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***TOURISM INNOVATIONS***  
***A JOURNAL OF INDIAN TOURISM CONGRESS (ITC)***

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## **CREATING NEW DIMENSIONS FOR HERITAGE TOURISM CONSUMPTION IN INDIA BY PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS**

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### **Abstract**

Heritage tourism has been a strong base for Indian tourism industry since its inception. Many of the heritage monuments, cultural dances and handicrafts have become iconic for Indian tourism industry. Promoting this kind of tourism has always been included in national tourism policy and five year plans and for the private players heritage tourism has been a concrete product with golden triangle as diamond selling destination. But with the repetitive selling of golden triangle and other known heritage sites now the travel agents and tour operators face a dilemma of offering same thing year after year. But with new thinking and acceptance of unconventional ideas many of the travel agents and tour operators have come up with new and innovative ideas of showcasing heritage of our country to the tourist.

So this paper tries to find out the 1) Assessing the contribution of the private players(tour operators and travel agents) in promotion of heritage tourism 2) Innovative approaches and practices adopted by travel agents and tour operators in showcasing the heritage of India .

Key words: innovation, heritage tourism, private players, heritage promotion.

### **Heritage as a tourism product**

Heritage means something that has been inherited from the past and which can be passed on to future generations. In India the tourism industry has long since thrived on the heritage tourism which is a type of tourism in which we show our heritage to the tourists. Heritage tourism is the creative expression of a people's existence in the past, their traditions, beliefs, rituals, festivals, and lifestyle. Heritage tourism gives us a chance to know the people who have inhabited this land before us and made and invented objects, customs and concepts that help us to live and strive further for improvement as we are doing for future generation. Heritage tourism links our past with our present by showing us what we have achieved in the past and how we have become what we are today.

Heritage tourism can be basically classified on two types of heritage tourism products- Cultural and natural (UNESCO classification)

Classification of heritage tourism product

- Tangible – historical monument, Archaeological sites
- Intangible – customs, traditions, cuisine, handicrafts
- Natural- flora and fauna, geological and physical formations

Now a days heritage tourism has also been classified into two new types based on the location of the heritage product.

- Urban Heritage Tourism
- Rural Heritage Tourism

In India heritage tourism has emerged as one of the most popular type of tourism. The share of heritage tourism in the overall tourism figures in India, be it domestic or foreign travelers, is over 60 percent, according to various estimates. It is the oldest form of tourism and in India it has always been given prominence. The first-ever Indian Tourism Day was celebrated on January 25, 1998. The Year 1999 was celebrated as *Explore India Millennium Year* by presenting a spectacular tableau on the cultural heritage of India at the Republic Day Parade and organizing India Tourism Expo in New Delhi and Khajuraho.

The importance of heritage buildings and monuments as an attraction can be gauged by the various plans to showcase Delhi's rich heritage to tourists expected to visit during the Commonwealth Games 2010 to New Delhi. The monuments of historical importance in and around Delhi were revamped and restored (making monuments accessible friendly, illumination of monuments etc.) under 'Heritage Game Plan' for the Commonwealth Games 2010.

### **Why to promote heritage tourism**

Heritage tourism provides an extraordinary opportunity to expand the travel experience by incorporating the arts, music, cuisine, artistic traditions and material vestiges of built cultural environment, including monuments, historic public buildings, farms, castles, cathedrals, museums, archaeological ruins and relics. Research suggests that, in most cases, people visit heritage places to enhance learning, satisfy curiosity and feelings of nostalgia, grow spiritually, relax, get away from home, spend time with loved ones, or "discover themselves" (Confer and Kerstetter 2000; Krakover and Cohen 2001; Poria *et al.* 2004; Prentice *et al.* 1997; Timothy 1997; Timothy and Boyd 2003).

