

## **Tents : An identity of cultural tourism in Rajasthan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Tent is presumed to be the oldest form of portable shelter made of animal hide or cloth stretched over vertical branches or poles and the edges pegged on the ground. They have been in use as shelters for various purposes since prehistoric man first began to build tents as architectural structures. The history of tents is long and vast, and has found mention in holy literature, in poetic verses, illustrated in art, and most importantly used as an art form in its own right and as an expression of life in ancient cultures. The present day tourism global market creates an organic and interdependent system in which the supply and demand side experiences significant changes both time and space. According to the recent changes of tourism trends it is obvious that visitors are more strongly involved in cultural activities. Now a day the generation is motivated mainly by sport, spectacle and satisfaction. The cultural tourism will only be able to survive and attract more tourists by applying an up to date and competitive cultural tourism product development approach (Stebbins, 2012). The state of Rajasthan is located in the northwest of India, it is known for its heritage, culture, deserts, sand dunes and lush forests and varied wildlife. The geographical terrain and climate in most region of Rajasthan does not dependable on agriculture, therefore the tourism industry is considered as a key industry in the state. A simple example is adopting the promotional scheme “Padharo Mhare Desh” which means ‘welcome to my land, Rajasthan’. The Rajasthan Tourist Development Corporation, Government of Rajasthan (will be referred as RTDC, henceforth in this paper) and some private entrepreneurs are making efforts to expand tourism in the state. It has also begun to attract tourists to the rural and wildlife national parks in Rajasthan. The desert, which has more accessible and thus begun to attract more tourists (RTDC, 2009). The state requires a system of portable temporary accommodation facility in form of tents. With portable tents the same could be used at other suitable location as well. For example, Royal Jodhpur Tents, a private organisation based in Jodhpur, works on traditional tents for contemporary needs and promote them in for of cultural tourism. Hence, tents can be an important identity of cultural tourism in Rajasthan

**Key Words :** Tent, Portable, Culture, Tourism, Rajasthan

### **INTRODUCTION**

The aim and focus of this area of study is to understand cultural tourism. It may be noted that cultural tourism is arguably one of the tourism industry’s most sought after options. In today’s worldwide tourism business, there is an urgent need to preserve and market the rich and diverse

cultures of our world.

Any attempt to describe the term 'cultural tourism', leads to debates questioning issues related to culture and tourism. I could not find an existing, satisfactory definition. So without an acknowledged definition, 'cultural tourism' may be portrayed and viewed very differently by those offering and those wanting to experience cultural tourism.

As perplexing and unpredictable as it may be, cultural tourism's future potential seems strengthened by the increasing need of human beings, in wanting to become well versed with the cultural values of their own, and other cultures.

Visitors and tourists participating in activities of Mass tourism may now be guests with an additional demand of increased social and cultural input.

In an attempt to reach a workable, even if hypothetical, definition of the term 'cultural tourism', for myself and the purpose of this study, part of this chapter will explore the complexities of the terms 'culture', 'tourism' and 'cultural tourism' (Csapo, 2012).

### **Culture :**

According to Tylor (1871), culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". This quote, by one of the first researchers who managed a recognisable proof of culture, acknowledged by cultural science researchers, defines suitably the approach of this study.

Page number 244 of Webster's New Encyclopaedic Dictionary, also states that culture is "the characteristic features of a civilisation, including its beliefs, its artistic and material products, and its social institutions" (Webster, January 1994).

Human Sciences initially expressed that culture and societies are, "unique bounded entities with limits and specific characteristics. Cultures were static, in that they could be captured by anthropological analyses. Their customs, habits, mores, relationships, uniqueness could all be detailed, and in doing so, the ways in which each culture was separate from all others could be seen" (Csapo, 2012).

Studies on cultural order show that culture is not a restricted, unending component, and that, cultures are not separated from each other in watertight compartments; but continually correspond and connect with each other. This interaction results in the development and progression of culture.

In 1997, Hofstede stated that: "Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving". According to Hofstede, the rituals, the heroes and the symbols of the given culture may highlight the different levels of culture. This again would be of great interest to tourists.

Csapo (2012) characterized Cultural tourism and activities as following: Heritage tourism, Cultural thematic routes, Cultural city tourism, Traditional ethnic tourism, Religious tourism and Creative culture.

Heritage tourism is a critical part of cultural tourism, which is dependent on noteworthy, cultural and common assets of a given region. The United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) differentiate different types of heritage, movable, intangible and world heritage. Heritage tourism is an amazing new phenomena from one perspective concerning cultural tourism yet then again it might be followed over to the aged ancient times of mankind's history.

