

Role of Visitor Management for Enhanced Visitor Experience at UNESCO World Heritage Sites: A Case Study of Qutub Minar and Humayun's Tomb

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Abstract

For the tourism sites in India, Visitor Management is a recent but highly sought after management tool. This paper explores the linkage between visitor management and visitor experience in architectural UN World Heritage Sites (WHS), in the light of the fall of a pillar at Hampi Group of Monuments in Karnataka, a World Heritage Site due to increased visitors' pressures and a lack of proper visitor management plan. For the purpose of this Research Paper the researcher has concentrated on only two World Heritage Sites in Delhi – Qutub Minar and Humayun's Tomb. The role of visitor management in terms of heritage interpretation, conservation and preservation along with the management of visitor experience at the chosen sites were studied. This paper has tried to examine the physical and environmental carrying capacity of the sites to formulate and propose a plausible working plan of visitor management at these two sites. Research methodology involved, sampling to understand the need and the satisfaction at three levels: a) Visitors level b) Travel Agents, Tour operators, and other allied stake holders, c) Conservation managers,

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Environmentalist's and Government agencies. Primary data were collected through personnel interviews with the employees of Government and private organizations involved in tourism activities at the two sites along with interaction with the visitors at the site through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were collected from records of Government and Non-Government organizations involved in running the management of these Heritage Sites. Some references were also collected from important heritage site globally wherein visitor management has been successfully implemented, so as to understand whether the same can be replicated in the chosen site.

Keywords: Heritage Interpretation, Visitor Management, Visitor Experience, World Heritage Sites.

Introduction

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. It is an irreplaceable source of life and inspiration and has its own inherent value as stated by UNESCO (1972). The word "heritage" in its broader meaning is generally associated with the word "inheritance," which is transferred from one generation to another. Owing to its role as a carrier of historical values from the past, heritage is part of the cultural tradition of a society as observed by J.Huh (2002).

Today, Heritage sites, especially World Heritage Sites, because of their increased popularity are serving as a preferred destination for the tourists. People feel the need to associate to heritage to add perspective and meaning to their lives. Hence, their travel plan to these accepted sites has led to high potential of tourism for these sites. According to Phillips (2014), the fact that the label represents 'Outstanding Universal Value' gives tourists the expectation that visiting the site will be a unique experience and at the same time provides the tourism industry with an easily promoted and almost fail-proof destination. World Heritage and Tourism, IUCN, (2011) also states that these World Heritage Sites are amongst the most popular and heavily promoted attractions in most of the countries.

To handle the increasing visitation at World Heritage Sites, the site managers are continuously working to maintain the sanctity of the site and at the same time to uphold the enjoyment and satisfaction level for the visitors. Conventional approaches to visitor management largely focused on managing the heritage resource and controlling visitor's footfall. But, in present times the focus has shifted to finding solutions and tools so as to enhance the visitor experience, while maintaining the brand image of the destination and quality of life of the locals.

Visitor management plan have been widely accepted by the site managers as an efficient tool for promoting sustainable culture tourism products in historical sites all over the world. A study by Hall, C.M. and Piggin, R., (2003) highlights the following outcomes/ advantages of Visitor Management applications:

- reducing damage to fragile environments and disruption to local communities
- improving the visitor experience
- spreading economic benefits from visitors across an area, and throughout the seasons
- steering visitors evenly towards all attractions and artifacts
- giving the management a clear objective and target
- Engaging the local community in discussions about the impact of visitors in their community.
- Guiding the site managers in the marketing of the destination.

Since, India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world with a kaleidoscopic rich variety of cultural heritage as avowed in UNESCO (2000). Also, visitor management as a management tool is recent and is in its nascent stage in Indian tourism industry. Subsequently, visitors and heritage have a symbiotic relationship which cannot be ignored. Hence, it was found appropriate to study the two World Heritage Sites (Qutub Minar and Humayun Tomb) in the capital city of India, New Delhi which are popular both among domestic and international tourists.

