

Heritage Tourism –Challenges Ahead

A Case Study of Vishnupur-the Land of Teracotta, Temples and Baluchari

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Introduction

“Vishnupur” or “the abode of Lord Vishnu” is presently the headquarters of the subdivision of the same name in the Bankura District situated on the southernmost part of the state of West Bengal in India. Vishnupur is situated 132kms from the metrocity of the state of West Bengal. Known also as a seat of crafts and culture, this place was known for almost 1000 years ago when it was the capital of the Malla rulers of Mallabhum. Vishnupur reached its zenith during the patronage of the Malla ruler Veer Hambir and his successors Raja Raghunath Singha and Veer Singha. During their suzerainty Vishnupur became the principle centre of culture in Bengal. Vishnupur also known as the land of temples, terracotta and Baluchari, however the royal patronage gave rise to the Vishnupur school of painting and the Vishnupuri Gharana of Hindusthani classical music in the form of Bangkotmukhi. So terracotta, metalware and the temples characterize Vishnupur. Built in bricks and also in laterite, the temples are mostly of Ekratna type with a single tower upon a sloping roof and a square cell (garbagriha) flanked by a perch on each side with three multicusp arches. The principle reason to choose Vishnupur as a subject of my analytical study is because UNESCO had declared this place as a world Heritage site in the year 1987 and this place is also known as a site of culture and heritage.

Vishnupur, once a flourishing town and served as the capital of the Malla rulers of Bengal from the 17th to the 18th century. The word malla came from the word MallaYudh. The Malla rulers established their rule in 694AD. Vishnupur, also called Mallabhum is known for its terracotta ornamentation on its temples. Veer Hambir, The most renowned ruler and a contemporary of Akbar, was an ardent devotee of Vishnu, hence the name Vishnupur.

The earliest temple and the main attraction at Vishnupur is Ras Mancha built in 1600AD. The uniqueness of this temple is that it is raised on a laterite plinth with pyramidal superstructure, there are circumbulatory galleries, the arches are decorated with terracotal lotus motifs, inside the temple there are three paths for worshipping purpose at the time of Ras festival. Its parallel has not been found elsewhere in India. Due North is the ShyamRaya Temple built around 1643AD, it is square shaped with side walls broken into details with three curvaceous arches and decorated with huge medallions of Krishna and gopis dancing in celebration.

Near this temple is the famous KeshtaRaya Temple built in 1655AD. This brick temple imitates the indigenous double hut design back to back as one unit, hence also called JorBangla. North of Shyam Raya Temple is the MadanMohan temple, famous for its ekratna style of architecture which is unique here. Many other temples like Radha Govinda Temple, RadhaShyam Temple, etc and many embankments like Lalbandh, Krishnabandh, and Jamunabandh.

The famous Dalmadal (a huge canon) constructed by Raja Gopal Singh in 1742AD is also found here. It was used to keep the Maratha troops and the Muslims from attacking the villagers. It is also said that when the Mughals attacked Vishnupur, no human could fire the mammoth weapon and Vishnu descended to the Earth and fired the canon bringing victory to the city.

The most important festival of Vishnupur is Jhapan, held on the last day of the Bengali month of Sravana (mid August). Another important festival is held known as Indrapooja, on the occasion of which the Malla raja of Vishnupur gives away yellow turbans to the local santhal chiefs. Vishnupur is known for its beautiful handicrafts made of red soil especially the terracotta Horse also known as Panchmura Horse or Bankura. The sarees are made of Tussar silk namely Baluchari and Swarnachari sarees are famous worldwide. Sweetmeats or Morraba of Vishnupur and quaint circular playing cards called Ganijifa are also very popular.

Objective of the Study

In order to study the importance of that particular aspect of Vishnupur which has the capacity to attract customers I made this field study. Firstly I divided 1500 students of my college studying in various UG level courses into two sections namely ‘T’ and ‘N’ where T stands for students pursuing Tourism related courses and N stands for students pursuing non tourism related courses. I prepared a questionnaire and gave each group to answer them depending on their age. After that I analysed the data on the basis of the following parameters namely:

1. How many of the students liked the art and architecture of the temples of Vishnupur.

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2. What percentage of customers was mesmerized by the handicrafts of Vishnupur.
3. What percentage of customers were attracted by the weaved Tussar sarees of Vishnupur.
4. How much satisfaction was given to the customers on the basis of the mode of communication and transportation system of Vishnupur.
5. What percentage of customers was satisfied by the development that is going on at Vishnupur.

