

WHY THE TAJ MAHAL COMES FIRST AND AGRA SECOND? TURNAROUND THROUGH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

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Abstract

The study focus on the potential issues of tourism perceptible in and around Agra city and the area of turnaround needed for better tourism. Present study is explorative and conceptual in nature. Data have been collected from secondary sources such as research journals, books, newspaper articles, expert's interviews and hoteliers' suggestions, surveys and websites were visited to reconnoiter problem area and existing issues of tourism industry. The scope of study outlines the current issues of tourism industry in and around Agra city in terms of Human Resource practices. Different issues and challenges in terms of financial and operational practices are also discussed in this study. Findings divulge that Agra tourism industry is suffering from voluminous challenges like 'Backpacker tourists', low management system, poor infrastructure and unsatisfied tourist. This plagues hospitality industry very acutely.

Serious steps must be taken to eradicate this immoral development.

Keywords: Backpacker, Employee Engagement, Tourism Industry, Turnaround, 6S

INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry has a wide arena which encapsulates a varying number of services and processes. It is interconnected with array of economic activity that runs through different sectors pushed forward by market forces and government bodies, orchestrated by regulatory framework and general economic conditions. In the country like India, tourism is significantly play important role in economy because it generates earnings and employment both. According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), travel and tourism is an important economic activity in most countries around the world. Tourism directly generates employment in its own sector as well as via

indirect and induced effects in the concern sectors of the economy. According to WTTC report, (2013) it is forecasted to account 30,631,000 direct jobs by 2023, an increase of 2.1% per annum which in turn generate huge employment opportunities in various other sectors also. The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP reflects the ‘internal’ spending on Travel & Tourism. Total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP reflects the ‘wider’ spending on Travel & Tourism. The number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India during 2010 increased to 5.78 million as compared to 5.17 million in 2009. The share of India in international tourist arrivals in 2010 was 0.61%, which is 0.02% improvement over 2009. However, India’s rank improved to 40th, in 2010, from 41st in 2009. India accounted for 2.83% of tourist arrivals in Asia Pacific Region in 2010; with the rank of 11. Table 1 shows the brief position of India Tourism against World Tourism.

This industry involves tangible and intangible components. The tangible elements include transport bodies like roadways, airways, waterways, railways and premises; accommodation services like hotels, lodge, apartments, guests’ house and related hospitality services like food and beverages, tours and operators, safety and

security. The intangible elements include leisure, satisfaction, loyalty, experience, rest, culture, adventure, services delivered, willingness towards work, room amenities, and convenience. So, we can say that tourism industry is an umbrella industry in which many interdependent and inter-related industries bring together economic development and growth. It acts a catalyst for economic growth and adds value to the leisure and recreation. Tourism is the act of travel for the purpose of leisure, pleasure and business. As per World Tourism Organization (WTO) tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (2003).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research study has been basically directed to the following objectives:

1. To focus on the potential issues of tourism perceptible in and around Agra city.
2. To identify the area of turnaround needed for tourism in Agra city.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Present study is explorative and conceptual in nature. Data have been collected from

Table 1 India’s position with respect to world

A.	WORLD	2010	2011	2012
1.	Number of International Tourist Arrivals (million)	940.0 (P)	990	1035 (P)
	Annual Growth Rate	6.6%	5.0%	4.0%
2.	International Tourist Receipts (US \$ million)	919.0(P)	1030.0(P)	1075 (P)
	Annual Growth Rate	8.0%	11.1%	3.2%
B.	INDIA’S POSITION IN WORLD			
1.	Share of India in International Tourist Arrivals	0.61%	0.64%	0.64%
2.	India’s rank in World Tourist Arrivals	40	38	41
3.	Share of India in International Tourist Receipts	1.54%	1.61%	1.65%
4.	India’s rank in world Tourism Receipts (As per RBI’s estimate)	17	17	16
C.	WORLD TRAVEL AND TOURISM COUNCIL (WTTC)	2023	2012	2013
	Economic Factors			
1.	GDP: Direct Contribution	4.4%	2.9%	3.1%
	Total Contribution	4.4%	9.3%	3.2%
2.	Employment : Direct Contribution	3.7%	3.4%	1.2%
	Indirect Contribution	9.9%	8.7%	1.7%
D.	TRAVEL AND TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS REPORT (TTC Index)	Score	Rank	
		(1-7)	(Out of 140 Countries)	
	2013 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index	4.1	65	
	2011 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index	4.1	68	
	2009 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index	4.1	62	
	14 Pillars of Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index			
1.	Policy rules and regulations	3.7	125	
2.	Environment sustainability	4.2	107	
3.	Safety and Security	4.7	74	
4.	Health and Hygiene	3.0	109	
5.	Prioritization of Travel and Tourism	4.0	98	
6.	Air Transport Infrastructure	4.2	39	
7.	Ground Transport Infrastructure	4.2	42	
8.	Tourism Infrastructure	2.6	95	
9.	ICT Infrastructure	2.1	111	
10.	Price Competitiveness in T & T Industry	5.1	20	
11.	Human Resources	4.6	96	
12.	Affinity for Travel and Tourism	4.3	111	
13.	Natural Resources	5.4	9	
14.	Cultural Resources	4.7	24	