UNESCO Designation

According to UNESCO, (2016) there are 35 World Heritage properties in India out of which 27 are cultural, 7 are natural properties and 1 is mixed. It is prestigious for a country to have a site listed on World Heritage list as it boosts tourism and the revenue earned can be used for the maintenance and preservation of the inheritance of the times of yore. The present study on two World Heritage Sites provokes the ability of visitor management plan to release the pressure and safe guard these sites for the future generation by promoting sustainable cultural tourism.

Research Objectives

Research aims to understand the need and the satisfaction at three levels -a) Visitors level, b) Travel Agents, Tour operators, and other allied stake holders, c) Conservation managers, Environmentalists' and Government agencies.

Research Methodology

This is an exploratory research involving the primary data which were collected through personnel interviews with the employees of government and private organizations involved in tourism activities at the two sites along with interaction with the visitors at the site through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were collected from records of government and non-government organizations involved in running the management of Heritage sites. Some references were also collected from important heritage site globally wherein visitor management has been successfully implemented, so as to understand whether the same can be replicated in the chosen site.

Literature Review

Literature review, brought to fore that many World Heritage Sites globally have successfully incorporated visitor management tools to enhance visitor experience and have been able to protect their universal treasures for future generations. The following best chosen practices (World Heritage Committee, 2011) used by sites worldwide were studied:

- i. WHS Petra in Jordan is a caravan city, situated between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea and is surrounded by mountains riddled with passages and gorges. As Ballawi (2013) elaborates on the measures recommended at the site which were to make people aware about the accumulative slow effects caused by touching, stepping and random climbing. The signage and other interpretational material included statements for consequences for negative behaviour on the sites by the tourists and guides and other stake holders to be involved in making tourists aware of eco-tourism ethics. Also to reduce congestion the group size has been limited and limitations have also been made on the length of stay at the site. Zoning of major bio-diversity areas have been initiated.
- ii. WHS Stonehenge in U.K. is globally popular for its unique and dense concentration of outstanding pre-historic monuments and unparalleled landscape. A popular study by Cristopher Young(2009) suggest that to develop appropriate measures for traffic management at road junctions to increase the safety for pedestrians, motorists and cyclists, to design public transport network and associate facilities, to identify convenient pick up & drop off points, to review speed limits next to the site and to make parking free for pre booked coaches.
- iii. WHS at Citadel of Salah El Dien at Cairo in Egypt is a fourth pyramid of Egypt with a history of over 837 years. The study by El-Barmelgy, (2013) stated measures which were implemented at the site. For example the destination managers changed the start point of the visitation trip to a defined point inside the Citadel to avoid bottlenecks, demolished a building in the vicinity as it had no historical and cultural value and banned the access for private cars, except in case of emergencies.
- iv. Study by Press Information Bureau, (2013) revealed that similar steps were integrated at National Museum-Janpath, New Delhi to augment visitors' knowledge for the museum's antiquities by giving free tours to the museum by trained volunteer guides.

