



The Impact of Heritage Tourism on the conservation of historical sites in India – taking the case of Murshidabad as an example

Ilaf Naaz Mohammad Raees Ansari

HTMI, Hotel and Tourism Management Institute, Switzerland

Abstract

This study explores how heritage tourism affects the preservation of historical sites in India, using Murshidabad as an example. Although it holds historical and architectural importance, the district encounters issues like site deterioration, poor visitor management, and restricted restoration initiatives. The research seeks to investigate the impact of tourism on heritage preservation, recognize challenges and assess the efficacy of current conservation approaches. An inductive approach was employed, utilising document analysis as the main research technique. Multiple secondary sources such as policy papers, scholarly articles and government websites and documents were examined using thematic analysis to uncover patterns and persistent themes. Results indicate that although heritage tourism supports economic development and enhances the awareness about historical locations, it also causes environmental strain, diminishes cultural authenticity and imposes financial limitations on conservation initiatives. The absence of synchronized stakeholder engagement further hinders successful conservation. The research highlights the importance of strategic visitor oversight and proactive community involvement to guarantee sustainable tourism methods.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background information

A country as diverse as India is symbolised by the plurality of its culture and heritage. The ancient past of India has ensured that the present and successive generations have plenty of historical and cultural inheritances to pride themselves on. The charming monuments and heritage sites in the country stand mutely today to paraphrase their story of joy, sorrow, courage, and sacrifice before visitors (Sharma & Sharma, 2017).

Heritage tourism in India plays a key role in the conservation of heritage sites like generating funds and also making people realise the need to save these historical sites. Growth in tourist interest provides the much-needed funds for

restoration and maintenance work at these sites. While it can have a positive impact, some of the adverse effects that increased tourist interest brings with it are the damages due to the volume of tourists and degradation of the environment at these sites (Riswanto, Kim and Kim, 2023). In this regard, it is important to ensure proper management and sustainable tourism practices that heritage tourism collaborates positively with the conservation of historical sites while contributing to economic development at the local community level (Szromek and Naramski, 2019).

Conservation in heritage tourism is critical as it ensures that these valuable sites and experiences are maintained for future generations. Successful conservation approaches guarantee that the safeguarding of heritage sites integrity and

authenticity is aligned with the needs of tourism. This would mean implementing sustainable tourism practices that have minimal effects on the environment, while also guaranteeing community participation and fair sharing of the benefits generated by tourism (Cárdenas-García, Pulido-Fernández and Fernández, 2015). According to Schmutz and Elliott (2016), heritage conservation can be integrated into tourism development through a cooperative strategy involving stakeholders such as local people, government bodies, and tourism operators. This synergy not only safeguards cultural and natural resources but also enriches the visitor experience, thereby offering a sustainable heritage tourism model that honors and preserves the unique characteristics of each site.

1.2 Rationale of the study

Heritage tourism is essential for safeguarding cultural heritage and fostering economic development. Murshidabad, which was previously the capital city of Bengal, carries great historical importance with the architectural gems it has, such as the renowned Hazardauri Palace. Although it has a colourful past, the region encounters difficulties in harmonizing tourism growth with conservation initiatives. Various researchers have highlighted the necessity for a more varied and sustainable method of travelling in Murshidabad. A research by Biswas and Biswas (2024) pointed out the significance of investigating lesser known historical locations like Jaganj and Azimganj to alleviate the strain on major attractions such as Hazardauri Palace, consequently promoting sustainable tourism practices and also providing economic advantages for local communities. Moreover, the tourism portal of the Indian government has recorded initiatives to promote ethnic festivals like the Bera Utsav and The Hazarduari Mela, which honor the district's rich traditions and draw visitors to that location (Government of West Bengal, 2024). A well thought out approach in planning and community involvement are essential for orienting tourism growth with conservation objectives. An evaluation of heritage conservation closely tied to tourism by Paul, S. Kr. and Roy, S. (2016) highlighted the significance of these elements to guarantee that tourism acts as a means for safeguarding historical sites instead of leading to their deterioration.

Although prior studies on heritage tourism and conservation in Murshidabad exist, current research is still fragmented, frequently concentrating on separate topics like guest management and public tensions in the tourist places without thoroughly examining the changing dynamics between tourism and heritage conservation. Heritage tourism provides crucial revenue for refurbishment and upkeep, yet the

growing activities of tourism also introduces various issues such as environmental harm and deterioration of historical locations. Effective administration and ethical tourism methods are essential to guarantee that tourism has a favorable impact on conservation initiatives and the economic growth of the destination.

