



HERITAGE TOURISM IN THE POST PANDEMIC - COVID 19

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Abstract:

The recent destructive COVID-19 outbreak, lockdown, and social distancing initiatives certainly had a huge effect on the heritage market all over the world. Most museums, archaeological, and heritage sites around the world are currently closed due to which heritage professionals have been furloughed. It resulted in the loss of revenue generated through tourists and the selling of goods to the visitors of heritage sites as Tourism is the economic backbone of many countries around the world. It is a big source and always helpful in generating revenue and foreign exchange. Heritage tourism offers the most obvious source of revenue in our country. However it's a deep matter of concern that this sector is the most affected sector due to corona virus disease (COVID- 19). COVID-19 is spreading rapidly at an unprecedented scale across continents and has emerged as the single biggest life-threatening health risk in the world which has been faced in modern time. This paper focuses on the COVID-19 impact on heritage tourism and culture of India explaining how lockdown leads to cancellation or postpone of many events that affected the people who were earning through heritage tourism.

Key Words: Heritage, Tourism, Post Pandemic

Introduction:

A lifetime is not enough to learn about India's heritage tourism, from the Bay of Bengal to the Royal Rajasthan and from the magnificent Kashmir to the peaceful Kanyakumari, tourism industry has represented India's culture and heritage. India's endless layers of heritage and culture have constantly amazed scholars and tourists alike. India, the prismatic land of spirituality, colour, pomp, gaiety, vast expanse of cuisines, fabrics of aromas, scenery, architecture, language, and countless specialties give a full journey that touches mind, body, and soul. The wonders of India have been explored by serious researchers and scholarly writings of A. L. Basham (The wonder that was India), Shonar (Of past dawns, and future noon's) mesmerize readers. Heritage Tourism's main focus is on experiencing distinct cultures or heritage relics have traditionally been one of the major reasons for people to travel. Since India is one of the countries severely affected by the corona virus, resulting in economic downturns. India is among those countries which responded in an early time with various forms of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI), including lockdown (home isolation, voluntary/required quarantine), social distancing (vulnerable or entire populations), closure of schools/universities and non-essential businesses/workplaces, cancelling or postponing events (i.e. major conferences and trade shows, concerts and festivals), and bans on gatherings of people over certain numbers. Many industries affected by this pandemic across the globe. Tourism is perhaps the main industry that would be negatively impacted (Ayittei et al, 2020). Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries; it is anticipated to play a major role in restoring socio-economic stability after the COVID-19 pandemic. Heritage Tourism Scenario in our country is not much different and Tourism contributes to GDP of this country in a handsome proportion as it generates much needed foreign currency in India. However, it's a deep matter of concern for all the stakeholders associated with tourism industry that tourism is the most affected sector in the world due to corona virus disease (COVID-19) in the beginning of 2020. The lockdown situation due to COVID-19 not only affected the revenue but also led to closure of many conservation works on heritage site, loss of many jobs as well as it created problem to thousands of employees who rely on tourism-related activities to earn their regular income, many hotels staff members lost their jobs, small artisans, small business persons faced huge dropping as they are all linked with heritage tourism.

This paper is focused on how tourism will be after covid-19 pandemic, what precautions and guidelines should be followed while visiting any heritage site and how this pandemic led to suffer all the people who are engaged with heritage tourism.

Heritage Tourism:

Lord defines cultural tourism as: "Visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage. Offerings of a community, region, group, or institution" (Lord.B, 2002). Heritage tourism, an integral part of the wider cultural tourism category, and has become a significant tourism field all over the world. It is all about cultural traditions, places, and values. The term "Heritage" is relatively recent invention and began to be used commonly in Europe in 1970's. Whatever we inherit from the past can be termed as heritage. Interpretation of heritage depends upon the understanding that it is crystallization of culture over the period of time as the representative part of it in time and space (McCain et al, 2003). In fact, culture is the core that develops around it the visible landmarks

known as heritage. These landmarks are both tangible and intangible (Moscardo, 1996). Tangible being the built part in terms of architectural marvels and religious places that include temples, shrines, forts and palaces (NTHP, 1999).