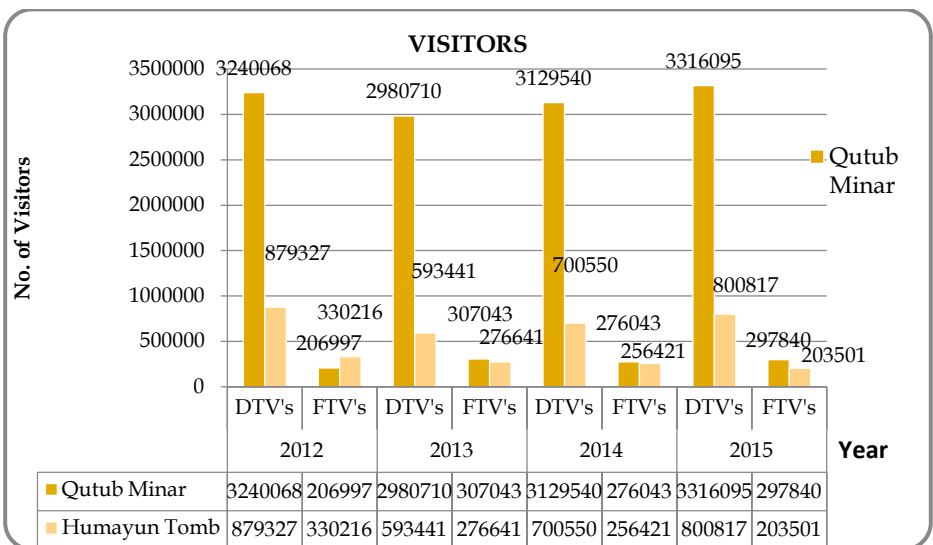
Secondary Data

The secondary research has been conducted to study the current status of Tourist Arrivals at the chosen sites to compare the state of affairs with the main concepts as defined in the literature review. To gather the secondary data, ASI the managing body of these two sites was contacted.

Secondary Data Findings

The data (Ministry of Tourism, 2016) analysis helped find the inclination of tourists which is currently more towards Qutub Minar than Humayun tomb by 330% (approx.) among domestic tourists and is equal among international tourists for both the sites (reference table 1). Nevertheless, the trend among visitors for the period (2012-2015) shows increase in tourist arrival at Humayun tomb by 17% in comparison to Qutub Minar which has witnessed a growth by 5% only. Reference data collected from ASI Delhi circle also indicates the months of May and June in summers and December and January in winters as peak seasons amongst Domestic tourists whereas December and January months are most popular among foreign tourists for both monuments. Table1 summarizes the visitor arrival at Qutub Minar and Humayun Tomb from 2012-2015.

Table 1 Visitor arrival at Qutub Minar and Humayun Tomb from 2012-2015.



The data was collected by interviewing various stake holders viz. ASI Delhi Circle, Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Travel agents/operators, tourist guides to gather general information on the management's initiatives and ongoing projects and future plans for the sites. The facts revealed that management for both sites have taken commendable & praiseworthy steps to improve the socio-economic characteristics of residents, visitor population and environmental features of the site. The site managers have taken the following initiatives to improve socio-economic & environmental carrying capacity of the site.

Steps taken at Qutub Minar

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) along with INTACH has taken positive steps towards the upkeep of the monument as well as to promote tourism:

- i. **Socio-Economic:** It is the venue of the annual 'Qutub Festival', held in November-December every year, where artists, musicians and dancers perform over three days. Such tourism activities provide job opportunities and lend a hand in local handicrafts development and hence results in positive impact on the local income.
- ii. **Conservation & Restoration:** Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and Indian National Trust for Art & Culture (INTACH) have restored some 40 monuments in the adjoining area as the Mehrauli Archaeological Park, Directorate General - CPWD, (2013).
 - ASI has been successful in getting the Police Memorial shifted and in diverting the Delhi Metro away from the Qutub Minar, (Jain, 2006).

Steps taken at Humayun Tomb

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) along with Aga Khan Trust for Culture and with some help from MCD and CPWD has taken positive steps towards the upkeep of the monument as well as to promote tourism:

- i. **Socio - Economic:** In 2007, an agreement with the ASI, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Central Public Works Department, and Aga Khan
- ii. Trust for Culture enabled to initiate the conservation and restoration of the historic area in and around Humayun's tomb (Nanda, 2007).
 - To improve the quality of life, training programs of the residents have been conducted. E.g. Craftsmen from Uzbekistan have trained the youth of Nizamuddin basti in tile making which has created economic opportunities for them.
 - Residents have access to the parks of the monument and surrounding complex through monthly pass system (for nature walks).
 - Various up-gradation projects to improve health, sanitation and infrastructure for the locals have been initiated. They have also opened Gynecologists, Pediatrician and ENT clinics.
 - To improve the education, pre & primary schools have been opened. Computer courses have been introduced and the old school buildings have been renovated.
 - Landscaping of neighbourhood parks and street improvement has also taken place.
 - Open air amphitheatre has been created for the practitioners of Quwwali music tradition that were created here in 14th CE by Hazarat Amir Khusrau & continue to draw a wide audience.
- i. **Conservation & Restoration Initiatives:** The expansion has been co-funded by partners like:-Sir Dorabji Tata Trust , Ford Foundation, World Monuments Fund ,The United States Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, Sir Rattan Tata Trust, The Delhi Urban Heritage Foundation, Municipal Corporation of Delhi. Significant work has been carried out in coordination with all the above organizations under public private partnership schemes.
 - Aga Khan Trust for Culture has restored over 30 monuments creating a 100-acre City Park, linking the Batashwala complex

to the adjoining Humayun's Tomb complex and Sundar Nursery.