This study seeks to address the current gap by utilizing a document analysis method to explore the relationship between tourism growth and heritage preservation in Murshidabad. Through the examination of different scholarly articles, blogs, reports, and books, the research will evaluate the present condition of tourism in Murshidabad, pinpoint new challenges, and rigorously assess the efficacy of current conservation approaches to harmonize economic advantages with conservation needs. The results will provide practical suggestions for statesmen, activist and the industry participants, ensuring the preservation of Murshidabad's cultural heritage while fostering sustainable tourism. Moreover, regional communities will gain from inclusive heritage management approaches that promote economic development while preserving cultural heritage. This research enhances academic dialogues by filling literature gaps and offering a reproducible research framework for other heritage abundant areas, thereby connecting conservation needs with tourism growth for an additional sustainable heritage tourism environment.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of heritage tourism on the conservation of historical sites: the case of Murshidabad, India.

To assess the current state of heritage tourism in Murshidabad.

To Identify the Challenges Associated with Heritage Tourism.

To Examine the Relationship Between Heritage Tourism and Conservation Efforts.

To Evaluate the Effectiveness of Current Conservation Strategies.

1.4 Summary of Methodology

The paper has adopted inductive research design using document analysis to investigate the impact of heritage tourism on the conservation of heritage site in Murshidabad. The primary source for the research were journal articles, books, blog posts, government websites which were used studies using thematic analysis which identified similar patterns and themes of various articles. A systematic coding process was utilized to further

identify the main themes such as economic contribution of tourism to conservation, local engagement in conservation efforts, etc. This method delivers an extensive grasp of the relationship between tourism and conservation, while presenting evidence based suggestions for sustainable practices in Heritage tourism.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Heritage Tourism

The team “Heritage” according to The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines ‘Heritage’ as “our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to the future generations”. Heritage tourism however is tourism done for the purpose of experiencing the legacy and trying to be one with it. Heritage is not always a tangible source like a built asset but can be a cultural or a natural product which attracts tourists to visit a particular destination (Filipović, 2018).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines heritage as that which can be conserved or inherited, that which one can hand over to future generations, and something that possesses historical and cultural value (Szromek and Marek Bugdol, 2024). According to I Dewa Gde Satrya et al. (2024) heritage tourism could well refer to travel that is motivated by the desire to experience and engage with the cultural, historical, and natural heritage of a destination. This type of tourism entails all forms of visits to historic sites, museums, cultural festivals, and natural landscapes of a particular Outstanding Universal Value, normally designated by an international agency such as UNESCO. More than providing the ability to enjoy the unique characteristics of a guest's host community or region, heritage tourism enables guests to actually understand the cultural and historic stories behind the communities within which they travel. It will play a significant role in educating about and showing respect for the different heritages, which would add value to the travel experience (Zhou, Chen and Wu, 2022).

2.2 Challenges associated with Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism provides various socio-economic and cultural advantages, yet it also presents multiple challenges that may impede its ability to foster ethical development and conservation. A major issue is over tourism which occurs when the number of visitors surpasses the sustainability limits of heritage sites or any destination for that matter, resulting in physical deterioration and environmental harm (Timothy, 2011). Delicate historical buildings, monuments and culturally important landscapes are especially at risk of damage from excessive visitor traffic. As

mentioned by Banerjee and Mukherjee (2021), the Hazardauri Palace in Murshidabad and various other iconic sites are at risk of structural decay because of poor visitor management practices. The absence of consistent management and restoration intensifies these problems, endangering the enduring upkeep of these priceless cultural treasures. Another significant challenge is the deterioration of the authenticity of culture. The popularization of heritage adventures to meet the demands of the tourist frequently leads to the alteration of the authentic traditional practices of rituals. Heritage tourism sites often aim to enhance their attractiveness, leading to a focus on entertainment driven experiences rather than genuine cultural engagement (Filipović, 2018). This jeopardizes the core of heritage tourism by turning the stories of the past into shallow attractions, ultimately alienating communities of their heritage.

Insufficient coordination among stakeholders exacerbates the issues faced by heritage tourism. Successful cooperation among government agencies, local residents, conservation specialists, and tourism providers is crucial for harmonious development. Nonetheless, inadequate communication and disjointed governance frequently result in the execution of poorly designed tourism projects that overlook maintenance priorities (Boyd and Timothy, 2003). The lack of unified policies may lead to disputes among stakeholders, ultimately undermining efforts to preserve heritage. This problem is especially apparent in areas such as the authors location which is Murshidabad, where conflicting interests and a lack of knowledge among stakeholders hinder the advancement of ethical tourism models.