Heritage tourism is the new barometer of international relations and in country like India where diversity of ethnicity within one cultural space is the hallmark of national consciousness (Quirk, 1989); it gives tourism marketers a mosaic to operate upon in terms of framing strategies for the heritage tourism (Robinson, 1999).

Heritage tourism is the recreational activity that makes a tourist travel but towards past; no doubt the tourist is living in the present age. Heritage assets link past, present and future. It is focused on the mosaic of areas, traditions, art and architecture, festivals, and interactions that depicts nation and its people, representing countries diversity and character.

Travelers who engage in cultural tourism activities visit the following areas:

- art galleries, theatres and museums
- historic sites, communities or landmarks
- cultural events, festivals and fairs
- ethnic communities and neighbourhoods
- architectural and archaeological treasures

Global Pandemic Novel Corona COVID-19:

A novel corona virus virus originated from the Wuhan province in China during December 2019 (Lu, H et al, 2020). COVID-19 is a new pandemic that spreads mainly when an infected person coughs or sneezes via contact with an uninfected person. It began in China and then found its way to the world, leading to large numbers of deaths across the globe. The global pandemic of novel Corona virus has not only brought entire socio-economic structures in to a standstill but has challenged the globalization and global operations of enterprises. Paradoxically, potential repercussions and alternative ways out are yet volatile. At first, corona virus cases occurred in India due to the connection abroad rather than transmission within the country. By spreading the corona virus that resulted in many deaths around the globe, India's government took an early step and gave order to complete lockdown across India. This lockdown leads to devastated billions of lives, thus generating conditions for economic instability.

The government began partial easing of the lockdown after a few months but maintained some limits on movements and mass gatherings. However, the decisions on limiting the movements of people and commodity mainly affected to the industries like tourism, because, tourism include air transportation, sea transportation, food handling, accommodation sector, cultural activity, entertainment and recreation etc.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the loss of lives and livelihood all over the world. Industries across the spectrum have been impacted by the pandemic, the travel and tourism industry has felt maximum impact because of grounding of planes, closure of railways, heritage sites, hotels and other establishments. The travel and tourism industry has proven its importance as an economic growth engine for the world economy. For nine years consecutively, the industry's growth rate has surpassed the growth rate of the global economy. In 2019, the industry grew at 3.5% compared to global GDP growth rate of 2.5%. Accounting for 10.3% of total GDP, the industry contributed USD 8.9 trillion to the global GDP and created approximately 330 million jobs, one in 10 that year. (Travel and Tourism, 2020)

The tourism sector, in which heritage-based cultural tourism is an important part in India, is experiencing huge losses because of global pandemic. Most museums, archaeological and

Heritage sites around the world are currently closed due to which heritage professionals have been furloughed. It resulted in the loss of revenue generated through tourist and selling of goods to the visitors of heritage sites. As on 14 March 2020, ministry for culture and tourism, ordered the closure of all "monuments and museums protected by the Archaeological Survey of India across the country, including the Taj Mahal mausoleum in Agra." In early July the closure of the Taj Mahal was extended for an undefined duration as Agra was one of the worst affected cities in the country's most populous state.

But by March 2020, scenario of tourism in India get totally changed as on 24 March 2020, the Government of India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered a nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 pandemic in India as a precautionary measure to prevent corona virus outbreak.

COVID- 19 Impact on Heritage Tourism:

India is the birthplace and cradle of some of the largest cultures and religions around the world. The unprecedented cultural ebullience of India's rich world heritage sites allures visitors from all over the world. The various shades of customs and practices applied to the Indian culture and the various cultural heritage sites in India speak volumes about the same. Culture and tourism go hand in hand. A large number of tourists visit India's major heritage sites, which have been closed in the lockdown. It is estimated that more than 30% of international tourists come to India to visit the heritage sites.