Heritage tourism can successfully help preserve resources while boosting local economies by generating jobs, new businesses. Some other benefits of Heritage Tourism are:

- Improves quality of life --Builds community pride
- Diversifying the local economy
- Promotes resource protection
- Increases visitor expenditures
- Generates employment
- Preserves the unique character of a community
- Increases community pride and awareness of community resources
- Tool for poverty alleviation, economic development and tourism promotion in rural sites
- Attracting visitors interested in history and preservation
- Increasing historic attraction revenues
- Preserving local traditions and culture
- Increasing awareness of the site or area's significance

The major cultural differences between people around the world can, and often do, create tensions and conflicts. By enabling people to visit, study and work in other countries, Travel and Tourism builds vital bridges to help overcome these problems. Indirectly, it can also promote the exchange of cultures and global dialogue, which in turn fosters understanding between people, boosting national pride, helping to preserve and promote cultural heritage, and protect indigenous people and their way of life. (WTTC, 2011)

**Heritage interpretation, presentation and customer satisfaction level.**

Heritage tourism is all about something that happened ages ago and we only have stories, myths and folktales and mute monuments that tell us the story of our glorious past of furious battles, royal life, intellectual mind, deep love or old civilizations. Heritage sites have more than one story to tell us. Here a tourist who are new to these heritage are solely dependent on somebody who knows about the heritage to introduce them to different heritage sites by which they form perception about the history they are told. By the way of presentation and the side of interpretation they will have a positive or a negative view about the heritage site which will further affect the overall tourist satisfaction level.

Heritage is largely concerned with interpretation and presentation of the past (Smith, 2003). We can here take two situations- In first case a tourist who visits red fort without a guide on his own would find it to be big monument of red sandstone covering large acres of land and would eventually get tired of walking and also bored by the repetitive viewing red sandstone building blocks. In second case we have a tourist who has a guide be it a human guide or a travel book which explains about each monuments linking with the history and the lifestyle of Mughal era. He will be seeing the monument in a story like way and will have a virtual film in his mind. He will find the monuments fascinating and a light and sound show would clear the overall concept of him about Mughal era.

In both the above situations the heritage tourism product was the same Red fort in Delhi but the way of presentation for both were different and so were the interpretation which has significantly affected the overall satisfaction level of the tourist given the weather, distance etc factors were same.

Here we can see the importance of presentation and interpretation of heritage sites to the tourist .In presenting and interpreting the historical story of heritage sites, it is necessary to be selective and to decide which element will be of most interest to what type of people. The special requirements of interpretation and presentation of heritage arises from the fact that the remains are not able to speak for themselves.

Interpretation refers to the full range of potential activities intended to heighten public awareness and enhance understanding of cultural heritage site. These can include print and electronic publications, public lectures, on-site and directly related off-site installations, educational programmes, community activities, and ongoing research, training, and evaluation of the interpretation process itself.

Presentation more specifically denotes the carefully planned communication of interpretive content through the arrangement of interpretive information, physical access, and interpretive infrastructure at a cultural heritage site. It can be conveyed through a variety of technical means, including, yet not requiring, such elements as informational panels, museum-type displays, formalized walking tours, lectures and guided tours, and multimedia applications and websites. ([http://www.enamecharter.org/downloads/ICOMOS\\_Interpretation\\_Charter\\_EN\\_10-04-07.pdf](http://www.enamecharter.org/downloads/ICOMOS_Interpretation_Charter_EN_10-04-07.pdf))

*An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationship through the original objects by firsthand experience by illustrative media rather than simply to communicate factual information (Tilden 1977).*

Customer satisfaction represents the positive result of the consumption of goods and services. Customer satisfaction results when the tourist's expectations are met. It is linked to other factors of behavior such as motivations, attitudes and the service encounter. A tourist while visiting a heritage site has expectations which when met fulfills his purpose of visit. Tourism planning for heritage places should ensure that the visitor experience is worthwhile, satisfying and enjoyable.

Following helps in enhancing visitor experience:

1. Visitor Interpretation Centre
2. Proper upkeep of monument
3. Signage
4. Lighting
5. Sound and Light show
6. Security
7. Availability of guide/audio guide
8. Souvenir shops
9. Printed material for information
10. Café corners
11. Parking facility
12. Greenery
13. Public utility like water taps, toilets, telephone booths etc
14. Facilities for disabled persons like ramps, equipments, lifts, toilets etc.
15. Ease of visitation

To widen the appeal of the heritage sites interpretation and presentation plays important role in stimulating, engaging and involving the visitors and hence enhancing the experience of the tourist.