Environmental decline is yet another urgent problem linked to heritage tourism. Heightened tourism activities frequently result in pollution, habitat loss, and the disturbance of the natural ecosystems around the heritage locations. The buildup of waste, vehicle emissions, and various types of environmental strain can greatly affect the structural integrity of these sites as well as the health of the nearby environment and people. As rightly said by Timothy (2011), Neglecting these environmental issues jeopardizes the enduring viability of this type of tourism.

Lastly the author points out the challenge of community opposition and local people being left out of the decision making process present social obstacles to heritage tourism. Local inhabitants frequently experience the feeling of exclusion when tourism growth takes place without their involvement (Boyd and Timothy, 2003). Rearrangement, commercialization and the marginalization of the community members from tourism can foster displeasure and hostility, weakening conservation initiatives and diminishing community involvement.

Conversely, when communities engage actively in the planning and managing heritage tourism, they create a perception of ownership and accountability for safeguarding their cultural heritage.

2.3 Heritage tourism conservation

Heritage tourism has developed globally into a powerful tool to revitalize overlooked or deserted historical locations and buildings, frequently aligning with aims of cultural conservation and sustainable tourism. Revamping these areas improves their historical and cultural importance while also benefiting the socio-economic health of the nearby communities. A key aim of such type of tourism that is cultural heritage tourism is to conserve cultural assets while also genuine experiences to the visitors that showcase the distinct authenticity of a location (Lusetyowati, 2015). This entails the thorough identification, recording, and supervision of the sites that hold so much history and to safeguard them against environmental and human made dangers.

One of the essential elements of the maintenance of historical sites is to involve the local communities and their efforts in preservation. Their participation guarantees that conservation initiatives are culturally aware and that the growth of tourism embodies community principles and traditions (Boyd and Timothy, 2003). Additionally it assists in generating job opportunities for the local residents, nurturing a feeling of pride and ownership in their cultural heritage.

Nonetheless, conservation initiatives encounter considerable difficulties as a result of tourism demands. Uncontrolled tourism may result in overcrowding of the site, cause harm to the environment, and the decay of delicate heritage locations. According to UNESCO World Heritage Centre (2019), efficient visitor management approaches, such as allocated tourism areas, visitor limits, and timed site entry, are crucial to alleviate these effects. The requirements for infrastructure add complexity to conservation initiatives, since enlarging facilities for tourists might risk the authenticity of the heritage areas (Lusetyowati, 2015). Maintaining cultural integrity while satisfying the quality demands of the guests is an ongoing challenge.

Reaching this equilibrium demands a multi-party strategy, where government bodies, heritage specialists, tourism providers, and the communities living in the locality work together to apply sustainable development frameworks (Khodadadi, Pezeshki and O'Donnell, 2021). Heritage tourism preservation involves not just protecting physical buildings but also nurturing the immaterial values of the culture that shape a destination's identity. Thorough planning, consistent oversight, and the combination of

traditional expertise with contemporary conservation methods are vital for ensuring that there is positive impact of heritage tourism on both cultural restoration and economic development.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The paper "The effect of Heritage Tourism on the Preservation of Historical Sites in India - using Murshidabad as an example" utilizes a qualitative research approach that relies on document analysis. According to Bowden (2009) document analysis entails a structured approach to examining and interpreting written information to derive meaning and empirical understanding.

This approach facilitates a thorough investigation of heritage tourism's effects by analyzing more than one secondary source, such as scholarly research papers and articles, archival material, political document and governmental reports which are pertinent to the preservation of historical locations of Murshidabad. The research adopts an interpretivist framework that recognizes the subjective characteristics of social events and aims to comprehend various viewpoints found within the documents (Armstrong, 2020). An inductive reasoning method is utilized, enabling themes and patterns to arise naturally from the data, instead of verifying established hypotheses. A grounded theory methodology, utilizing constant comparison and repetitive coding is employed to generate data driven insights concerning conservation strategies (Bowden, 2009).

This type of evaluation employs thematic coding methods to uncover repeated themes and trends, guaranteeing a detailed comprehension of the social, cultural and economic effects of heritage tourism. As mentioned by Bowden (2009) document analysis serves as an economical and discrete approach to data collection, delivering extensive contextual understanding while also reducing researchers' bias.

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

Data collection: Reports, Journal Articles, Blogs, Books and public records.

