TOURISM & HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN AJMER DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT: Tourism is an important segment of the Indian economy, contributing about 5.3% of the country s GDP. The tourism sector is a broad industry comprising wide array of operators from hotels to local transport players. Thus the tourism industry makes an important impact on the local economy of the region and generates large employment opportunities. The present survey with the objective of assessing the tourism impact on society and environment, the economic implications of tourism on host community, motivational and behavioural patterns of tourist. Environment related problems were also given due research scope in order to draw a relevant conclusion.

KEYWORDS: Tourism, travel, sustainable, environment.

METHODOLOGY: Emphirical study was formulated keeping in view the various essentials and requirements of subject and research. Therefore all sources of information of foreign tourists, domestic tourists, officers, various tours and travel agencies, hoteliers, businessman, teachers and students of host community traders were personally tapped and an exclusive emphasis were made on the assessment of situation. In addition to the information collected, the questionnaire, personal interviews were also conducted. 160 tourists were randomly chosen as respondent and thoroughly conclusion and suggestions which came were tabulated and data collected was analysed.

INTRODUCTION

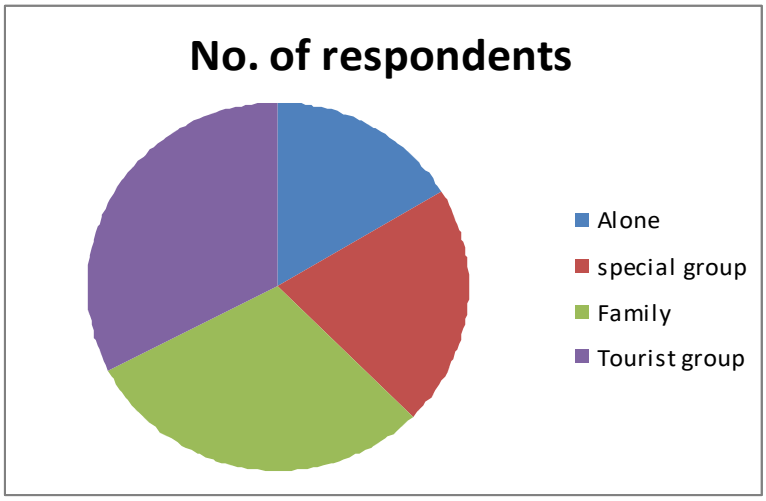
The unique feature of tourism in Ajmer is the large number of day tourists who stop over at Ajmer enroute from Jaipur moving towards Jodhpur or Udaipur, which are more popular destinations. The nature of tourism in Ajmer is chiefly religious tourism. The Dargah attracts large number of tourists all round the year, but the tourist flow peaks during the *Urs* (fair), typically occurring in the month of August very year. The monthly flow of tourists reveals interesting trends. Domestic tourist arrivals of about 100,000 a month, barring the summer months of May, June and July, provide a clear base load for the tourism industry in Ajmer. This base load translates to arrivals of about 3,500 persons per day. However, in the month of the *Urs*, tourist arrivals peak at about 400,000. Foreign tourist arrivals are more dependent on favorability of the climate, and therefore are high in the November to March period, barring the month of August for the Urs.

OBSERVATION OF STUDY THROUGH RANDOM SURVEY

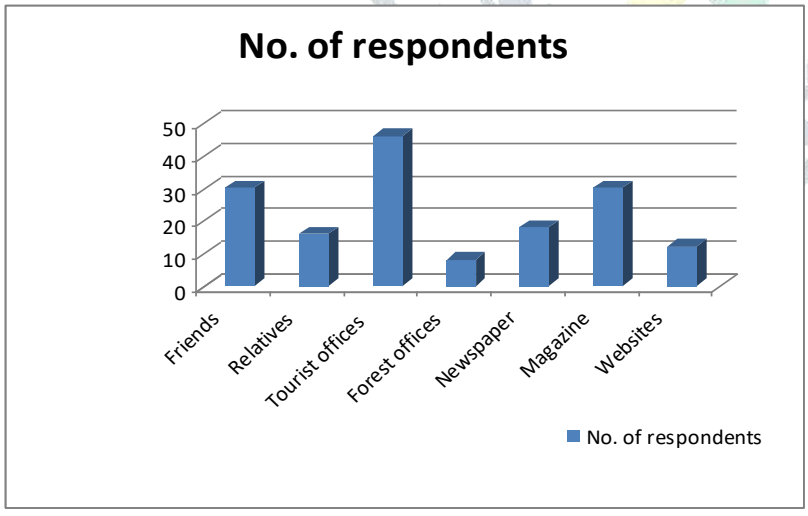
TRAVELLING STYLE

S.no.	Composition	No. of respondents	% of respondents
1	Alone	26	16.00
2	special group	34	22.67
3	Family	48	29.33
4	Tourist group	52	32.00
	Total	160	100

sourece : Field survey conducted by researcher.