### **Innovation in Heritage Tourism**

**Tourism in India** is the largest service industry, with a contribution of 6.23% to the national GDP and 8.78% of the total employment in India. In 2010, total Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTA) in India were 5.78 million. It has also been recognized as one of the best opportunities to create income and employment for the country so growth of tourism cannot be taken for granted.

Tourism industry is highly dynamic and prone to tourist changing demand. Like other products tourism products also face the dire situation of stagnation in its life cycle so without new products or bringing newness in the existing product(For e.g.- helicopter joyrides were introduced in the annually held SurajkundMela in 2012) the tourism industry would have to face gradual decline which a developing country like ours cannot afford. Hence innovation is the key to survival. Although heritage industry in the past focused overwhelmingly on the patrimony of the privileged (e.g., castles, cathedrals, stately homes), there is now widespread acknowledgement and acceptance of everyday landscapes that depict the lives of ordinary people: families, farmers, factory workers, miners, fishers, women and children (Timothy and Boyd 2006).

Moreover the expansion of tourism demand as well as demographic changes of the segment market has increased the competition in the industry making innovation and use of unconventional ideas the need of the hour. Stakeholders of heritage tourism have taken good initiatives in promoting heritage tourism in unconventional ways.

### **Heritage stakeholders**

- Government
- Private entrepreneurs
- Local

- Tourists

The Ministry of Tourism has taken the initiative and developed rural sites to promote rural tourism in India. Initiative like light and sound shows at various monuments across India and illumination of heritage monuments have been a value addition in the potential of the monument. The states have also realized that innovation is the key to survival in the changing tourist behavior and demand. Some of the initiatives at state level are as follows.

- BSTDC is building Sufi, Ramayana, Shakti and astro circuits.
- “HarGaon Ki Kahani” (every village has a story), another innovative approach by HPTDC
- Heritage hotels have been one such outcome of innovative products.
- Luxury tourist trains
- Punjab Tourism Board in their 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan will introduce Farm/Rural circuit, Eco Tourism Trail, Freedom Trail and Heritage circuit to position the state as a top tourism destination in the country.
- The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry has formed Indian Heritage Tourism Conclave for all stakeholders to converge and collaborate to tap the immense potential of Heritage Tourism in India.
- Sikkim tourism has taken ‘Culture’ as a way to revive its tourism industry by organizing cultural shows.
- Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan has rolled out a two month long promotional campaign titled ‘Rajasthan Calling’.

The private players in India have ventured into Heritage Management as they market, promote and use the heritage sites for tourist-friendly services such as parking for vehicles, guides, refreshment centers, events and maintenance. For example the Oberoi Group and the Aga Khan Foundation were granted the conservation and upkeep of Humayun Tomb in Delhi. Indian Oil Corporation is responsible for maintenance of Konark Temple. The company paid Rs 20 crores for taking over the monument and every year they contribute Rs 10 crores to the National Culture Fund. The UP government has so far privatized the upkeep of at least 50 monuments. The Maharashtra government intends to hand over 244 of its heritage monuments for upkeep by private players. This is a win-win situation for both the private players and the governments. Private players levy entry fees, use the monuments for advertising and their photographs on calendars and diaries, and they get tax exemptions on the funds they use for conservation of these heritage sites.

Local and tourists share their experiences by writing on blogs and social networking sites. This is good word of mouth publicity for the destinations.

## **Research Method**

### *Objectives of research*

The research paper is written with following objectives:

- 1) Assessing the contribution of the private players (tour operators and travel agents) in promotion of heritage tourism.
- 2) Innovative approaches and practices adopted by travel agents and tour operators in showcasing the heritage of India

### *Sample and Data Collection*

The survey population included 50 Inbound Travel Agents and Tour Operators randomly selected from Delhi /NCR. For this research paper primary and secondary data collection was done. The primary data was collected by questionnaire method which was sent by mail to the Inbound Travel Agents and Tour Operators spread out in Delhi NCR. The questionnaire was structured in nature with both open and closed ended questions. This method being cost efficient method of collecting primary data allows the respondents to choose the time and place of completion. Prior to sending the questionnaires the survey population a telephonic communication was done to give a brief introduction about the research and also to acquire cooperation of the respondents. Sending out the questionnaires and receiving of the questionnaires from respondents took approximately two months. Initially 80 companies were sent the questionnaires out of which only 50 questionnaires were received and were of use to the research.