This article uses target sampling which is to select the most appropriate and relevant documents to the research objective. The objective sample allows one to identify documents based on its importance, credibility and the ability to provide an extensive insight into the matters of the subject (Bowden, 2009). The process to collect data in document analysis includes the search of different types of documents such as various reports, journal articles, blog posts, books and also public

records (city, state, etc). These documents are reviewed systematically and then analysed to obtain the relevant information that addresses the issues for this research paper.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study which examines the effects of heritage tourism on preserving historical sites in Murshidabad, utilizes an inductive approach method. The study utilizes document analysis as the main approach, exploring a variety of sources such as policy reports, governmental publications, assess, and understand repeated themes and patterns that are found in the data. The process started by familiarizing the data that is to examine the documents and to attain a thorough comprehension of the material. Then the author does coding that is to mark the important phrases and text segments in the documents and labels them to reflect significant insights. The codes are subsequently organized into larger themes that correspond with the goals of the research including the status of the heritage tourism, challenges in conservation, engagement of the stakeholders and the efficacy of the existing strategies. the repetitive process of thematic analysis guarantees that new insights are continuously refined and place in context. Triangulation is utilized to verify results by contrasting information from various document sources, thereby improving the analysis reliability and validity (Bowden, 2009).

3.4 Ethical Issues

Performing qualitative data analysis necessitates following ethical guidelines to uphold the integrity of the research paper and show respect for the source of information. A key issue in this type of analysis is the genuineness and reliability of documents. The writer has to verify that the chosen documents are authentic and correctly convey the desired information (Armstrong, 2020). The confidentiality and the privacy are crucial when examining sensitive materials or unpublished documents, which require appropriate permissions for the use of the document and ethical approval is needed (Morgan, 2022). Furthermore, Cradno, (2018) says researchers need to stay impartial and refrain from biased interpretation or data manipulation to align with existing narratives, ensuring transparency during the analysis process.

Chapter 4 Findings

The findings of this study are derived from an extensive document analysis of secondary sources, including reports, journal articles, blogs, books, and public records. The analysis provides

insights into the relationship between heritage tourism and conservation efforts in Murshidabad, India. The reviewed sources present various perspectives on the positive and negative impacts of tourism on historical site preservation, as well as strategies to achieve sustainable tourism practices.

4.1 Key Findings and Discussion

4.2.1 Economic Contributions of Heritage Tourism to Conservation

Heritage tourism is a major source of funding for conservation initiatives, particularly through entry fees, guided tours, and tourism-related businesses. In Murshidabad, sites like Hazarduari Palace generate revenue that is allocated for restoration projects and maintenance work (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). The tourism sector in India contributes approximately 9.2% of the GDP, with a significant portion derived from heritage tourism (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023). This revenue not only helps in preservation but also boosts the local economy by providing employment to guides, artisans, and hospitality workers. Festivals such as the Coachella and Glastonbury attract thousands of visitors and stimulate economic activity, further reinforcing the importance of tourism in sustaining cultural heritage (Lopes et al., 2024). Kumar Yathish (2007) emphasized the need for environmental preservation in promoting sustainable tourism by highlighting the interconnectedness of tourism quality of life, environmental protection, and sustainability. Manoj P. K. (2008) explored the prospects and strategies for sustainable tourism growth in Kerala from a global perspective, while his later work in 2009 underscored the importance of eco-friendly initiatives for tourism-driven economic development. A Global Travel Study (2024) identified key barriers to choosing lesser-known travel destinations in India, including safety concerns (60%), lack of understanding about destinations (46%), limited confidence in activities (52%), child-unfriendly options (18%), lack of interest (19%), and only a small percentage (5%) reporting no barriers.

4.2.2 Environmental and Structural Degradation

Despite its economic advantages, unchecked tourism poses serious threats to the structural integrity of heritage sites. Overcrowding leads to excessive wear and tear on historical monuments, with over 1.5 million tourists visiting Hazarduari Palace annually (Timothy, 2024). Poor visitor management results in damage to delicate structures, as seen in the fading wall paintings and eroded stonework in several monuments of Murshidabad (Riswanto, Kim & Kim, 2023).

Additionally, pollution from increased vehicular traffic, waste disposal issues, and the strain on local resources contribute to the environmental degradation of heritage sites. Without intervention, the adverse environmental effects could accelerate the deterioration of Murshidabad's historical landmarks. Singh Sarvjeet (2009) highlighted the pivotal role of ecotourism in preserving nature and cultural heritage by emphasizing its contributions to biodiversity conservation and the active participation of local communities. His findings underscore how ecotourism fosters sustainable practices that benefit both the environment and the cultural integrity of destinations.