- The conservation work is aimed at restoring the architectural integrity and the original Mughal splendour by using traditional building craft skills with the traditional materials.

Feedback from Tour & Travel Agents/Escorts

The opinion of Travel Agents both inbound and outbound for the two monuments was as follows:

- Both the sites are highly recommended both for domestic & inbound tourist by the agents and are a must see historic places in Delhi. The fixed as well as tailor made itineraries included visit to both the places both in the case of individuals and group travellers.
- Also, for most agents the preference remained for pre booking of tickets & parking both in case of individuals and for group tours through on line ticketing facility.
- The major challenges faced by these agents were congestion at parking and non-availability of interpretation material. However most have already started giving their own brochures and pamphlets to impart required information to their visitors.

Analysis of Primary Data

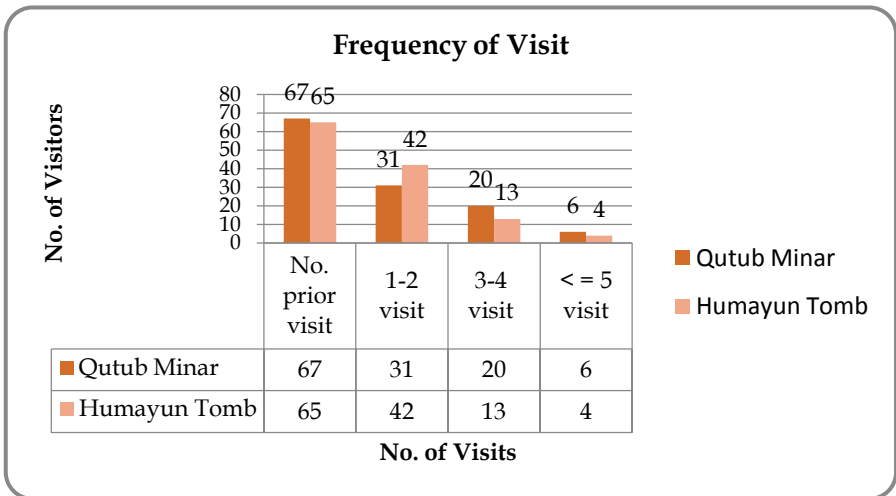
A sample of one hundred twenty four (124) questionnaires were filled by visitors at each site from October'15 to December'15 during the peak season for domestic and international tourists. The aim of the survey was to study the demographic and travel behaviour characteristics and motivational factors that are likely to influence most the travellers' cultural heritage visitation pattern at the selected sites. The questionnaires helped gain an insight into the visitors' profile, their expectation before visit and the level of satisfaction after visit.

Demographic Profiling

The total numbers of visitors at both the sites are 124 each. The demographic profile is being discussed in the tables

Table 2 Demographic profile of Visitors at Qutub Minar and Humayun Tomb from 2012-2015.

