The Gwalior Fort: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

Heritage Tourism is one of the fastest and prominent sectors in comparison to the other form of tourisms. Heritage tourism focuses on destinations, natural and cultural values and goes beyond a simple interest in the past. Heritage and cultural tourism encompasses a wide variety of landscapes and settings, it explores the cultural and natural heritages of peoples, highlighting natural physical beauty, urban or industrial developments. Heritage of destination like Gwalior is rich in heritage and had made contribution towards its past. The Gwalior fort is facing many challenges at present but at the same time the scope for opportunities is no less. A proper model should be followed for the protection, preservation and conservation of this national monument as this can be a major attraction which can help in placing Gwalior amongst the most favourable destinations. This paper tries to highlights different aspects related to monument, traditional scenery, handicraft, food, accessibility, preservation, museum, architecture, light and sound show, live shows which can help in the development of the fort.

Key words: Heritage, Gwalior fort, challenges, opportunities.
1. Introduction

The three words i.e. culture, heritage and tourism are extremely correlated to each other. However culture, heritage and tourism have their own independent identity and existence but at the same time each is dependent on the other as well. Culture cannot exist without heritage and where there is culture and heritage, tourism will have its existence. During the past decade cultural and heritage tourism has undergone tremendous growth and cultural and heritage tourism according to WTO (Richards, 2000) is a very important segment of the tourism demand which represents 37% of international tourism. Boniface and Fowler call tourism the greatest show on the earth (1993, p. 11) whose greatest ingredient is heritage.

The glorious past of India has also ensured that the present and subsequent generations have plenty of historical and cultural heritages to be proud of. For centuries, people migrated into rich country. India with her respective culture and tradition later mixed with the rituals of the Indians has given birth to a new colour of heritage and culture. This amalgamation of cultures has slowly but gradually has enriched the values and faith of the Indians even further with each sunrise and sunset in the sky. The rich heritage of India comes alive with all its fragrance and colour which are still breathing in the heritage palaces, forts, temples and monuments fringed in each and every corner which makes multifaceted country, India. The splendid architecture, minutely carved motifs, embellished facades of the heritage monuments narrates the immense skill of the craftsmen of the country which have been fascinating the world for many centuries. If one start counting may fail to accommodate all the heritage sites of India in fingers which have evolved with the passage of time. UNESCO has come up with the mission to protect these treasures which are finest gifts to world from India so that generations to come feel them as fortunate. The number of important monuments and sites in India is so great that a single tour to discover the multifarious facets of its wonderful heritage is not enough. Nevertheless it will give an admirable glimpse into the Indian History and Heritage. Set with this background this research examines the satisfaction of tourists visiting the heritage sites of Gwalior.

2. Literature Review

Tourism is Basic and most desirable human activity deserving the praise and encouragement of all peoples and all governments. It is an industry concerned with attracting people to a destination, transporting them, housing and entertaining them upon arrival and returning them to their homes. Travel, today is sold like a normal consumer product through retail outlets, wholesalers and even departmental stores of many countries. More and more people with small incomes are taking overseas travel possible. In addition to leisure time activity, tourism has many faces like cultural tourism, religious tourism, eco-tourism, heritage
tourism, adventure tourism, rural tourism, leisure tourism, beach tourism, social tourism, medical tourism etc. A lot of emphasis has been laid down on the economic role of tourism, its contribution to foreign exchange earnings of the nation its potential for greater employment. It is the time to understand the important role of tourism as a means of social education and social mobilization in the country itself.

Heritage is a legacy for our past, a living and an integral part of our life today. Heritage is defined as cultural and natural heritage. Cultural heritage can be described in terms of both tangible and intangible. Heritage can be termed as living interpretations of the past in present.

Tangible Heritage encompasses the vast created works of humankind including places of human habitation, villages, towns and cities, buildings, structure, art works, documents, handicrafts, musical instruments, furniture, clothing and items of personal decoration, religious, ritual and funerary objects, tools, machinery and equipment and industrial systems.

Tangible Heritage encompasses –Movable heritage (like paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts etc.), Immovable Heritage (monuments, archaeological sites and so on) and Natural Heritage.