(P) Provisional

Source: Researcher Compiled Data from The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013, World Economic Forum; India Tourism Statistics 2010, 2011, 2012; World Travel & Tourism Council, Economic Impact 2013 World

secondary sources such as research journals, books, newspaper articles, expert's interviews and hoteliers' suggestions. Digital sources like e - reports and surveys, websites were visited to collect data to reconnoiter problem area and existing HR

practices in the tourism industry.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Keeping in view the objective of the study, Agra's socio-economic conditions in terms of tourism has been considered as study variable.

Agra: A City with Its Own Story

Agra is a part of the state of Uttar Pradesh in Northern India. Agra is the one of the crucial tourist destinations attracting tourists from all over the world. Agra came into attention from the epical age, when Mahabharata was written; and it was refer as Agraban (TMS, 2009). Agra has also been referred as Arya Griha or the abode of the Aryans (agra.nic.in.2013). Agra has been ruled by many great kings. Sikander Lodi was first to invade Agra, but was overthrown by Babur the Asian emperor in 1526. (Central Pollution Board, 2006). Many Mughal emperors like Humayun, Akbar, Jehangir, and Shah Jahan wrought Agra city into the rich cultural gold mine (Agra India, 2008). This period is often known as '*Golden Age of Agra*' because monuments that we today admire were constructed such as Agra Fort, FatehpurSikri, Sikandra, Itmad-Ud-Daula's Tomb and The TajMahal (Uttar Pradesh

Tourism, 2011).The British declared it as a district in

1805 A.D. and designated as capital of United Province (ADA, 2011).

Agra is a hub of leather, plastic, steel and petha manufacturing industries. These industries have contributed much to the poor environmental state and ruthless infrastructural facilities of city. It is also one of most important sources of economic development through tourist, accommodation, transport and commerce. Agra have honor of recording three monuments in The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List; the TajMahal, Agra Fort and FatehpurSikri.

But, now-a-days Agra is recognized by overpopulation, pollution, mucky and filthy roads, an excessive number of vehicles resulting traffic jams, poverty, overcrowding, dis-engagement among management, corruption, lack of regard for rules and regulation, decline in socio-economic sense, crimes and noisiness.

Tourism and Tourist In and Around Agra

Annual tourist visitors in districts of Uttar Pradesh illustrate Allahabad in first position among all other visited districts. Total

tourist visits in 2010 were 3, 03, 76,790 crore in Allahabad and second and third position captured by Varanasi and Agra by 43, 58,873 lakh and 43, 33,804 lakh respectively. Allahabad scored first again in 2011 with 3, 15, 63,431 crore, but Agra shifted to second position from third by reaching 79,65,747 lakh. Agra region scored high in 2011 in term of foreign tourist by 10, 73,473 lakh, whereas domestic tourist only reached 68, 92,274 lakh. Table 3 shows districts-wise annual tourist visitors in 2010, 2011 and 2012. In spite of having historical monuments, Agra is not capable to hold the tourist for full one day, and tourists come, see the Tajmahal and go back to other destinations without visiting other monuments in Agra.

