questionnaire.

Table – 2
Demographic Profile of Tourists

SL. No.	Particulars	No. of Tourists	%
1	Gender:		
	Male	194	61%
	Female	126	39%
	Total	320	100%
2	Age:		
	10-20	38	12%
	21-30	84	26%
	31-40	92	29%
	41-50	53	17%
	51-60	45	14%
	60 Yr Above	08	02%

	Total	320	100%
3	Education		
	Literate	273	85%
	Illiterate	47	15%
	Total	320	100%
4	Occupation		
	Students	68	21%
	Private Employees	46	15%
	Govt. Employees	83	26%
	Business	94	29%
	Any Other	29	09%
	Total	320	100%
5	Monthly Income		
	Below Rs. 30,000/-	85	26%
	Rs. 31,000/- to Rs. 60,000/-	110	34%
	Rs. 61,000/-to Rs. 1,00,000/-	74	23%
	Rs. 1,00,000 Above	51	16%
	Total	320	100%
6	Preferred Tourist Place		
	Natural	233	73%
	Man Made	87	27%
	Total	320	100%
7	Hobbies		
	Travelling	179	56%
	Playing	38	12%
	Social Media Browsing	103	32%
	Total	320	100%

Source: Primary Data

As per the above table, there are 61 percent of male visitors, 29 percent of visitors hail from 31-40 age group, over 85 percent of visitors are literates, 29 percent of tourists are in business, the highest tourists monthly income between Rs. 31,000/- to Rs. 60,000/-, and such visitors are in 34 percent, most of the tourists (73%) prefer to travel to natural places as their destination choice, and about 56% of tourists hobby is travelling.

MOTIVATING FACTORS:

Travel is an activity essentially driven by motivational forces. It is the global integrating network of biological and cultural forces which gives value and direction to travel choices, behavior and experience. The researchers have brought into light the behind motivational factors to visit this ecotourism destinations as mentioned in the below table 3.

Table – 3**Motivating Factors for Tourist Arrivals**

SL No	Motivating Factors	For Tourist Arrivals & their Frequency	%
01	Easy Accessibility	39	12%
02	Regular Promotional Activities & Advertisements	42	13%
03	Amenities & Facilities	16	05%
04	Brand Name	48	15%
05	Peaceful Landscape	36	11%
06	Cleanliness in Surroundings	44	14%
07	Stress Buster Experience	62	19%
08	Destination Attractive Features	33	10%
	Total	320	100

Source: Primary Data

As per the above table data, the majority of the tourists (19%) have opined that this ecotourism destination could provides the stress buster experience, which attracts large number of tourists.

FULFILMENT OF TOURIST EXPECTATIONS AT ECOTOURISM DESTINATION:

The majority reasons for tourists and visitors to be taking up a trip are to have fun. A fun-filled tour happens when there is a clear agenda for the travel. The expectations of the tourists and visitors thus fulfilled and they return from the tour with complete satisfaction and fulfillment of their expectations. The researchers have investigated through their research how best this ecotourism destination is fulfilling the expectations of tourists during their visit.

Table – 4**Fulfillment of Visitor Expectations at Mahavir Harina Vanasthali National Park Ecotourism Destination**

SL No	Expectations	Visitor Frequency	%
01	Quality Road Connectivity	15	05%
02	Safe Destination Reaching	17	05%
03	Informative Do's & Don't Sign Boards at the Destination	23	07%
04	Stress Free Experiences	25	08%
05	Pleasant Environment	22	07%
06	Satisfy's Tourist Expectations	61	19%
07	Upto the Mark Amenities & Facilities	29	09%
08	Availability of Wash Rooms	23	07%
09	Pleasant Personalized Experiences	22	07%
10	Safety Measures	28	09%
11	Mobile Connectivity Signal Towers	27	08%
12	Wide Promotional Activities	16	05%

13	Canteen and Hotel Facility	12	04%
	Total	320	100

Source: Primary Data

According to the above table, majority of tourists (19%) have opined that this ecotourism destination could satisfy's the tourist expectations.

ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOURAL TRAITS:

The researcher has brought into light the tourist behavioral traits towards environmental protective practices with the support of five-point Likert scale, where, 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree with statements, mentioned in the below table number 5.