In addition to the questionnaire method the secondary data was collected through books, journals, travel magazines, websites of Inbound Travel Agents and Tour Operators which is mentioned in the reference section.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

The changing demands of tourist related to attractions have prompted the service providers like travel agents and tour operators to introduce innovative and unconventional practices for tourists at the destination.

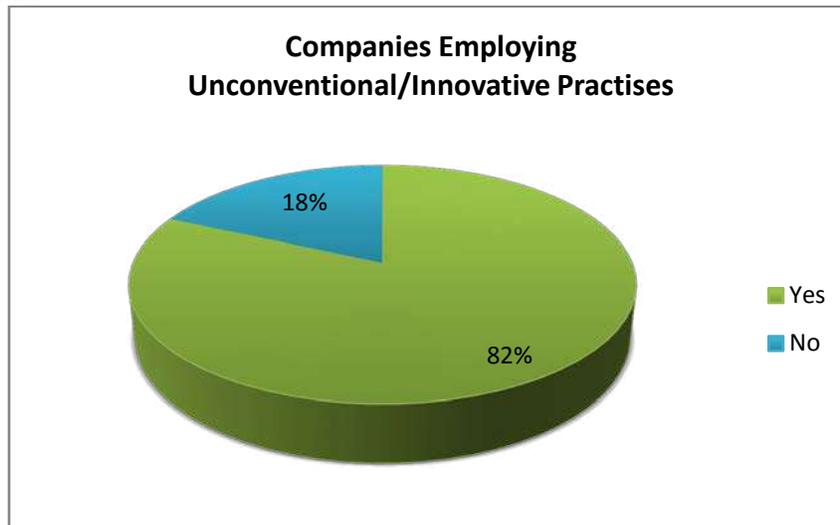


Fig. 1 Companies Employing Unconventional/Innovative Practises

82% companies employ innovative and unconventional practices for tourists at the destination while 18 % did not introduce innovative and unconventional practices.

The innovative and unconventional practices have been beneficial to the companies. The following graph points out the benefits of employing innovative and unconventional practices.