Visits to historic sites, including those that portray events associated with human suffering and mass death, have become a significant aspect of tourist visitation (Waitt, 2000), for reasons such as opportunities for visitors to re-live those historical events and for the monetary value of such visits for conservation purposes. Examples include the slave forts and castles in the coast and war related sites such as Museums with exhibits on the Holocaust and Cuchi Tunnels of Vietnam (Henderson’s, 2000). Foley and Lennon (1996) and Seaton (1996), focusing on sites associated with the death of important contemporary history, have described the phenomena as being visited by people who are fascinated by death. Rojek (1993) have described the visit to these sites as private enjoyment of pleasure in the events associated with those sites, at least for some visitors. However, although it is possible that some visitors may be fascinated by the ‘gruesome’, such sites are rarely developed to serve the pleasure needs of visitors, but some entertaining activities may be included to heap visitors’ numbers. We therefore find that in some (Garrod & Fyall, 2000).However, the presentation and interpretation of heritage sites are susceptible to distortions (Boniface and Fowler, 1993) and they are powerful sources of misunderstanding and liberation of strong emotions (Fowler,1992).

Graham et.al. (2000) describe Heritage as cultural and economic capital, vulnerable to exploitation of various types. Governments responsible may be following hegemonic aims (Tunbridge 1984; Mc Intosh and Prentice (1999), for e.g. describe the search for meaning and pride in the past as the result of the divorce of western societies from their rural origins through urbanisation and population drift to the cities. Institutions such as Heritage attractions
and museums play a key role in conferring authority upon their interpretation of the past. Following this general line of argument Prideaux and Kininmount (1999; p-300) observed that one of the roles of Australian heritage attractions, including rural museums, was to act as ‘a repository of many of the artefacts that embody Australia’s image of itself as land of battles, mates an mate ships, a fair go for all and victory in the fall of adversity. In many non –Beach holiday destinations’, heritage attractions may constitute important tourism resources, one e.g. being the tourist- historic city (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1990; Timothy & Wall 1995; Prentice et al. 1998). Heritage attractions in an area differs from other attractions such as theme parks, shopping precincts /national areas. Richards (2000,p-9), for e.g. states that Heritage tourism is largely concerned with the cultural legacy of the past, or the ‘hard’ cultural resources usually contained in old buildings, museums, monuments, and landscapes or represented and interpreted in specialised Heritage centres. In a broadly similar manner, Ashworth (2000p, 19) defined Heritage tourism as the ‘co modified artefacts, buildings, memories and experiences of the past that entails cooperation between heritage producers, the tourism industry and the local place managers. Light et al (1994) describes Heritage tourism as belonging to the middle –class, well –educated, middle –aged, no children, on holiday away from home and who have a prior knowledge of history. This view is largely supported by Balcar & Pearce (1996) and Prentice (1993). Identification of target markets based on preference patterns of tourist for specific types of Heritage attractions is essential as not all heritage tourists can be expected to be interested in all Heritage attractions. Previous research have revealed that Heritage tourists are likely to spend more money per trip than other groups of tourists (Kerstetter et. al; 2001) although the time spent at heritage sites is disputed, with Kerstetter et.al (2001) quoting the average length of stay as days whereas Ashworth (2000) argues for a shorter length of stay.

2.1 Cultural/Heritage Destination Attributes

The aim of the study is to identify the attributes of the Gwalior fort which satisfy the tourists when they visit it. According to Andersen, Prentice and Guerin (1997), the several attributes are historical buildings, museums, galleries, theatres, festivals and events, shopping, food, palaces, famous people, castles, sports, and old towns in a destination. Richards (1996) chose several attributes related to cultural/heritage destinations in order to analyze European cultural tourism. Glasson (1994) explained the impacts of cultural/heritage tourism and management responses through an overview of the characteristics of tourists to Oxford. Peleggi (1996) examined the relevance of Thailand’s heritage attractions to both international and domestic tourism, including an analysis of the state tourism agency’s promotion of heritage and the ideological implications of heritage sightseeing in relation to the official
historical narrative. This research provided several attributes, such as traditional villages, monuments, museums, and temples.