In a list of 116 centrally protected ticketed monuments, Taj Mahal was the top revenue earner in Agra. In 2017-2018 (before pandemic), Taj Mahal saw more than 64 lakh visitors and earned more than Rs.56 crore. Apart from Taj Mahal, Agra Fort (24 lakh visitors and Rs. 34 crore revenue), Delhi Red Fort (35 lakh visitors

and Rs. 21 crore revenue) and Qutub Minar (29 lakhvisitors and Rs. 26 crore revenue), but the scenario of travel and tourism get completely changed after March 2020 when the government of India has decided to shut down all ASI- protected monuments, including Taj Mahal, and central museums across the country. The closing down of iconic Taj Mahal is an evocative sign of how the travel and tourism landscape of India has changed due to Covid-19 (Uniyal, R et al. 2020).

The pandemic has had an impact on cultural events in the region through the cancellation or postponement of major events, including many cultural events as well as pilgrimage in India, for example: The Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya, over a hundred kilometers south of Bihar's capital Patna, is a renowned world heritage site. It was here that Prince Siddhartha of the Shakya clan is said to have attained "total enlightenment" under the Bodhi tree and become the Buddha in 623 B.C. Visited by domestic and international visitors and pilgrims alike, the site helped boost tourism in Bihar, with the number of tourists rising from 28.9 million in 2015, including 923,000 foreign tourists, to 35 million in 2019, with more than 500,000 foreigners visiting Bodh Gaya and Gaya, a holy city on the banks of the Falgu River, in 2019. But the COVID-19 scare and subsequent closure has denied some kind of pay to tourism, leaving the site abandoned (Insight, I., 2020).

COVID-19 is spreading rapidly at an unprecedented scale across continents and has emerged as the single biggest life-threatening health risk in the world has faced in modern times. The lockdown situation due to COVID-19 not only affected the loss in revenue by tourism but also led to closed down of many conservation works on heritage site, loss of many jobs as well as it created problem to thousands of employees who rely on tourism-related activities to earn their regular income. Similarly, most hotels in India have sent their staff home, paying them half their salaries, small artisans, small business persons face huge loss.

Travel & Tourism Jobs, in Millions:

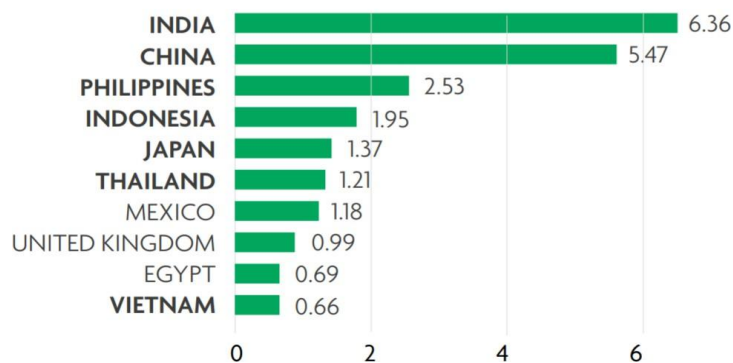


Figure 1: Top 10 countries in the world: Jobs created 2014-2019

Source: World Travel and Tourism Council

As the graph showing above, India is one of the leading countries in providing employment during 2014-2019 (world Travel and Tourism Council, 2020). However, since the time of COVID-19 which hit the globe on December 2019. There has been a great loss of employment in tourism sector according to an estimated 2 crore to 5.5 crore people employed (directly or indirectly) in the tourism sector in India have lost their job in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic (The print, 2020).