Research Methodology

Research Type: - Exploratory.
 Sampling Technique: - Simple Random Technique.
 Sampling Unit: - UG level Students Of my college.
 Sample Size: - 1500 divided into 3 age groups.
 Tools for data collection:- Questionnaire.
 A question was prepared which consisted of 30 odd questions.

Results and Discussions

Now the data that I obtained from my sample survey methods are as follows:-

1. Data collected after studying the answers given by 500 students of the T group

Liking Towards	Age Between 18-19 years	Age between 19-20 years	Age between 20-21 years	Percentage(no of students liking the parameter /Total no of students taking the questionnaire*100)
Art and Architecture	160	80	175	83
Handicrafts	185	190	123	99.6
Weaved Tussar sarees like Baluchari	122	177	198	99.4
Communications and Transportation	30	32	29	14.2
Development going on	60	70	80	42

So when we analyze this data, we find that 99% of the students of this group irrespective of sex, age were attracted towards the handicrafts and sarees on tussar works of Vishnupur. While 83% were attracted towards the temple art and architecture, 14.2% said that they were satisfied with the destination accessibility and 42% were satisfied with the developments at Vishnupur.

Now the data collected after analyzing 1000 students of the 'N' group:-

The table is given as

Liking Towards	Age Between 18-19 years	Age between 19-20 years	Age between 20-21 years	Percentage(Number of students liking a parameter/total number of students taking the questionnaire*100)
Art and Architecture	281	309	290	88
Handicrafts	330	310	330	97
Weaved Tussar Sarees Like Baluchari	322	323	335	98
Communication and Transportation	104	92	64	26
Developments going on at Vishnupur	125	130	195	45

On analyzing this data, I found that (7% of this group liked the handicrafts, 98% of them liked weaved sarees, 45% of them were satisfied with the developments at Vishnupur, 26% and 88% were satisfied with the accessibility and art and architecture respectively.

On further asking the students, they replied that Baluchari sarees, Baluchari shawls, swarnachari sarees, terracotta ornaments and Horses were mostly liked by them. On further studying the students' psychology and also the psychology of the tourists whom I met at Vishnupur, I understood that:- the bachelor group who

are more dynamic and have less liability were more afflicted towards the silk sarees for the elderly members of their family and terracotta works for decorating their homes, terracotta ornaments either for themselves or for their peers. On further studying it was found that this bachelor group belongs to the Belongers of the outer directed group and I-am-me type of the inner directed group. On further studying these data it is also understood that the Experiential group were mostly interested in purchasing prestigious and valuable works of art, the emulators were interested in terracotta works, the achievers were more interested in the valuable Baluchari sarees, silkwares, etc for their boutiques while the societally conscious were mostly in the art and architecture of the ekratna temples of Vishnupur. The sustainers of the need driven category of our values and lifestyles were more interested in their nearby vacation trip at a low cost. Thus throughout my survey, I could realize that the sarees, terracotta works of Vishnupur are still very close to the heart of all people irrespective of their social hierarchy, age, sex marital status, income, education or family life cycle.

Suggestion

1. We need to create a popular resort in an area in order to relieve the pressure from another area of a more sensitive nature.
2. We need to encourage green policies.
3. To provide urban tourist facilities in the destination to fulfill the needs of the tourists.
4. To develop public and private sector cooperation, cooperation among the hosts and the guests at the national and international levels aimed at developing touristic environmental guidelines and standards.
5. We need to create environmental awareness by making locals aware of the effects of tourism through professional trainings. This will help them to understand culture differences and advice regarding acceptable parts of the visitors visit.

Conclusion

So, if we, the host society along with the tourists and the WBTD, try to first maintain the carrying capacity of the destination in terms of ecological, economic, sociocultural, infrastructural and psychological sustainability, creating more consciousness among both the hosts and the tourists, a warm relationship between the host and the guest, then we would be able to bring more number of tourist arrival (both domestic and international) at Vishnupur and hence bring Vishnupur as an international tourism destination within the next five years down the line.