Tourist satisfaction is important to successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Several researchers have studied customer satisfaction and provided theories about tourism (Bramwell, 1998; Bowen, 2001). For example, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry’s (1985) expectation-perception gap model, Oliver’s expectancy–disconfirmation theory (Pizam and Milman, 1993), Sirgy’s congruity model (Sirgy, 1984; Chon and Olsen, 1991), and the performance – only model (Pizam, Neumann, and Reichel, 1978) have been used to measure tourist satisfaction with specific tourism destinations.

Furthermore, after tourists have bought the travel service and products, if the evaluation of their experience of the travel product is better than their expectations, they will be satisfied with their travel experience.

2.2 Gwalior and Gwalior fort

The Gwalior district, which is in the Gwalior revenue division, lies in the northern part of the State. It covers an area of 2002 square miles which is a little more than 1.1 percent of the State. The district has a population of 1,629,881, according of the Census of 2011, distributed almost equally between the rural and urban areas. The Gwalior is bounded on the north and North West by Morena district, on the North –east by Bhind district, on the east by Datia district and on the south by the Shivpuri district. Gwalior was founded by a Kachhwaha Chief, named Suraj Sen., the Petty Raja of Kuntalpuri. Suraj Sen. was a leper, and one day when thirsty with hunting near the hill of Gopagiri, he came to the cave of the Sidh Gwalipa, and asked for water. The hermit gave him some water in his own vessel, and no sooner had he drunk it than he was cured of his leprosy. The grateful Raja then asked what he could so for the holy man, and he described to built a fort on the hill, and to enlarge the tank from which the healing water had been drawn. Suraj Sen. accordingly built the Fortress, which he named after the hermit Gwali-awar, or Gwalior, as it is now written.

Gwalior has a rich historic background. Gwalior has tangible heritage, living heritage, natural heritage, archaeological heritage, and pilgrim heritage, and intangible heritage-Tansen mahoutsav, Gwalior mela, Gwalior cuisine.

The fort of Gwalior, aptly called the author of Taj –ul – Maasir, the ‘Pearl in the necklace of the castles of Hind’ stands on a long and narrow rocky hill of sandstone which rises abruptly 300 ft above, the surrounding country. It is a mile and three quarters long, running north to south, and varies in width from 600 ft. to 2800 ft. east to west. In some places the cliff overhangs and in others, where the hill sides are less precipitous they are scraped. The
The wall of the fortress is 30 to 35 feet high with the rock below them steeply scarped down to a sloping glacis of crumbling basalt.

The fort contains various objects of historical and antiquarian interest. Today two roads climb up to the fort - one to the Gwalior Gate on the east and the other to the Urwahi Gate on the west. The first path is defended by five gates, placed at strategic points along its course. Originally there were two more gates but they have been removed. The fort possesses numerous tanks, besides two rock cut cisterns. There are various monuments in the fort, including six palaces, four Hindu and Two Muslim.

3. Methodology

The methodology adopted for the study was observation and interview method. The Gwalior fort was visited randomly 3 times and tourists were interviewed each time on the aspects like challenges faced by the fort and the opportunities for improvement. The observation method was adopted as it suits best in this situation.

3.1 Research Questions

The question was to find out the exact condition of the fort in present scenario. The concern was to find out different ways in which it could be made famous and well preserved for the future. The main concern was to find out the challenges and the opportunities there are for the development of the area in and around the Gwalior fort.

3.1.1 Gwalior Fort: The Challenges

Monument – The condition of the monument is in bad shape. The fort is under the archaeological survey of India but it has not been well preserved and conserved. Though an entry fee of Rs. .5/ is taken from the Indian nationals but the monument is not under properly managed hands. This massive monument has the capacity to attract a large number of tourists but as we head toward the surroundings of the monument are in bad shape. From the main entrance gate to the other entrance gate there is a long way up the hill which has not been well preserved and managed. Clean and green environment around the monument would have added to its beauty but there is a quick entrance to almost everybody in this area. Inside the monument there are some areas which are not electrified and have dark rooms. The tourists are not able to visit these areas until and unless they hire a guide or they have some lightning with them. The dark portion of the monument which lies underground becomes unapproachable causing inconvenience to the tourist and thus increasing their irritation level and negativity for the fort. The fort is not clean at some places. The fort is huge and has a significant place in the history of Gwalior but it has no environment to stay there for long.