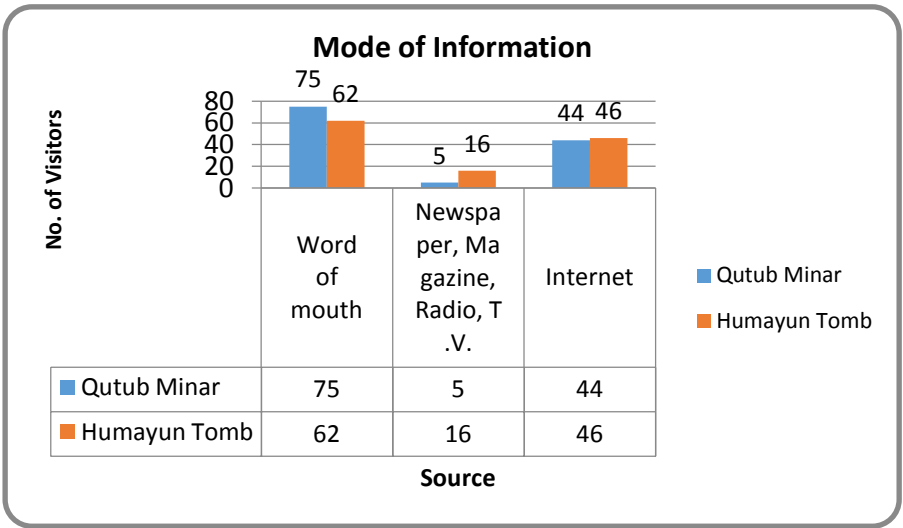
Visitor's Profile		Qutub Minar	Humayun Tomb	Analysis / Remarks
Age	16-30 Yrs	40 (32%)	37 (30%)	31-45yrs. being the most dominant age group at both sites
	31-45 Yrs	53 (43%)	50 (40%)	
	46 & above	31 (25%)	37 (30%)	
Gender	Male	74 (60%)	68 (55%)	The ratio for Male and Female almost at par
	Female	50 (40%)	56 (45%)	
Popularity among DTV's / FTV's	Locals (Delhi)	70 (56%)	66 (53%)	Most visits from locals and few visits from International tourists
	Outside Delhi	32 (26%)	38 (31%)	
	FTV's	22 (18%)	20 (16%)	
Repeat Visits		41 (33%)	47 (38%)	Popular among tourists



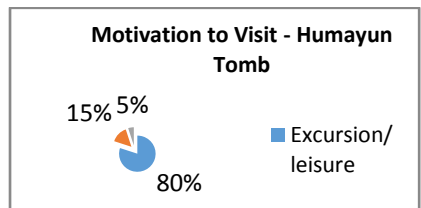
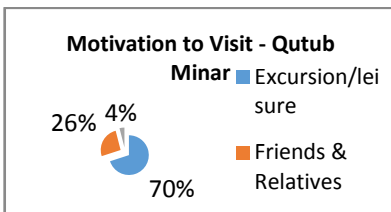
Bar Graph Chart 1 Frequency of Visit

Table 3: Frequency of Tourists Visits

Frequency of visit	QutubMinar	Humayun Tomb	Analysis/ Remarks
No prior visit	67	65	The sites are frequented by repeat tourists
1-2 visit	31	42	
3-4 visit	20	13	
5 visit	6	4	



Bar Graph Chart 2: Mode of Information



Pie Graph Chart 3: Motivation to Visit Qutub Minar and Humayun Tomb

Table 3: Analysis of Profiling

Total Number of Visitors - 124		Qutub Minar	Humayun Tomb	Analysis/Remarks
Mode of Information	Word of mouth	75 (61%)	62 (50%)	Word of Mouth, main reason behind the visit.
	Newspaper, Magazine, Radio, T.V.	5 (4%)	16 (13%)	
	Internet	44 (35%)	46 (37%)	
Motivation	Excursion/leisure	87 (70%)	100 (80%)	Main motivational factor was for excursion/leisure & least due to fact that it was WHS.
	Friends & Relatives	32 (26%)	19 (15%)	
	WHS	5 (4%)	6 (5%)	
Mode of transportation	Private	81 (65%)	99 (80%)	Private vehicles being most popular.
	Public Mode	26 (21%)	23 (18%)	
	Metro	17 (14%)	2 (2%)	
Intention to revisit		107 (86%)	98 (79%)	Visitors overall percentage of satisfaction & intention to revisit was around 80%

Research Findings

The research findings from the data collected have been identified as positive & negative and are discussed below.

- a) **Positive aspects:** The satisfying attributes found at both sites by most visitors in this study were-

Majority tourists found the natural environment and the surroundings inside and outside the monument satisfying with well-kept gardens and magnificent authentic architecture.