India has been divided into 24 Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) Circles, each under the jurisdiction of a Superintending Archaeologist. Table 2 gives list of ten most popular monuments in terms of visitors in 2011. Among all the monuments, TajMahal, Agra (4.65 million) was the most visited monument in 2011 for domestic visitors as well as (0.67 million) foreign visits followed by QutubMinar, Delhi (2.98 million) domestic and (0.33 million) foreign visitors.

The tourists' experience in Agra is constrained by the lack of infrastructural facilities, unreliable, untrained guides and tour operators, local crimes such as chain or bag snatching, rapes and harassment by local people.

Table 2 Domestic and Foreign Visitors at 10 Most Popular Centrally Protected Ticketed ASI Monuments During 2011

10 Most popular Centrally Protected Ticketed Monuments for Domestic Visitors in 2011			10 Most popular Centrally Protected Ticketed Monuments for Foreign Visitors in 2011		
Rank	Name of the Monument	No. of Domestic Visitors	Rank	Name of the Monument	No. of Foreign Visitors
1	TajMahal, Agra	4646203	1	TajMahal, Agra	668903
2	QutubMinar, Delhi	2980415	2	QutubMinar, Delhi	331557
3	Red Fort, Delhi	2615976	3	Agra Fort, Agra	306097
4	Sun Temple, Konark	2225087	4	Humayun's Tomb, Delhi	253967
5	Agra Fort, Agra	1605432	5	FatehpurSikri, Agra	229091
6	Golconda Fort, Hyderabad	1483333	6	Red Fort, Delhi	160425
7	Charminar, Hyderabad	1440998	7	Mattancherry Palace Museum, Kochi	130847
8	Ellora Caves, Aurangabad	1308262	8	Western Group of Temples, Khajuraho	97356
9	Bibi-Ka-Maqbara, Aurangabad	1215998	9	Group of monuments, Mamallapuram	74187
10	Gol-Gumbaz, Bijapur	1125985	10	Excavated Remains at Sarnath (UP)	71249

Source: Indian Tourism Statistics 2011

The reality is that there are severe water scarcities, underdeveloped electricity system, and dilapidated roads throughout the year. Only 50% of the tourists visit FatehpurSikri, other monuments like Akbar

Tomb, Imtāb-Ud-Dauld's receives few visitors. Unorganized tourists circuit further decrease the number of day stay of the tourists. It is recognized that the hotel industry is not doing as well as it should be due lower occupancy rates, lower engagement among management, unmotivated and unsatisfied employees. The surveys says that the tourists are mainly dissatisfied with lack of public convenience, information center, large number of hawkers, peddlers, photographers provide a major nuisance and are frequently crests a primary reason for dissatisfaction with the tourist experiences. Hence, Agra has no quality reasons for long stay.

Director of Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management, Agra University Mr. Lav Kush Mishra informed that the economic activity in Agra can only be turnaround when tourists stay in the city for at least for two days. He added that this trend has increased after the Yamuna express way got functional. At the end of the day, *Taj wins hearts of tourists but Agra loses business* as tourists leave the city and go said N K Pathak, Archaeological Survey of India's Agra region chief in Times of India (2012). Furthermore, Rajiv Tiwari, president of the Federation of Travel Agencies, says that "Agra occupancy rate is still low due to

absence of nightlife and that is the reason why tourists' do not stay overnight". The tourists could be engaged by proper publicity for instance Varanasi has virtually enriched only except the Ganga Ghats but more tourists spend days and nights there; moving around temples and lanes said Sandeep Arora, ex-president of the Agra Hotels and Restaurants Association.

The National Tourism Policy of India, 2002 has underlined the '6S' of tourism development, the six key result areas of swagat (hospitality), soochna (information), suvidha (facilitation), suraksha (security/ protection), sahyog (cooperation) and sanrachna (infrastructure development). These six areas comprise both 'hard' and 'soft' skills of tourism. This approach has enabled us to set forth and analyze dynamics of change in HR at Agra.

Swagat(Hospitality)

Due to poor management and compliance, tourists drive up to the "No Vehicle Zone" hence, create related issues, including pollution. Although state tourism Department has made arrangements at the entrance itself in order to restrict the private vehicles and take tourists through CNG buses.

Suchana(Information)

Tourist Information Centres are required on few locations on facilities tourists.