In light of the aforementioned, one may determine that cultural order is a part of the lifestyle

that a large number of people are imbibing and imparting. Similarities in spoken language, lifestyle, conventions, legacy, conviction, framework, and even enhancement, can unite individuals into a particular cultural identity (UNESCO).

Man is a social animal. We must fully appreciate this fact if we are to understand human nature. Technological advancements have made it much easier for him to step out of his own cultural heritage, learn about other cultures, and ultimately redefine the cultural legacy he bequeaths to the next generation.

In these modern times, where cultural diffusion has resulted in the disappearance of traditional cultures, people have responded by displaying a sense of nostalgia, and a significant effort to retain their collective and individual cultural heritage. In a cosmopolitan world, people are travelling, looking for a source of identity and a sense of belonging.

### **Tourism :**

Space tourism is expected to “take off” in the first quarter of the 21st century, although, compared with traditional destinations, the number of tourists in orbit will remain low, until technologies such as a space elevator make space travel cheap (Educational Tourism, 2009).

Human beings have always travelled to discover the mysteries of new lands.

William F. Theobald suggested that “etymologically, the word *tour* is derived from the Latin, ‘tornare’ and the Greek, ‘tornos’, meaning ‘a lathe or circle; the movement around a central point or axis’. This meaning changed in modern English to represent ‘one’s turn’. The suffix *-ism* is defined as ‘an action or process; typical behaviour or quality’, while the suffix, *-ist* denotes ‘one that performs a given action’. When the word *tour* and the suffixes *-ism* and *-ist* are combined, they suggest the action of movement around a circle. One can argue that a circle represents a starting point, which ultimately returns back to its beginning. Therefore, like a circle, a tour represents a journey in that it is a round-trip, i.e., the act of leaving and then returning to the original starting point, and therefore, one who takes such a journey can be called a tourist” (Theobald, 1998).

In 1976, the Tourism Society of England’s definition was: “Tourism is the temporary, short-term movement of people to destination outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities during the stay at each destination. It includes movements for all purposes” (Beaver, 2002). When people use their leisure time to travel to the distant parts of the world, to see historical monuments, famous works of art, learn new languages, experience new cultures and to taste different cuisines, it is tourism (Educational Tourism, 2009).

Tourism is travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people who “travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes, not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (Educational Tourism, 2009).

Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity that can be domestic or international. Today, tourism is a major source of income for many countries, and affects the economy of both the source and host countries. In some cases, like the desert state of Rajasthan in India, it is of vital importance. Its importance was recognized in the *Manila Declaration on World Tourism of 1980* as, “an activity essential to the life of nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational, and economic sectors of national societies and on their international relations (UNWTO, (2008)).

With improvements in technology allowing the transport of large numbers of people, in a short

space of time, to places of interest, a greater number of people began to enjoy the benefits of leisure time. This came to be known as mass tourism.

There has been an upmarket trend in the tourism sector over the last few decades. Tourists have higher levels of disposable income and greater leisure time. They are also better educated and have more sophisticated tastes. There is now a demand for better quality products, which has resulted in a fragmenting of the mass market. People want more specialised versions or niche market-targeted destination packages. Adjectival tourism refers to the numerous niche or specialty travel forms of tourism that have emerged over the years, each with its own adjective. Many of these have come into common use by the tourism industry and academics (Educational Tourism, 2009).

Crispin Raymond and Greg Richards, as members of the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS), have directed a number of projects for the European Commission, including cultural and crafts tourism, known as sustainable tourism. "Sustainable tourism is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems." (World Tourism Organization, 2005).

Tourist can totally, partially or only incidentally be involved in cultural tourism or in culturally motivated activities. Firstly this study will highlight essential types or in different statement components of cultural tourism from a thematic point of view together by the standards of the favoured activity.

### **Cultural Tourism :**

"What is cultural tourism?" This seemingly simple question is actually very difficult to answer, because, there are almost as many definitions of cultural tourism as there are cultural tourists" (Csapo, 20012).

The Dictionary of Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Terms published in 1996, defines Cultural Tourism as: "General term referring to leisure travel motivated by one or more aspects of the culture of a particular area" (Medlik, 1996).