- Basic facilities like toilet facility and drinking water were evaluated by tourist as average and also the staff courtesy and effectiveness at reception was found satisfactory.
 - The Guides at QutubMinar and Interpretation centre at Humayun Tomb with display boards and signage's telling the history of two sites was also found to be above average.
- a) **Negative aspects:** The dissatisfying attributes found at both sites were-
- Non-availability of free brochures and pamphlets resulted in buying of expensive reference books at both the sites by the visitors. However lack of interpretation counter was amiss with special reference to QutubMinar.
 - At both the sites most tourists found lack of accessibility through public modes as both are not well connected with public transportation.
 - Visitors missed activities in the form of historical enactments-Light and sound show, dressing up in royal style, souvenirs in the form of personalized mugs, t-shirts etc. for the better feel of the past and to carry remembrances back home.
 - Both the sites were not friendly for people with special needs, especially Humayun Tomb.

Limitations

Implications drawn here were subject to several limitations such as:

- For stakeholders 200 emails were sent but most of the travel agents, tour operators and the Guides/Escorts were not willing to respond due to their busy schedule as it was peak season and/or mail moving into their junk/spam folder.
- Interviews with different stakeholders of the site in the framework of the analysis were carried to get more precise and detailed answers about qualitative work for a particular site. Not all potential interviewees wanted to be interviewed as a result it is assumed that some important information

has been lost. For example future management plans were unobtainable.

- Another limitation is the limited time frame. Interviews had to be conducted with the most important people in a short time of four months. Therefore, only the key people in the framework of the project could be interviewed.
- The study did not obtain longitudinal data (data collected at different points in time) but relied on a cross sectional data (data collected at peak season beginning from October - December'15).
- The information collected through questionnaire stayed limited as tourists gave restricted answers.

Suggestions

In view of the literature review, primary & secondary research carried out at WHS (Qutub Minar and Humayun Tomb), the following suggestions would be helpful in enhancing the visitor experience and satisfaction level.

- i. **Need of readily available interpretation material:** Availability of brochures, leaflets in few widely spoken languages along with English and Hindi should be made available at ticket counters by the authorities. As both the sites are very popular among foreign nationals, provision of interpretational tools can help in better interpretation of the historical stories related to the site and bringing the site to life by defining its relevance and importance. There is a need for an installation of interpretation center at Qutub Minar, as digital technology can help show the art and a visitor can obtain maximum information before visiting the site.
- ii. **Promotional Activities:** Promotional activities in the form of historical enactments (like dressing up in royal style, regular illumination of the monuments, light and sound shows, laser shows, storytelling sessions & puppet show for kids), should be introduced and properly planned and

designed. This will help position good image of the destination in the visitor's mind.

- iii. **Souvenir shops:** Opening of souvenir shops with picture postcards, utility items like mugs, key chains, t-shirts etc. is a must at both the monuments as carrying mementos and tokens can result in repeat and more satisfied visitation.
- iv. **Well trained staff to facilitate visitors in proper handling of artefacts:** Having trained and skilled staff will develop and offer outstanding self-guiding interpretive opportunities for visitors. To maintain the complex there must be good and constant education of employees, the host population and also rising awareness of the World Heritage site. Also first aid facilities should be provided and the staff should be trained for the same on regular basis.
- v. **Improvement in basic facilities:** Basic facilities of drinking water in both premises should be carefully introduced in the form of fountain taps which merges with the background architecture. Also the existing toilet facilities should be run on PPP (public private partnership) mode for better maintenance and upkeep. One study (Aggarwal & Suklabaidya, 2016) on Red Fort revealed that toilet facilities maintained and run by private companies like "Sulab Sauchalyas" are better maintained than the ones run by Archaeological Survey of India. The sign boards for facilities for people with special needs for wheel chair facility should be made conspicuous.
- vi. **Building of overhead bridges & Decongestion of parking:** At both sites De-congestion of parking space by exploring alternate parking options should be done by the authorities. Particularly in the case of Qutub Minar, overhead bridges/underground subways between the parking/ticket counter area to the entrance of the site will be helpful since visitors can avoid main roads and traffic to reach the site.
- vii. **Clear and conspicuous display of informative sign boards and directional panel:** One of the prime motivational factors behind visitor's visit to a heritage site is acquisition of knowledge, hence availability of detailed signage at

different places for the tourists who want to visit the site on their own at their own pace, is indispensable for the site complex area. This will highlight the rich heritage of the site