Measures for Tourism in Post Pandemic:

There is no doubt, that this pandemic situation has brought lot of negative impacts on Indian heritage tourism as well as other cultural and festive events. It arrived and changed the way we live and the way we travel. It is very clear that travel and tourism will no longer same as it was before pandemic. For smooth going heritage tourism we have to take certain measures such as:

- Establishing the quarantine camps for passengers from identified high risk destinations at airport as well as at heritage site.
- Placing thermo scanners at the entrance of heritage site.
- Identify the network of patients and lead the recognized potential individuals for quarantine process.
- Curfew and lock down around the areas identifying as high danger zones, low contentment zones, etc.
- Proper sanitization or cleaning should be done at entrance as well as other areas of heritage site.
- COVID-19 kit should be provided to the visitors which includes Mask, gloves, face shield and sanitizer.
- Creating virtual tour of heritage site through web site is the most effective way during pandemic as well as post pandemic.

Earlier, the tourist guides used to serve in crowded tours but now post-pandemic they will give tours to small groups with limited time slots and this will help tourism to get back. However, with this pandemic, individuals are seeking to make peace with the present and discovering ways of maintaining their normal lives as time passes. Health is the main concern during the pandemic and the best thing for this is precaution, always

wear mask and wash hands frequently. As for tourists some measures have been taken before moving to another

State, if you're planning to roam around the globe first you need to have your COVID-19 test and if the test turns out negative, then you are good to go. As an present example if you're planning to go to another country then you may have to have a COVID-19 test at the country's airport for example if you are planning to visit Dubai you will be expected to have a COVID-19 test at the airport in Dubai and you may be quarantined at the same time until the reports comes out and as a precautionary measure before leaving the country you'll be required to have a COVID-19 test again.

Another example can be taken from South Korea, when you'll be taking a flight to South Korea there you'll be required to fill a form regarding your health status which contain the information regarding the quarantined period for the travelers and you have to have a COVID-19 test as well. If you're planning to visit a hill station or a tourist place in India then you may need to carry your COVID-19 test report as well. In India most of the heritage monuments protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) were closed during the pandemic and began opening up in early July when restrictions began to ease. Almost 3,700 monuments across the country opened up except for the Taj Mahal and the Agra Fort. Now the government announces for the reopening of the heritage sites with certain precautions against corona virus. For example: after being shut for some six months due to corona virus, India's top tourist attraction, the Taj Mahal has reopened with certain guidelines issued by city administration and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) such as maximum 5,000 tourist can enter the monument. Similarly, at Agra Fort maximum 2,500 tourists are allowed to enter. Tickets to enter the monuments are only booked by online medium from the ASI website or through mobile app. The Taj Mahal will have visitors in two slots pre-lunch and post-lunch. In each slot, there will be a maximum of 2,500 visitors. Official photographers to the monument have been divided into groups to be allowed entry on alternate days. Apart from this wearing of mask is mandatory, strict physical distancing, circles are being marked for standing, and nobody allowed entering without thermal screening.

Travel and tourism will no longer similar as it was earlier but by taking up above mentioned measures and government's guidelines somehow, we will be able to travel and get to know more about our heritage as well as other's culture until and unless till this pandemic get over. Apart from this, with the help of digital media we can also perform virtual tour to different places for example, in Italy a virtual road trip from Pompeii to Amalfi was organized online, which was successful attempt and appreciated by many peoples.

Conclusion:

Heritage tourism is an activity that is a source of recreational for an individual. Tourism and culture go hand in hand; letting people get a chance to get closer to their community and roots, provide people a path from different community to get closer to other cultures as well. Tourism and economy are like two sides of a coin that runs together because tourism is a source of a country's good economy. India, as described above, is a country with an extremely rich heritage that draws tourists from all around the world, hosts 30% international tourists, has also faced the wrath of this pandemic.

On the other hand, tourism stands for business or employment opportunities for locals, several heritage sites promote traditional craft and culture through involving communities within the return they earned their livelihood, as above mentioned COVID -19 has severely affected the tourism which is indirectly affecting local craftsman and artists. So therefore, to revive the tourism and persons associated with it, all the measures mentioned above for tourism during and post pandemic should be taken well case of by all the individuals involved in this tourism industry. Digitally cultural events may also organize by the concerned authority; also the handicraft products which are placed for sell in the market of heritage site can be made available through E-market.

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