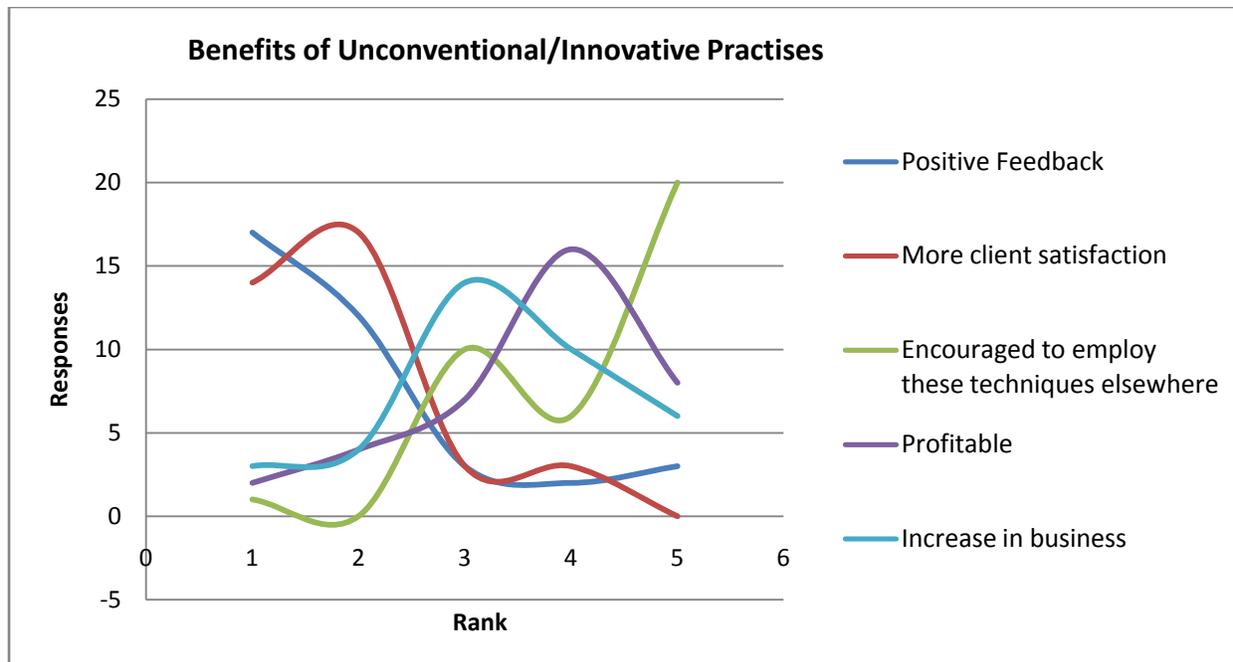


Fig. 2 Benefits of Unconventional/Innovative Practises

Client satisfaction has been ranked first which shows that there has been value addition to tourist experience at the destination. Once there is a client satisfaction it leads to positive feedback which has been ranked two. Every company seeks to increase their market share and in this case companies found that by employing innovative and unconventional practices they are able to increase their business.

Heritage is an important tourist product, motivating travelers and also forming key component in destination marketing campaigns. There are challenges in showcasing the heritage as there are new emerging heritage destinations and the information about them is readily available which is a prerequisite for heritage tourism.

Need and motivation may be responsible for any type of travel but if a potential tourist is not aware of all the travel possibilities his or her need may not be successfully satisfied (Ivanovic, 2008).

Repetitive visits by tourists is an important factor for tourism growth of any country and is always given prominence while planning. For repeat visit tourist would always evaluate his past experience and so all the stakeholders in tourism have to make sure that his overall experience is satisfactory so that he is motivated enough to visit the destination again.

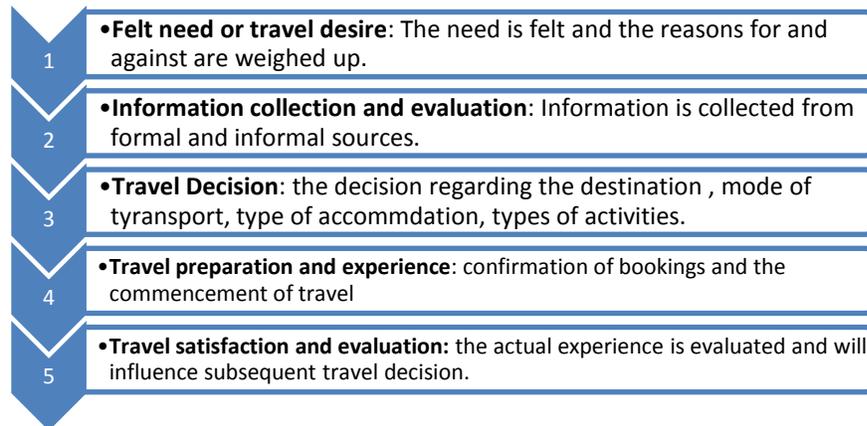


Fig. 3 Matheison and Wall's Tourist Decision Making Process(Ivanovic, 2008)

The total satisfaction of the tourist depends on the experience of the tourist at the destination due to the various services delivered to them. It has been found in our research that introducing innovative practices have been highly appreciated by the tourist at heritage sites. It is found that following practices are being adopted-

- **Heritage walks-**Walking tours to historical places through the city under a tour guide connecting the various historical monuments within the city based on historical facts. 20% of the travel agents and tour operators employ this as a means of showcasing the heritage as the tourist enjoy heritage, not only as a past but as a living tradition
- **Light and Sound Shows-** Special lighting effects are projected onto the façade of a historical building or ruin and synchronized with recorded or live narration and music to dramatize the history of the place. 20% of the travel agents and tour operators take it as an important component as it recreates the history.
- **Special tours:** this includes photography tours, rickshaw rides, bicycle tours, organizing traditional cuisine evenings etc. this is also gaining popularity for the niche segment as is evident from the findings.
- **Interpretation of heritage monuments in a different way:** Showcasing the heritage from different locations, at different timing and also providing details about the heritage site according to the special requirement/interest of the tourist.
- **Voluntary Services by the tourists at heritage destinations-**under the CSR the tour operators and travel agents motivates the tourist to perform voluntary service at the destinations like donations, teaching in schools, cleaning the place etc.11% of the tour operators and travel agents find this useful as this bonds the tourist with the locals and the destination they are visiting.
- **Meeting elderly citizens at the sites/destination** to know more about the site/destination is being practiced by 9% of tour operators and travel agents as this gives first hand information to the tourists.
- 8% of the other activities include guiding by the lecturers, session with curators of the museum, treasure hunt, cooking classes, focus on home stays etc