- viii. **Guides, who also have fluency in widely spoken languages along with English and Hindi, could be employed :** Participation of locals in upkeep and running of the site is of utmost importance. Therefore, providing them with the opportunities of earning livelihood by offering jobs of guides, security personnel in the parking area can be an option. Management can train locals to be trained, licensed guides who will help improve the host population socially, economically and culturally and thus resulting in responsible tourism.

Conclusion

World Heritage Sites are important for attracting tourism all over the world and in the context of India as well. It is a means of providing socio-economic excellence for the residents and brings in the benefits of better preservation and restoration for the monument. Visitor management at such sites leads to improvement of visitor experience and can help evade the destruction of the heritage site.

The study on two popular World Heritage Sites of Delhi gives an imminent proposal for up gradation of basic facilities at Qutub Minar and Humayun Tomb and to find solutions which can help save a site, by better restorations and maintenance. This will help safeguard the sites constructed during the regimes of different kingdoms for the millions of tourist visiting these sites from around the world. Interviews with various stakeholders of the sites and a research on the satisfaction level of the visitors with the help of a questionnaire survey helped find the lacunas in fundamental amenities which are amiss at the sites. The research on these heritage sites clearly has great potential for the management and decision makers and the results indicate that site operators should aim to provide different tourists with different experiences by providing visitors with different angles of interpretation and facilities during their visit. Also marketing of the site should be

changed to include informational bits that will enrich visitors' knowledge of historical events as well as help those who seek an educational experience or simply wish to visit the sites for a family outing. Public private partnerships as witnessed at Humayun Tomb can be evolved at new heritage projects to augment the visitor facilities and to bring in better management expertise.

The study opens doors for further research areas as several constraints already discussed may rationalize forthcoming research. It is important to evaluate the actual impact that Visitor Management policies or programs will have to adopt sustainable tourism. Also, visitor management is synonymous to Tourism Management and by further analyzing tourist behaviour, tourist choices and preferences, popular tour routes and their knowledge of history could help categorize tourists into casual to sightseeing tourists. Another study could also be carried on other site management principles for WHS covering issues such as marketing and revenue generation by studying international and national case studies.

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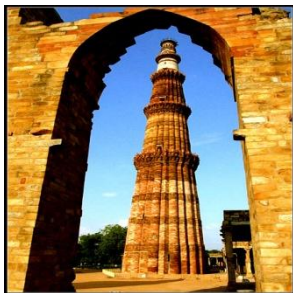
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Annexure - 1

Important facts about Qutub Minar:




It was built in the early 13th century a few kilometers south of Delhi, the red sandstone tower of Qutub Minar is 72.5 m high, tapering from 2.75 m in diameter at its peak to 14.32 m at its base, and alternating angular and rounded flutings

-Qutbu'd Din Aibak laid the foundation of the Minar mainly as a victory tower but also used for

	<p>mu'adhdhin (crier) to call people for prayers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Subsequent stories completed by his successor Shamsu'd-Din Iltutmish and later by FiruzTughlaq's.-It is the highest stone tower in India made of sandstone and marble at the top.- Other structures in the complex are the Quwwatul-Islam Mosque, the Alai Gate, the Alai Minar, the Iron pillar, and the tombs of Iltutmish, Alauddin Khilji and Imam Zamin, surrounded by Jain temple ruins.
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Important facts about Humayun tomb:

	<p>It was built in 1560 C.E. by Humayun's widow Haji Begum. It is a substantial example of the Mughal architecture with contrasting red and white surfaces, high arches and double dome of the mausoleum.</p> <p>It has the densest ensembles of medieval Islamic garden tombs with Babur's tomb, Sabz Burj, Isa Khan's tomb and many other royal members rest here. During those days it was considered auspicious to be buried near a saint's tomb and hence the site is in close proximity to Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya.</p>
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