Table – 5

Descriptive Statistical Data on Tourists Environmental Behavioral Traits (EBT)

EBT	Frequency and Percentage						Mean	SD	CV
		SD	D	N	A	SA			
I respect the environmental safeguarding practices	F	52	86	72	58	52	2.88	1.332	1.775
	%	16.3	29.1	20.9	17.4	16.3			
I use bin for waste plastics and others	F	0	4	10	47	25	4.08	.770	.593
	%	0	4.7	11.6	54.7	29.1			
I use the usual tourist path	F	4	3	9	15	55	4.33	1.100	1.210
	%	4.7	3.5	10.5	17.4	64.0			
I do not create noise	F	3	4	15	27	37	4.06	1.056	1.114
	%	3.5	4.7	17.4	31.4	43.0			
I do not buy souvenirs made from any elements of local animals and plants	F	42	21	15	5	3	1.91	1.102	1.215
	%	48.8	24.4	17.4	5.8	3.8			

Source: Primary Data

Only 33.7 percent of the tourists (16.3 Strongly Agree + 17.4 Agree) have opined that they gives huge respect to environmental safeguarding practices, keeping in view the significance of ecological and wildlife protective responsibilities. Besides, it is also found that 83.8% (54.7 Strongly Agree + 29.1 Agree) of the visitors have used litter bins for placing unused plastics and other items. This research finds that there is a significant number of visitor arrivals, 81.4 (17.4 Strongly Agree + 64.0 Agree) visiting this ecotourism destination, used the usual path. It is also found that over 74.4% of visitors have involved in not making noise at the ecotourism destination to experience the beautiful nature, birds and butterfly presence and movements. Besides, it is also found that less number of the visitors (9.6%) have ensured that they did not buy any souvenirs made from any elements of local animals and plants.

DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTIONAL BEHAVIOURAL TRAITS:

The researchers have brought into light the tourist behavioral traits towards development and promotional environmental protective practices with the support of five-point Likert scale, where, 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree with statements, mentioned in the below table number 5.

Table – 6

Descriptive Statistical Data on Tourist Development and Promotional Behavioral Traits (DPBT's)

DPBT	Frequency and Percentage						Mean	SD	CV
		SD	D	N	A	SA			
I post destination beauty via social media	F	64	62	53	82	59	3.71	1.126	1.267
	%	7.0	5.8	22.1	39.5	25.6			

I request someone not to destroy the beauty of this ecotourism destination	F	2	4	18	29	33	4.01	1.000	1.000
	%	2.3	4.7	20.9	33.7	38.4			
I volunteer for the conservation of destination environment	F	2	6	11	42	25	3.95	.957	.915
	%	2.3	7.0	12.8	48.8	29.1			
I make positive word of mouth about destination	F	2	3	14	25	42	4.19	.988	.977
	%	2.3	3.5	16.3	29.1	48.8			

Source: Primary Data

The research finds a satisfactory oriented performance in case of development and promotional behavior of the tourist visiting this ecotourism destination. It is clearly visible that, more than 65 percent of the tourists have involved in destination development and promotional activities by posting certain beautiful videos in social media. It is also found that more than 70 percent of tourists request others not to engage in such activities that lead to destroying the natural beauty of this ecotourism destination and 78 percent of the tourists promoted volunteering and engaged in the activities to preserve the environment of this ecotourism destination. Around 62 percent of the tourists promote positive word of mouth about this destination.

LEGAL AND ETHICAL BEHAVIORAL TRAITS:

The researcher has brought into light the tourists behavioral traits towards ethical environmental protective practices with the support of five-point Likert scale, where, 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree with statements, mentioned in the below table number 7.

Table – 7

Descriptive Statistical Data on Tourists Legal and Ethical Behavioral Traits (LEBT's)

LEBT	Frequency and Percentage						Mean	SD	CV
		SD	D	N	A	SA			
In case of emergency, I like to take help from tourist police or security guard	F	12	31	76	94	107	4.19	.901	.812
	%	1.2	4.7	11.6	39.5	43.0			
I obey the local customs and laws	F	4	1	4	30	47	4.34	.978	.956
	%	4.7	1.2	4.7	34.9	54.7			

Source: Primary Data

The study finds a significant percentage of tourists obey the legal and ethical behavior during their visit to this ecotourism destination. More than 80 percent of the respondents prefer taking help from security guard, tourist police, in case of emergency and 89.6 percent of respondents support following local customs and laws.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS:

As per the following model summary, the value of adjusted R², the coefficient of determination, implies that responsible tourist behavioral practices have explained 76.4% by the independent variables, i.e., environmental behavioral traits, development and promotional behavioral traits, and legal and ethical behavioral traits.