***Suvidha*(facilitation)**

During the summer months it is very common phenomenon to have international visitors' faints heat exhaustion and sunstroke inside the Taj. There are no medical provisions even after paying 750 for a ticket that why it's Ah! Taj for foreign tourists. Hence, being a UNESCO heritage site, strict regulation and management is required. Unavailability of drinking water facility is another drawback in the development of this destination. Though there are projects at city level for providing water supply in this region but still it is a major issue.

***Suraksha*(Safety)**

Local people and guides start cashing and bothering tourist (especially foreign) which leaves a very wrong impression among tourists. Because of these touts and offensive behavior tourists generally don't spend much time at starting and ending points. Tourists fear ranges from terrorist attacks, religious minefields to isolated locales behavior like rape and thieves.

***Sahayoga*(Co-operation)**

The taxi drivers and guides are perceived to charge arbitrary amounts and are not subject to any internal institutionalized code of

conduct leading to their short term gains at the cost of longer term opportunity cost of lesser number of tourists. It is important to explain to the local population of the importance of tourism in Agra and the country and offer special re-habilitation packages in the context of their dislocations

***Samrachana*(Infrastructure)**

Agra has very poor civic conditions with dirty roads, lanes and drains. This "puts off tourists" and discourages travel to monuments other than the Taj. The main road that leads to the Taj passes through very busy and dirty stretches in Agra. Further, roadways are filled with muck and pile of garbage. Bad traffic jams also spoil the mood. For instance, ground near the Agra Fort where every year Ram Lila is organized is occupied with rotten garbage, ruining the image of Agra.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AS A TURNAROUND APPROACH

Turnaround may be defined as the recovery of a firm's economic performance following an existence threatening decline (Pandit 2000). Khandwalla (1992) defines turnaround as equivalent to reaching at least a breakeven from a loss situation. Many turnaround researchers have identifies a number of turnaround strategies.

Khanwalla's (1992) found four broad turnaround strategies such as HR strategies, product/market strategies, financial strategies and production, operations and technology strategies. This study will focus on HR strategies only. HR strategies involves downsizing efforts, retrenchment, change in top management, but instead reducing employees of organization and hiring new ones, engaging them in their work could more beneficial to both employee and employer. Employee engagement is positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values (Robinson et al., 2004). Employee feels engaged when they find meaningful role at their work, get assertive relationship with peers and supervisor and also operates in environment that is efficient. Engaging employees is crucial to satisfying and understanding the organization's customers (Castries, 2009). This has a measurable and direct impact on profitability, productivity, retention, financial results and customer satisfaction.

Industry experts believe that employee engagement is the key in maintaining benevolence for a value-based industry like hospitality. Thus, along with traditional practices coupled with innovative HR concepts like job characteristics, training

and development, rewards and recognition, career path, relationship with peers and supervisor, engagement practices, OD intervention and Human Resource Information System should be the new "call word" in Indian tourism biosphere..

The first step in employee engagement during turnaround strategy is recognizing that indeed of fear and resentment, new ways of working could be thrust onto an individual. Instead of de-motivating course, be proactive and handle the situation as an opportunity to create a more inclusive and engaged environment. Tower Perrin (2003) shown 84% of highly engaged employees positively impact the quality of their organization's product, compared with only 31% of the disengaged. Whereas 72% of highly engaged employees can positively affect customer service, compared with 27% of the disengaged. It is not difficult to understand that organization that do a better endeavor of engaging their employees do overtake the slowdown situations.

FINDINGS

Agra is the melting point of culture and heritage. Tourists come to see The TajMahal from different part of the world. But unfortunately, this city is suffering from economic slowdown during past couple of years. Agra is recognized by overpopulation,

pollution, mucky and filthy roads, an excessive number of vehicles resulting traffic jams, poverty, overcrowding, disengagement among management, corruption, lack of regard for rules and regulation, decline in socio-economic sense, crimes and noisiness. The basic reason why Agra comes second, even after number one in tourists visit is its dis-engagement among staff working in every path. With suitable engagement initiatives, this socio-economic slowdown could be reduced like proper training and development of employees, affective communication, recognition of employees, making work more meaningful and psychological safety. One should do efforts keeping in minds the words by Miraim Beard about Tourism is “*travel is more than seeing the sights; it is a change that goes on deep and permanent, in the ideas of living.*” Travel and tourism is not only a way to adventure but changes our though process in deep and make permanent.

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