Traditional scenery: The fort is massive but there is no such beautiful scenery around it. It is at the highest level and the entire city can be viewed from here standing at the walls of
the fort. But the traditional beauty and scenery has been lost due to unaware attitude of the locals and the tourists.

Handicrafts: There are no outlets of the handicrafts around the fort. Tourist visiting the fort has some kind of expectation as Gwalior is famous for its textile and cloth industry. Being under the ASI and having a reasonable high area under it there is no shop of handicraft which could have portrait the local art and culture to the tourist and which would have satisfied the tourist in a way that there was something for them to be carried away as souvenirs especially for those who have come to the fort with expectations high. Government have not taken any initiative to open any outlet for the promotion of local art and craft of the place. The fort would have been the best source point for a cultural activity like this.

Food: There is no proper provision for food courts or restaurants in and around fort. The number of shops providing basic facilities like mineral water, tea, coffee are just negligible. The tourists who come to a fort have high expectations and deserve some kind of facilities. If there would be such facilities in the fort to a quality wise end it will probably help the local community to take interest and participate in making the fort more beautiful and bounty. The locals are also going to have source of income and they can get some money for their household.

Accessibility: There is a problem of accessibility in terms of govt. run buses. There are no buses which could run on certain routes to take the tourists or the locals to the fort directly. Going to the fort is a big challenge if one is not interested in hiring a vehicle which could directly take a person to the fort. But at the same time, if tourists want to explore the fort on their own they will face many problems –like the conditions of the road is not good, there is no other mode to go to the fort except own vehicle, hired vehicle .if one is interested in going by its own the person has to change 2-3 or even more vehicles to reach to the fort. Thus, reaching the fort is a big challenge in terms of uneasiness caused to the tourists.

Preservation: In order to pass on the heritage to the future generations what is currently identified as being culturally significant today, we must imbibe good conservation practices for fort in order to prevent it from deterioration and extend the life and basic functions of the fort. The various threats such as environmental threats –moisture, intense solar radiations, prevailing winds, rainfalls which change the physical attributes of the fort should be taken into account.

3.1.2 Gwalior Fort: The Opportunities

Museum: The museum is present near the fort which provides an opportunity to see the artefacts which have relevance and are a part of the history of the state. The museum should be enlarged by keeping some articles for sale which are of tourist interest and which would
have a higher satisfaction level for the tourists. The Museum can sell souvenirs and handicraft related items.

**Architecture:** The architecture of the Fort is so massive that it is clearly visible from different areas in the destination and also during the rail journey approaching towards Gwalior. One can easily feel the royal and grand structure as one starts approaching Gwalior. It is so prominent that it creates anxiety in the mind of the traveller as to which fort it could be. Its location in terms of its visibility from far off places provides an opportunity for the Government to make it more prominent in eyes of tourists by promoting it and improving its surroundings.

**The light and sound show:** The light and sound show already held in the vicinity of the fort should improve in the quality and variety should be offered to the tourist. The same show is running since the last many years. There has been no change in the style the show is conducted.

**Live show:** There could be a provision of live shows where the local community can be made a part of it. The locals can depict their art and culture in the form of dance and music. The folk songs and folk dances of Madhya Pradesh can be performed in front of the tourists and this will also boost the local’s art and culture. At the same time it will also provide some kind of community participation in the development of the forts image. it will also provide satisfaction to the tourists.

**4. Conclusion**

From the above studies it has been concluded that the Gwalior fort hold an important and significant part in the history of Gwalior. It has great heritage value and it comes under the category of built heritage. Gwalior fort faces some major problems in present scenario which are not good for its image. The fort has certain shortcomings which should be covered by the state government or the Archaeological survey of India collectively. It should be viewed as an important tourist destination as it has and it is attracting large number of tourist from different parts of the country but the focus should be to attract more tourists from international market also. It should bring some amendments in the way the present scenario is going on and at the same time challenges and opportunities should be sought out. It is great heritage of the state and it should cater to the tourist need and expectations in the right way. proper steps should be taken to conserve the beautiful piece of fine architecture so that it can help to uplift the states image and be fruitful for the community as well.

**References:**