A more detailed definition from the 1990s is provided by ICOMOS (International Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism): "Cultural tourism can be defined as that activity which enables people to experience the different ways of life of other people, thereby gaining at first hand an understanding of their customs, traditions, the physical environment, the intellectual ideas and those places of architectural, historic, archaeological or other cultural significance which remain from earlier times. Cultural tourism differs from recreational tourism in that it seeks to gain an understanding or appreciation of the nature of the place being visited" (ICOMOS Charter for Cultural Tourism, 1996). This definition, though lengthy, appears to be more relevant. It notices the man made attractions related with cultural tourism, and highlights the encompassing physical environment, simultaneously furnishing a more extensive spatial extension to this type of tourism.

It is also interesting to mention that the definition has been improved through the years to: "Cultural tourism is that form of tourism whose object is, among other aims, the discovery of monuments and sites. It exerts on these last a very positive effect insofar as it contributes - to satisfy its own ends - to their maintenance and protection. In fact, this form of tourism justifies the efforts which said maintenance and protection demand of the human community, because of the socio-cultural and economic benefits which they bestow on all the populations concerned" (ICOMOS, 1996).

According to Michalko and Ratz (ICOMOS, 1996), “Cultural tourism is a tourism product in which the motivation of the tourist is getting acquainted with new cultures, participating in cultural events, and visiting cultural attractions; and, the tour operator’s core element is the peculiar, unique culture of the visited destination”.

When investigating cultural tourism one also has to take into consideration the popular culture. In this respect, such tourism products as rock or pop music festivals, or “movie” tourism (visiting places where famous films were shot), must also be highlighted (ICOMOS, 1996).

Stebbins (1996) states that, “Cultural tourism is a genre of special interest tourism based on the search for, and participation in, new and deep cultural experiences, whether aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, or psychological.”

According to Aubert and Csapó (2012), the classic attractions of cultural tourism can be classified into three groups:

- Built and material values (buildings, material values of different art forms),
- The cultural values connected to everyday life (free time, leisure, lifestyle, habits, gastronomy)
- Events and festivals.

All the different definitions of ‘cultural tourism’ concentrate on the impact of the cultural exposure experienced by the tourist. It is interesting to observe that the definitions attempt to keep tabs on the fascination side of this kind of tourism, some on the topographical space and some on the experiences; yet, all of them highlight the role of the local population too.

**Scope and relevance of cultural tourism :**

While understanding the complex and wonderful concept of cultural tourism it is essential to determine who is a cultural tourist. One may consider a vacationer, who is interested in getting to know a diverse and remote society’s social and panoramic values, as a cultural tourist. These vacationers are culturally awakened tourist, yearning to engage with local communities that provide them some insight into the cultural transmission of societal norms, such that they are better able to understand, and interpret, their cultural evolution. Such tourists are important as they strengthen ties between communities, and countries, on a people-to-people basis.

As per Csapo (2012), the next step in our research is studying the typology of those taking part in cultural tourism. In his works he accepted the typology of McKercher and Du Gros who differentiated five types of cultural tourists, based on the importance of culture in their decision to travel, and also the depth of their experience refer Table 1.

<b>Table 1 : Types of cultural tourists by McKercher and Du Gros. Source: (Csapo, 2012)</b>	
Type of cultural tourist	Short characterisation
The purposeful cultural tourist	Cultural tourism is the primary motivation for visiting a destination and the tourist has a very deep and elaborate cultural experience
The sightseeing cultural tourist	Cultural tourism is a primary reason for visiting a destination, but the experience is less deep and elaborated
The serendipitous cultural tourist	A tourist who does not travel for cultural reasons, but who, after participating, ends up having a deep cultural tourism experience
The casual cultural tourist	Cultural tourism is a weak motive for travel and the resulting experience is shallow
The incidental cultural tourist	This tourist does not travel for cultural reasons, but nonetheless participates in some activities and has shallow experiences

Tourists can be totally, partially, or only incidentally be involved in cultural tourism, or in culturally motivated activities. It is very hard to register tourists belonging to whichever category of tourism activities. One can distinguish between specific and incidental cultural tourists, but the boundary between each category is very hard to distinguish.

As put forward by UNESCO: Thanks to a global, integrated approach in which nature meets culture, the past meets the present, the monumental and movable heritage meets the intangible, the protection of cultural heritage, as an expression of living culture, contributes to the development of societies and the building of peace. By virtue of its multifarious origins and the various influences that have shaped it throughout history, cultural heritage takes different tangible and intangible forms, all of which are invaluable for cultural diversity as the wellspring of wealth and creativity.