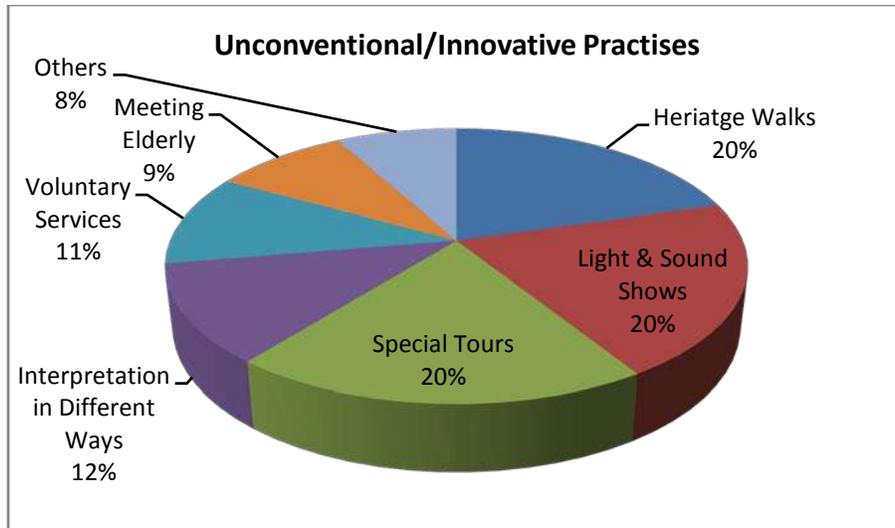


Fig. 4 Unconventional/Innovative Practises

The tourism and conservation sectors regard heritage places and their multiple values as long term assets that must be protected and conserved to ensure the sustainability of their respective objectives. The concept that tourism simply exploits heritage sites has to be reversed to one where tourism should be an active contributor to the conservation of heritage places. There should be a change from the concept of carrying capacity to caring capacity. Research papers tries to find out the contribution of tour operators and travel agents in revival and protection of heritage sites. 60% are not involved in revival and protection of heritage sites while 40% are taking up the responsibility

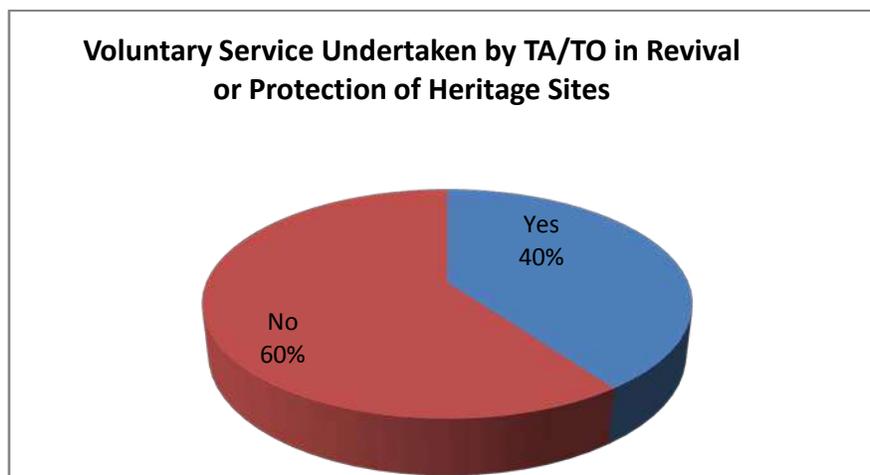


Fig. 5 Voluntary Service Undertaken by TA/TO in Revival or Protection of Heritage Sites

Following voluntary services are undertaken by tour operators and travel agents in revival and protection of heritage monuments.