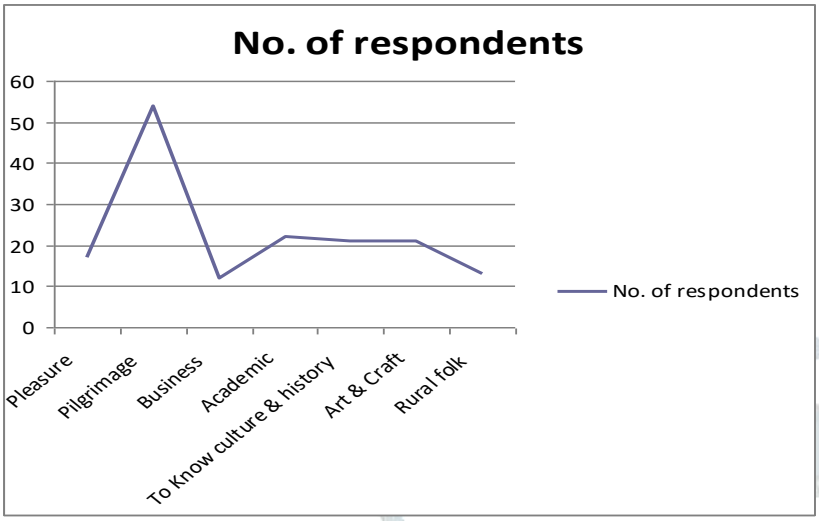
SOURCES INFLUENCING THE VISIT TO AJMER			
S.no.	**Composition**	**No. of respondents**	**% of respondents**
1	Friends	30	19.35
2	Relatives	16	11.33
3	Tourist offices	46	28.66
4	Forest offices	8	5.33
5	Newspaper	18	12.00
6	Magazine	30	17.33
7	Websites	12	6.00
	Total	160	100
sourece : Field survey conducted by researcher.			



PURPOSE OF VISIT			
S.no.	**Composition**	**No.of respondents**	**% of respondents**
1	Pleasure	17	10.00
2	Pilgrimage	54	32.00
3	Business	12	8.00
4	Academic	22	14.66

5	To Know culture & history	21	12.66
6	Art & Craft	21	14.00
7	Rural folk	13	8.66
	Total	160	99.98

sourece : Field survey conducted by researcher.



Implications and Problems of existing tourism

1. **Loss of natural landscape –** Tourism in Pushkar has brought along construction of houses, resorts, hotels, motels and other infrastructure for tourists which has inevitably encroached on previously open spaces, that is natural landscape, agricultural lands and has disturbed to a large extent.
2. **Congestion –** The concentration of tourists in holidays and fairs in close succession lends to the congestion of ghats and temples, lanes and overloading of tourists amenities and infrastructure. During the fair and other festivals there are traffic congestions leading to high fuel consumption, air and noise pollution.
3. **Degradation of landscapes, temples and ghats –** The installation of modern facilities and infrastructure has led to the aesthetic degradation of the landscape and sites in the valley. Study of different themes and their integrated appraisal have shown that Ajmer city is being major problem enlisted as improper drainage system, faulty sewage treatment plant, flooding, over populated residential areas, narrow and poor road network, less city plantation. The increasing crowd has contributed to pollution near the anasagar lake and ghats.
4. **Unhygenic conditions –** Stray animals are found roaming and sitting on the roads which cause problem of walking free on the road. Large heaps of garbage is found scattered posing threat of diseases.
5. **Cheating and black marketing –** The tourists are often cheated in the name of traditional antique items. The shopkeepers bluff these tourists and extract huge amount of money. The foreign tourist sell their currency to shopkeepers instead of banks, because these shops offer attractive amount for that currency than the banks.
6. **Socio-Cultural pollution –** It has become increasingly difficult to protect the serene and innocent life at pushkar and in Ajmer city. The influences of westernization from the foreign tourist, television and the aloofness is gradually turning it into a shelter for the unsocial activities. Houses and oldhavelies are being redesigned to suit the guest and this play a havoc with traditional architecture. There has been a growing incidence of drug abuse in Pushkar valley, second largest in India after Goa. These activities are bound to have uncontrollable consequences in near future.
7. Another problem faced by the tourists is eve teasing by the local young residents and they suggested some security arrangements as some of them lost their belongings, purses etc because of the pick pocketers.