In the light of the above note, as per the meaning of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Heritage Tourism Program, one may state that heritage tourism is a critical part of cultural tourism, which is dependent upon the cultural and common assets of a given region.

Taking into consideration the classification of cultural tourism, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) differentiates different types of heritage such as monumental, movable, intangible and world heritage. If one takes into consideration the forms of heritage and heritage tourism, one can differentiate between material and non-material heritage, and cultural heritage sites (Csapo, 2012).

In present day tourism, global markets create an organic and interdependent system, in which the supply and demand side experience significant changes, both in time and space, and also, from the perspective of the quantitative and qualitative aspects. Newer and newer regions and tourism products will be involved in international and domestic tourism trends. In the ever-growing competition only such a tourism destination can survive which, or who, can provide an ever-growing standard of quality (Stebbins, 1996).

### **Role of tents in promoting cultural tourism :**

Across the ancient cultures and civilisations of the world be it the Mongols, Arabs, Bedouins, Ottomans, Romans, North American Indians, Tibetans, Mughals and emperors of the Indian subcontinent, one thread of interest that bound them all was living life under the tents sheltered and yet in a free abandon. Each culture and civilisation lends their own identity to the structure but the very concept of a portable shelter was common to all.

State tourist department (RTDC) organizes various fairs and festivals, Desert festival in Jaisalmer being one of the most popular. Majority of the visitors visiting here are foreigners. Spend their time taking photographs, buying rural craft objects or enjoying the music or dance. The tourists look forward to native people, their traditional garments, music and the cattle and camels.

The geographical terrain and climate in most of the Rajasthan state does not promote dependability on agriculture, therefore, the tourism industry is considered a key industry in the state. The state government has already realised the potential of this industry for the economic development in the state, and has taken important measures to promote tourism.

Cities like Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmar, Udaipur and Bikaner have always thrived on tourism, and have a very large, well-organised, and established tourism industry. Their architecture, forts, monuments, markets and crafts have always attracted tourists. Many palaces in these cities have been turned into luxurious heritage hotels, rekindling the romance of bygone eras and causing the visitors to fall in love with the simplicity and magnificence of Rajasthan. Considering the overwhelming popularity of these places as tourist destinations, the local population, as well as, leading hoteliers

have invested in providing a large number of hotels for the visitors. Other than the private sector, public organisations like the RTDC have also set up their hotels in these cities and other locations of tourist interest.

The RTDC and some private entrepreneurs are making efforts to further expand the array of unique experiences tourism in the state has to offer. Local fairs and festivals in the rural regions are being highlighted through publicity and promotion. Tourist camps are organised to accommodate tourist during these fairs. A concerted effort is being made to attract tourist to the rural and wildlife national parks of Rajasthan.

In order to popularise wildlife sanctuaries, of which there are quite a few in Rajasthan, camps, similar to those organized for fairs and festivals, can be organized here too.

The desert, which has always been a mystery, has been made more accessible and thus has begun to draw more tourists. Besides the local fairs and festivals, the state tourist department also organizes a Desert festival in Jaisalmer, in the month of January - February.

In the present tourist scenario, majority of the tourists who visit these camps are foreigners. However, as per the organiser's records, the number of domestic tourists has risen visibly. Most of the domestic tourist travel as a part of group tours. Travel agencies in their native places organise these tours. They travel in buses owned or hired by the organisers. There are also tourists who tour independently. They are either individuals, or small groups of family or friends.

Though a festival or fair normally lasts for about four to seven days, the tourists stay only for about two nights, on an average. Hence, there is a flow of tourists arriving and departing, throughout the festival. As the sites where these festivals take place are not directly connected by rail or air, tourists come in hired taxis or buses. Depending on the kind of tourist, the luggage may vary from the negligible backpack to suitcases full of clothes, linen and food.

Normally, a tourist spends the early parts of the day visiting the fair either taking photographs, buying rural craft objects or enjoying the music, dance and other entertainments like puppet shows, dances and camel rides. In the afternoons, when the day gets warm and sunny, the tourist prefers to have lunch and rest. As the evening sets in, once again they go out for sight seeing or camel safaris. They return to the camp late in the evening. After dinner, there is entertainment organised for them. These programmes are also based on local folk culture and tradition.

The tourists who visit such fairs look forward to interacting with the native people, learning about their traditional attire, their daily life, sustenance and leisure. Tourists are also keen to experience the desert. In such rural and remote locations, where tourism at present is only seasonal, it makes sense to provide tented encampments instead of permanent accommodation facilities. Such places require a system of temporary accommodation facilities. This accommodation could be transported to the designated site and be set up.