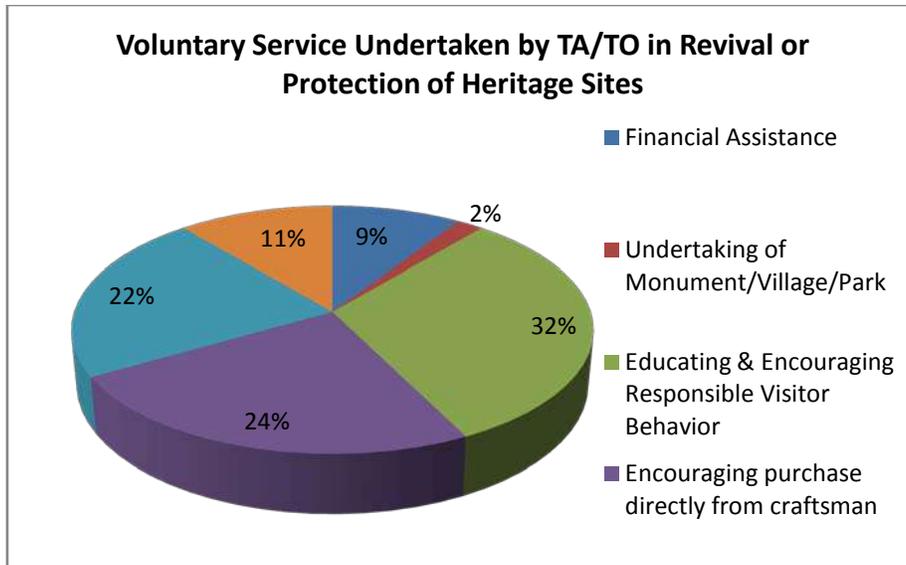


Fig. 6 Voluntary Service Undertaken by TA/TO in Revival or Protection of Heritage Sites

As figure 3 brings out the importance of information in selection of a destination for visit which is one of the major pull factor. It was found that only 16% of Tour Operators and Travel Agents publish their own exclusive literature for promotion in the form of brochures, pamphlets, newsletter and books.

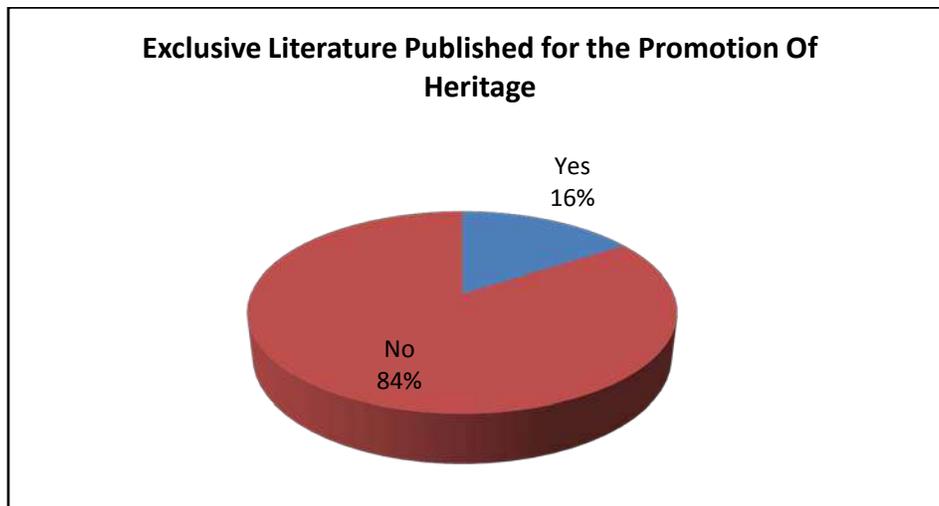


Fig. 7 Exclusive Literature Published for the Promotion of Heritage

The tourism industry has always been proactive regarding the adoption of new technologies. Recent advances in telecommunications, networking, database, data process and electronic marketing provide many opportunities for tourism business and are significantly impacting on traditional tourism business models. With the advent of social media the field of promotion has totally been revolutionized where the travel agents and tour operators and tourist have come on a same platform where they connect with each other. Social media has become an indispensable part of the marketing mix for many businesses and one of the best ways to reach customers and

clients as it is cost effective, has global reach, unlimited access, easy to use, flexible and measurable.