Table – 8

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.874 ^a	.764	.749	.33897

a. Predictors: (Constant), environmental behavioral traits, development and promotional behavioral traits, and legal and ethical behavioral traits

The ANOVA test was conducted in the below mentioned table 9. The P-value (0.000) is less than 0.05. So, the alternative hypothesis is accepted at the 95% level of confidence. This also implies that the model is significant and indicates that the environmental behavioral traits, development and promotional behavioral traits, and legal ethical behavioral traits can significantly explain responsible tourist behavioral practices.

Table – 9

1.1 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	29.738	5	5.948	51.763	.000 ^b
	Residual	9.192	80	.115		
	Total	38.930	85			

a. Dependent Variable: Responsible Tourist Behavior

b. Predictors: (Constant), environmental behavioral traits, development and promotional behavioral traits, and legal and ethical behavioral traits

The following table presents that the significant value of environmental behavioral traits, development and promotional behavioral traits, and legal and ethical behavioral traits is 0.000. The significant value of each indicator indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between responsible tourist behavioral practices and environmental behavioral traits (EBT); development and promotional behavioral traits (DPBT), and legal and ethical behavioral traits (LEBT).

Table – 10

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-2.208	.427		-5.178	.000
Environmental Behavioral Traits	.312	.083	.208	3.746	.000
Development and Promotional Behavioral Traits	.243	.058	.288	4.220	.000
Legal and Ethical Behavioral Traits	.243	.065	.257	3.736	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Responsible Tourist Behavioral Practices

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS:

The researchers have conducted the tests on developed hypothesis, as mentioned in below table.

Table – 11

Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis No.	Statement of the Hypothesis	P-value	Analysis	Result
H01	There is positive relationship between the practices of Environmental behavioral traits and responsible tourist behavioral practices.	0.000	$0.000 \leq 0.05$	Accepted

H02	There is positive relationship between the practices of Development and Promotional behavioral traits and responsible tourist behavioral practices.	.000	$0.000 \leq 0.05$	Accepted
H03	There is positive relationship between the practices of Legal and Ethical behavioral traits and responsible tourist behavioral practices	.000	$0.000 \leq 0.05$	Accepted

DISCUSSION:

The study found a positive relationship between the practices of environmental behavioral traits (EBT) and the responsible tourists behavioral practices, which also found in different previous studies, Eichelberger et al., (2021), Caruana et al, (2014). So, the environmentally responsible behavior has a great contribution on environmental sustainability (Su and Swanson, 2017; Eichelberger et al, 2021). This study also found that the practice of development and promotional, and legal and ethical behavioral traits have a positive relationship with responsible tourists behavioral practices and these are also consistent the previous studies i.e., Budiarta et al., (2018), Weeden, (2014), Lea, (1993); Said, (2018), Shahzalal, (2016), and Chafe, (2005); Thus, the findings of the study validate the previous arguments of different studies.

However, this study has some significant limitations; therefore, the findings of the study should be used cautiously. In this regard, the study grounds implications for the current literature and practice. The study enriches the current arguments of the relating to the responsible tourists behavior and its determinants such as environmental behavioral traits (EBT); development and promotional behavioral traits (DPBT), and legal and ethical behavioral traits (LEBT) that have examined in this study. However, the future researcher can extend the arguments of the study by conducting similar studies in different contexts.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTION:

In the research, it is found the issue of district administration low monitoring and improper management at this ecotourism destination, which was pointed out by most of the tourists. This research paper suggests the formulation and implementation of a master plan for the sustainable ecotourism development of this destination. Because formulation and implementation of tourism master plan is prioritized as key to tourism development. Secondly, this research suggests application of innovative technologies in promoting, administering, and managing this destination. As tourism is an information-intensive industry, the effectiveness of technological applications such as social media as a tool for tourism destination promotion and administration. Finally, this paper suggests controlling number of tourists in order to ensure quality tourism, environmental conservation, and destination development.

CONCLUSION:

This study investigates a detailed understanding regarding how responsibly tourists behave during their visit to an ecotourism destination, Mahavir Harina Vanasthali National Park, Hyderabad district of Telangana. The study considered a number of recognized behavioral traits and categorized those traits under environment, development and promotional, and legal, and ethical theme. From the statistical result, it is evident that there exists a positive significant relationship between responsible tourist behavioral practices and behavioral themes such as environmental behavioral traits (EBT); development and promotional behavioral traits (DPBT), and legal and ethical behavioral traits (LEBT).

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