Fairs in the state may be held as a series of fairs in different districts, with different local flavours, throughout the year; or a single fair could travel to different parts of the state, providing greater opportunity to the locals and the tourists alike.

Travelling fairs would need portable accommodation. Tented facilities provide everything needed in such a situation. When the tent is not in use at particular site, it can be stored, transported and used at the various other desired sites.

As mentioned in the beginning, the organisations like, Royal Jodhpur Tents, is one of the few companies that continue to work with traditional tents and promote them as a form of cultural tourism. Other than the Royal Jodhpur Tents, there are a few other companies in the business of making and promoting traditional tents in tourism and for other social events.

A few others are, Marwar Tents in Jodhpur; Garg International in Ambala; Mahavir Tents India Pvt. Ltd. in Gaziabad; Pashupati Enterprise in New Delhi; Kohinoor Dying and Tent Works in Jaipur. However, most of these are tent manufacturers in the trading business and do not deal directly with tourism.

Taking cognizance of all the challenges and opportunities inherent in cultural tourism in Rajasthan, it becomes increasingly important to enhance the vernacular ambience and experience of the cultural tourist visiting the state. Tented tourist camps are one of the most appropriate tools to further Rajasthan's unique tourist identity. The tents will in their own way connect to the concepts of Cultural Tourism.

To enhance the interest of visitors, in the concept of cultural tourism in Rajasthan using tented accommodation, it was important to understand the potential tourist. A survey was conducted by choosing a random group of people from various backgrounds and age groups. This was done, primarily, to gauge the awareness and preferences of individuals, in regard to the role of tented accommodation as a lodging alternate during a holiday, as a tourist.

To validate the scope of tents in establishing its identity as a tool in cultural tourism, a pilot survey was conducted by drawing a sample size of hundred tourists was done using a questionnaire with a multiple-choice answers. A total seventy-two people responded and following are the key findings of this survey:

- a) For most of the respondents a tourist vacation is recreation and leisure.
- b) Almost all have been to Rajasthan and relate it with desert, camels, and traditional culture.
- c) Around 73% of people prefer a week long stay at a heritage hotel or in tented accommodation. More than 50% of the respondents would expect to pay anything between Rs.3000 to Rs.7000 per day, for two persons; and around 30% of people between Rs.7000 to Rs.20000 per day or more. All potential tourists expect rooms with clean linen and contemporary washrooms. A television set, refrigerator and Wi-Fi facility is expected by 30% respondents.
- d) Most of the respondents relate tents to encampments of defence and security forces and homes for nomads. However 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of them has had a short stay in a tent, and are also aware of tents being used as tourist accommodation.
- e) Almost all feel that in tourism, tents are most appropriate for use in natural habitats like, mountains, forests and deserts. Hence, associate the use of tents only with natural surroundings.
- f) In respect to facilities like light and ventilation in a tented accommodation, people prefer the use of solar-power and environment friendly traditional methods. It is interesting to note that a majority of the respondents consider tented accommodation as primitive shelter, and feel that air-conditioning or similar contemporary facilities will defeat the purpose of staying in a tent.
- g) Almost all the respondents relate tented accommodation as a cosy, comfortable and eco-friendly arrangement.

In this survey, 47% people were between 36-45 years of age, 35% between 25-35 years and 18% between 46 to 55 years or above. An analysis of the survey brings the following points to light.

There is awareness about tents being used as tourist accommodation. However, the association of tented accommodation is limited to a minimal and primitive shelter, appropriate for natural habitats only. Since the structural make and material of the tent appears simple and less expensive, most of the respondents consider staying in a tent as an economic, low budget alternative, to staying in a luxurious hotel.

### **Conclusion :**

This study lays focus on trends of tourism that will promote culture and provide diverse

experience for visiting tourists. The tourism industry will mostly be benefited with the constant change of recreational needs of tourists and their requirement for cultural travels will rapidly grow.

Changes in physical environment along with tastes and preferences of the tourist as client have dictated the tent manufactures vary types, materials, styles and shapes of tents in respect to the space available. Tents can play a catalytic role in creating an identity for cultural tourism in Rajasthan

Hence, one may conclude that the stakeholders must not ignore the potential of tented accommodation in tourism industry. As, tents are simple and less expensive to execute and facilitate and at same time, promote the cultural aspect of Rajasthan immensely.

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