Although many businesses are getting on board with social media, others are still a bit cautious of completely breaking away from traditional media and embracing the social media hence 88 % of the travel agents and tour operators use the various forms of social media where Facebook is the most used social networking site followed by Twitter.

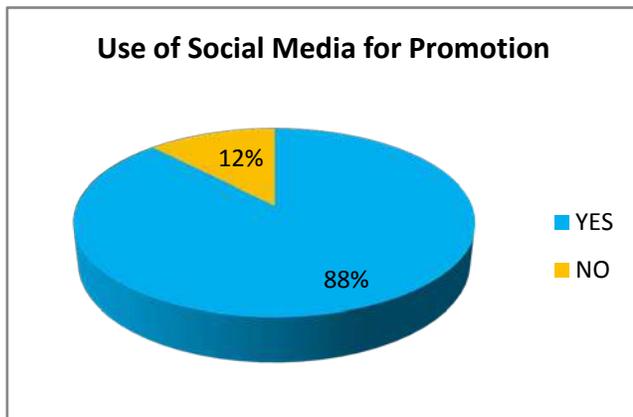


Fig. 8 Use of Social Media for Promotion

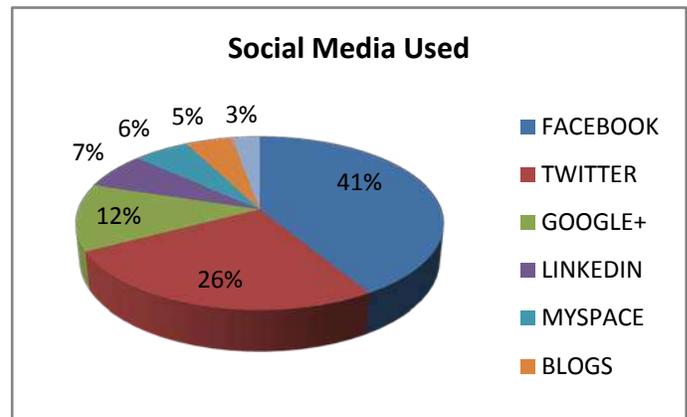


Fig. 9 Social Media Used

### Conclusions and Suggestions

Demand for heritage tourism products has grown exponentially and to meet the ever changing demand of the tourist the heritage has to be presented in new style so as to satisfy the needs of the tourist. Hence tourism entrepreneurs have realized that innovation is becoming a key element to survive and compete in a dynamic and radically changing environment. The study determines that heritage walks, light and sound shows, special tours, interpretation of heritage monuments in a different way, voluntary services by the tourists at heritage destinations, meeting elderly citizens at sites/ destinations are the unconventional and innovative activities that have been employed by the travel agents and tour operators. The study reveals that these unconventional and innovative activities have been beneficial in client satisfaction as well as profitable to the business growth.

Tourism industry has fully exploited the potential of heritage by including it in tour packages. Heritage is a repository of memories which need to be handed on in a good condition to subsequent generations thus it becomes important for the tourism stakeholders to take initiatives in sustaining the heritage, a representative of our past and a major source of revenue generation.

Unfortunately the findings bring out that the tour operators and travel agents surveyed are not yet motivated enough to adopt practices that would lead to revival and protection of our heritage sites. The practices mostly adopted by these service providers is –educating and encouraging responsible visitor behaviour, encouraging purchase directly from craftsman which is praise worthy effort but is not of much contribution in the revival and protection of heritage products. As heritage forms an important tourism product so it is suggested that the private players can adopt certain sustainable practices for conserving our valuable heritage.

Promotion is an important tool for creating awareness about the destination's heritage products. Along with traditional medias for promotion the travel agents and tour operators are now using

social networking sites for promotion which is a very innovative use of the technology which adds value to tourism services and supports the development of better customer relationship. It is already an established fact that tourists rely on published literature and thus travel agents and tour operators dealing in heritage itineraries and packages should publish their exclusive literature about heritage sites/monument as knowledge leads to interest.

It can also be inferred that the benefits by innovative practices and the voluntary services being employed by the private players is limited to them and is of little importance to the heritage assets of our nation right now. But as the benefits of innovative practices are incremental in nature, its effects shall be visible in due course of time.

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