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

To make Ajmer an international tourist destination by improving historical, natural, cultural heritage in addition to present religious attractions government has taken certain developmental objectives. The main objective is to preserve character of the soul of heritage city and facilitate inclusive heritage linked urban development by exploring various avenues including involving private sector. These objectives are as follows :

- To advocate responsible and community-based tourism so that locals can enjoy increased socio-economic benefits and improved environment.
- To develop tourism with honor, respect and nurture local cultures so that they enrich the tourism experience and build pride and confidence among local communities.
- Develop and form a heritage asset inventory of cities – natural, cultural, living and built heritage as a basis for urban planning, growth and service provision & delivery.
- Employment and enhancement of basic services delivery with focus on sanitation services like public conveniences, toilets, water taps, street lights with use of latest technologies in improving tourist facilities/amenities.
- To design and promote forms of tourism that provide healthy interaction opportunities for tourists and locals and increase better understanding of different cultures,customs, lifestyles, traditional knowledge and believes.
- Local capacity enhancement for inclusive heritage-based industry.
- Create effective connecion between tourism and cultural facilities and also the conservation of natural and built heritage.
- Urban heritage adaptive improvement and maintenance, including appropriate technologies for historic buildings retrofitting.
- To conserve and restore heritage monuments in Ajmer.
- To conduct market research and identify places and activities of touristic interest e.g. local music, dance, food, art and craft, festivals and events etc. and use them in sustainable manner for tourism advancement.
- To develop employment and self-employment opportunities for the poor and disadvantaged section of the community by involving them directly in tourism services.
- To arrange training and consultancy to local communities, government bodies, tourism organizations, and private sector and enable them to develop and promote responsible and community-based tourism in their areas so that positive impacts of tourism are increases and negative one decreases.
- To increase the number of tourists (domestic & foreign) visiting Ajmer in a sustainable manner.
- To prolong the average stay of tourists.
- Planning, development and fulfillment of heritage sensitive infrastructure.
- Service distribution and infrastructure provisioning in historic city core areas.
- Preserve and restore heritage wherein tourists can connect directly with city's unique character.
- Establish and administer effective public private partnership for adaptive urban rehabilitation.
- Development and advancement of core tangible economic activities to enhance avenues of livelihoods amongst stakeholders. This would also comprise necessary skill development amongst them including making public spaces accessible and developing cultural spaces.
- Making cities enlighten with use of modern ICT tools and making cities secure with modern surveillance and security apparatus like CCTV etc.
- Increase accessibility i.e. physical entry (roads as well as universal design) and intellectual access (i.e. digital culture and GIS mapping of historical locations, tourist maps and routes).
- To curtail negative social, economical and environmental impacts of mass tourism and promote tourism which is sustainable.

STRATEGIES AND PLANNING

- To increase the flow of tourists to the city, it is recommended to improve connectivity of Ajmer to other major cities. Although, the city is well connected at the state level, there is a need to augment connectivity improvement at national level. As a part of strategy, it is recommended to explore options for improving air connectivity of the City, to improve international connectivity to encourage tourism, in Ajmer and Pushkar.
- To develop and influence new venue for revenue generation, from tourism, through establishment of Arts and Crafts village, Development of Location as picnic spot etc.
- Citing the city s traditional significance as a centre for learning (presence of Mayo College and Saint Sophia College), it is recommended to explore this unique advantage, and promote the city as centre for high education and excellence. It is recommended to promote establishment of institutes of higher education, with active participation from the state government and private sector.
- Heritage conservation strategy should incorporate a comprehensive inventory that can be used to make informed decisions about the management of heritage sites, depending on the condition of asset and its significance in history.

- Community (individuals, owners, corporate s and institutions) involvement, through measures like fiscal incentives, grants for development and sponsorship schemes, and community awareness should be an integral and important component of the strategy.
- Capital works are recommended so as to improve facility to the tourist / pilgrims at the Vishram Sthali through provision of public convenience blocks, provision of drinking water, parking areas, etc. Maintenance of the assets should be a responsibility of the local body, the cost of which can be recovered through user charges and tied funds from the State.
- With an objective to prolong the stay of tourists in the City and increase economic benefits to the city, it is recommended to promote budget hotels and resorts and associated facilities, with support form ITDC, RTDC, and private developers.
- Integral part of the Policy are the recommendations on ensuring safety and security to the Tourists, improvement of law and order, Tourist Police, Code of Conduct, Complaint handling, for ensuring safe and hassle free stay for the Tourist.

