

INNOVATIVE IDEAS IN HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract:

In the 21st century, tourism has become a popular economic activity among all countries. Among various types of tourism, heritage tourism has been observed as the economically and commercially most viable option. Since countries with limited investment resources could invite foreign tourists to enjoy their heritage culture, history, arts, and music. However, heritage tourism in India has been observed as the neglected domain. The reasons for ignoring heritage tourism in India will be analyzed in this paper with the purpose to identify challenges to preserve, conserve, develop, and promote built heritage tourism. Innovative transformation is suggested as the approach to develop, rejuvenate, and transform the tangible and intangible heritage tourism in India for reuse, social and economic prosperity of locals living around heritage sites, as well as to provide transformational experience to visitors.

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Introduction: International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) defined “heritage” as a broad concept that include tangible assets such as natural and cultural environment, encompassing landscape, historic places, and build environment as well as intangible assets such as collection of past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences (ICOMOS, 2002). The World Heritage Committee and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) under the umbrella of UNESCO provide a global platform to identify heritage and heritage sites (UNESCO-IUCN, 1992). By 2001, the WHL (World Heritage List of the UNESCO) enlisted 690 sites from 122 countries as heritage sites. UNESCO (2016) has 832 cultural sites, 206 natural sites and 35 mixed, and 1073 representing 167 countries.

In India, UNESCO (2016) has listed as world heritage 28 cultural sites, which include, forts, caves, tombs, places of worship, gardens, mountain railways, and 8 natural sites, which include national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. It has been observed that there are still hundreds of centuries old heritage sites in India which should be protected and conserved for the future generations, in a sustainable manner. Given the numerous built heritage sites, India cannot just depend upon international organizations like UNESCO to protect priceless cultural, artefacts, historical monuments and natural heritage sites.

There must be a paradigm shift through local, ‘innovative transformation’ and entrepreneurship to conserve, develop and promote these sites through inclusive involvement of the population living around the sites, local businesses, and educational institutions to be able to sustain local communities, by employing them at these sites, and reviving the local cultural heritage.

Timothy asserts that, “Without an economic justification, conservation policies and practices in many places would not be established or justified in the minds of community members and leaders”. Therefore, heritage protection and conservation through innovative transformation strategies should benefit the local population in terms of employment at these sites for conservation as the main goal and heritage tourism development as the

second goal. Various employment opportunities such as heritage conservation, tour guide, safety and security, cleaning jobs, maintaining the grounds and gardens, at these sites can be self-sustaining. Revenue earned from tourists could be invested in history and education research, heritage conservation, and donations from bequests, advising from architecture, archaeologists, and volunteers of heritage protection researchers/students.

This paper aims to provide a platform for innovative transformative heritage tourism development for creating sustainable economic development triggering employment opportunities at the built heritage sites. It is possible by preservation and promotion of numerous neglected heritage sites in India and Pakistan to empower the local communities via innovative transformation strategies for their sustainable future. The main contribution of this chapter is to explore and critically discuss the recognition, preservation, conservation and protection for development and promotion of heritage tourism in India through innovative transformation and rejuvenation of numerous sites.

Economic Benefits of Cultural and Heritage Tourism:

- Injects new money into the economy, boosting businesses and tax revenues.
- Creates new jobs, businesses, events, and attractions, thus helping diversify the local economy.
- Supports small businesses and enables them to expand.
- Promotes the active preservation and protection of important local resources.
- Builds vital relationships among and within local communities.
- Helps encourage the development and maintenance of new/existing community amenities.

Social Benefits of Cultural and Heritage Tourism:

- Helps build social capital.
- Promotes preservation of local traditions, customs, and culture. UNESCO now recognises intangible cultural heritage as being as important as buildings. A market for experiences and traditional projects provides the economic support for keeping these skills and traditions alive.
- Promotes positive behaviour.
- Helps improve the community's image and pride.
- Promotes community beautification.
- Builds opportunities for healthy and useful community relationships and partnerships.
- Provides research, education, and work-placement opportunities for students.
- Creates enjoyable opportunities for both local residents and visitors attracted to the cultural arts, history, and preservation.
- Boosts local investment in heritage resources and amenities that support tourism services.

There is even evidence that helping to maintain buildings of character culture and heritage tourism can also contribute to the innovation and business diversification of precincts. Small businesses based in amazing buildings are typically innovators and provide a core for other larger businesses.

Environmental Benefits of Cultural and Heritage Tourism:

- Helps encourage a culture of preservation.
- Boost awareness of the tourist site, attraction, or area's significance.
- Helps encourage residents and visitors to be mindful of their impact on the natural and built environment.

Entrepreneurial Initiatives & Innovations: Some of the successful entrepreneurial initiatives that have been

implemented may be like identifying and enlisting with UNESCO World Heritage sites. Their responsibility is to maintain the heritage monuments/ sites across the world, considered as benchmarks for civilizations. In terms of innovation in Heritage tourism, education and utilization of local communities are considered to have a critical and wider role towards conservation and promoting these heritage sites. Local communities are benefitted around with the increased flow of tourists, thereby generating jobs and wealth, followed by the economic development of the surroundings. Global trends in tourism exhibit that a tourist desires to understand these heritage sites by engaging with locals, perceiving from them about their heritage. This requires a larger involvement of governments engagement with locals in achieving these goals. The other aspect expected from governments is to convert these heritage sites tourists, as friendly destinations. To achieve this, information and technology have played a vital role. Many of these innovative technologies have enriched the experience and made information easily accessible to different visitor segments such as guided tours and devices that enhance the visit (e.g. audio guides, GPS locators and mobile apps). Through new communication technologies, additional information can be shared with visitors, thereby becoming a focal point of added value to the heritage experience. How much are we prepared? If not, it is time to capitalize upon Heritage tourism.

Use of technology in heritage tourism is more common in India. While visiting any museum in India audio visual help in various foreign languages is offered by curator. 3-dimension technologies are also popular and effective in this field. Technology has made tourism an interactive and efficient industry. By making possible things that were unthinkable, technology has made the overall experience of a tourist more satisfactory. A tourist uses technology in its travel management. Be it planning a tour, technology assists in efficient tour planning by keeping a record of destinations, giving information about the climate and major attractions of a place, and also helps in the scheduling of tours. Availability of hi-end gadgets such as smart phones, smart watches, and heads-up display, requires less use of photographers and tour guides, making a tourist independent of other people. Technology also enhances the security of a tourist. Similarly, the availability of digital payments has made traveling a hassle-free activity. On the other hand, technology also assists other stakeholders in marketing themselves to tourists more effectively and efficiently. The reach of stakeholders has increased drastically due to the advent of technology.

Conclusion: In this century we witness numerous changes in traditional heritage tourism. Government and even travellers are becoming about the sustainability of this type of tourism. People other than History and Archaeology travels through caves, forts and temples. Certain new ideas help them and through it informal education promoted in society.

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