MAJOR INITIATIVES/PROJECTS

- **Provision of Citywide Tourist facilities -** With an objective to promote the city as tourist friendly, it is recommended to make basic tourist infrastructure available to all tourist/pilgrims. Proposed works include - Tourist reception centre, Souvenir shop, Information Centre with facilities for reservation of Air / Rail/ Roadways (At Bajrang Garh Choraya Police Chowki), Pre-paid taxi and rickshaw counters at railway station and bus stand, Promotion of Tourist Police, and signage and street furniture at important tourist locations.
- **Conservation and Restoration of Monuments** - It is recommended to prepare a conservation plan, to map, restore and conserve monuments in a phased manner over 5 years. Proposed monuments include Adhai Din ka Jhopra, Akbar s fort, Badshahi Haveli, Patwon-ki-Haveli, other monuments like tombs and historical miles stones, Old City Gates (3 nos.), Wells and Bawri s and Taragarh Fort Wall.
- **Renovation of Dargah Area** - The proposed projects will help improve environment and services for pilgrims. Proposed works include Widening of Gates, Improvement of langar khana, development of Sarai Chisti Chaman and Eidgah area to accommodate more pilgrims.
- **Dargah Bazzar Upgradation** - Underground wiring, road resurfacing,street lighting, signage, dustbins, benches, public toilets, conservation of facades, parking zones, pedestrian access.
- **Railway area upgradation** - Street furniture & Streetscaping -benches, bollards, dustbins, trees, resident and visitor parking.
- **Provision of facilities at Vishram Sthali -** Proposed works include improvement of Vishram Sthali at Pushkar, and develop new Vishram Sthali at Kayad Road. Works include integrated development for provision of all services, resting sheds, electrification etc.
- **Naya Bazzar Heritage Walk** - Underground wiring, road resurfacing, street furniture, lighting, signage, dustbins, benches, conservation of facades, parking area, public toilets.
- **Culture Park at Subhash Udyan** - Haat, exhibition area, jogging track, children's area, amphitheatre, food area.
- **Lakefronts upgradation - Anasagar and Foysagar -** Removal and clearing of silt from lakes, sewage treatment, lake front areas with seating, paving, dustbins, proper signage, lighting, jogging track along lakefront and parking space.
- **Provision of Facilities at Taragarh -** Improvement of road to Taragarh, improvement and repair of pathways, repair of Jhalras for water harvesting, construction of cafeteria and souvenir shop, and landscaping and beautification works of the monuments.
- **Beautification and promotion of new tourist attractions** - Proposed works include Rope-way (from Adhai Din ka Jhopra to Taragarh fort), Sound and Light Show at Ashok Udyah/Akbar Fort/Taragarh, development of Promenade around Anasagar Lake, development of Park at foothills of Nagpahar, development of camping ground sites around Foysagar, and development of Gateway at entry points to city.
- **Pushkar Heritage Walk** - Underground wiring, road resurfacing, street furniture, lighting, signage, dustbins, benches, conservation of frontage, parking area facilities, construction of public toilets.
- **Projects for Tourism Promotion –** Construction of Research Centre for Sufism, Arts and Crafts Village, Recreation Places, Picnic Spots, and integrated development of Anasagar and Baradari.
- **Provision of Facilities at Mela ground -** To improve facility to the tourist / pilgrims at Mela Ground proposed works include construction of stage, administration block, guest rooms, dormitories, drinking water, public convenience blocks, cattle sheds, and parking area. It is recommended to develop a cattle pond near

mela ground, equipped with facilities like sheds, fodder storage, water trough, vetenary clinic, bio-gas generation plant, etc.

Conclusion

For successful tourism development, the need for more intensive investment in modernization of infrastructure is increasingly appearing as a necessary condition. Higher level of tourism infrastructure development can contribute to increased efficiency of production and distribution of tourism services, and, in some cases, such as remote destinations, increased supply of tourism services. For the existence on the tourism market, which is becoming more dynamic and demanding, the question of improving competitiveness becomes crucial. In this regard, investment in the development of tourism infrastructure is becoming an important component of tourism competitiveness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I express my deep sense of gratitude to my revered supervisor Dr. C.M. Rajoriya and co-supervisor Dr. Ajay Kumar Sharma, this research work could not have been completed without their able and timely guidance and encouragement which i recieved from them. I am indebted to all those individuals who were generous enough with their time and services whenever i needed them. I also appreciated deep concern and constant encouragementof my family for providing a secure, supportive and intellectually stimulating environment. I also express my sincere thanks to the officials and personnel of Department of tourism, Ajmer for providing me the required information and other published information.

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