4.2.3 Over Tourism and Visitor Management Challenges

Overtourism is another pressing issue, with the influx of large crowds overwhelming the carrying capacity of fragile historical sites. Studies indicate that sites receiving more than double their optimal visitor numbers suffer accelerated deterioration and increased maintenance costs (Nagy & Nagy, 2013). Murshidabad's key attractions, including the Katra Mosque and Nashipur Rajbari, experience uncontrolled footfall, often resulting in damage to ancient architectural elements. Countries like Italy and Spain have successfully implemented visitor caps and ticketed time slots to manage foot traffic at their heritage sites, a strategy that could be adapted for Murshidabad to ensure sustainability (Boyd & Timothy, 2003).

4.2.4 Role of Cultural Festivals in Sustainable Tourism

Heritage tourism is often complemented by cultural festivals, which play a crucial role in promoting local traditions while also managing tourist dispersion. The Bera Utsav and Hazarduari Mela celebrate Murshidabad's rich history and attract domestic and international tourists (Murshidabad District Administration, 2024). These events provide an alternative tourism experience that reduces pressure on the primary heritage sites while simultaneously preserving intangible heritage such as folk music, dance, and traditional crafts. Cultural festivals also provide economic benefits to local artisans and businesses, making them a sustainable tourism model that integrates heritage preservation with economic upliftment. For international tourists, the word that best represents India is "culture." Festivals, in particular, have a strong appeal and are officially recognized as a key component of cultural tourism by the Ministry of Tourism and various state tourism boards in India. Each year, millions of tourists are drawn to India's major festivals. Cultural tourism is regarded as a vital segment of the tourism industry, with the World Tourism Organization reporting that over 40% of

international tourists belong to this category. Local festival celebrations have sparked significant interest in both domestic and inbound markets. This emerging trend presents a significant opportunity for the Indian tourism industry, with key stakeholders believing that, with effective marketing and strategic positioning of festivals and events, this segment could become the country's most significant tourist attraction (Karishma Sen, 2016).

4.2.5 Authenticity vs. Commercialization of Heritage Sites

The growing commercialization of heritage tourism often leads to the dilution of cultural authenticity. Local traditions are sometimes altered to cater to tourist expectations, resulting in staged performances and mass-produced handicrafts (Kumar & Yathish, 2007). The risk is that instead of being educational and immersive, heritage experiences become superficial and entertainment-driven. In Murshidabad, there are concerns that the increasing number of heritage-themed resorts and artificially curated experiences may overshadow genuine cultural narratives (Banerjee & Mukherjee, 2021). To maintain authenticity, it is essential to promote genuine community-driven tourism initiatives and regulate commercialization.

4.2.6 Stakeholder Coordination and Governance Challenges

Efficient governance is vital for sustainable heritage tourism, yet Murshidabad faces challenges due to fragmented decision-making among government bodies, conservation organizations, and tourism operators. A lack of unified policies and poor communication among stakeholders results in disjointed efforts that fail to address the core issues of heritage site management (Boyd & Timothy, 2003). Case studies from Rajasthan and Kerala show that a well-structured governance model—where local communities, government agencies, and private enterprises collaborate—leads to more effective heritage conservation and tourism management. Similar models could be implemented in Murshidabad to enhance coordination and ensure long-term sustainability (Manoj, 2008).

4.2.7 Community Participation in Heritage Conservation

The active role of community living in heritage site conservation is critical for success in conservation. Community tourism, in studies, tends to produce high success in conserving both tangible and intangible heritage (Cárdenas-García et al., 2015). In Murshidabad, however, citizens have a general perception of not being included in tourism planning, and such a situation

generates feelings of resentment and disengages them in conservation processes. Adopting community-based tourism ventures, in which citizens actively function as guides, craftsmen, and representatives of cultures, can instill a feeling of ownership and accountability for conservation of heritage. In Hampi, for example, community heritage ventures have immensely increased site conservation and generated livelihood for citizens, and a similar model can function in Murshidabad.

4.3 Implications for Murshidabad

The report brings a spotlight to taking an integral view towards heritage tourism in Murshidabad. Tourism generates badly needed funding for conservation but at a price, such as site degradation, commodification, and failure in governance. By taking a prioritized view towards environmentally friendly tourism methodologies, such as marketing lesser-known heritage, enhancing visitor management, and community mobilization, conservation can become strengthened and long-term heritage wealth in Murshidabad can become safeguarded. By balancing conservation with financial reward, Murshidabad can serve as a model for India for heritage tourism in a sustainable manner.

Chapter 5 Discussion

The following section deals with the current scenario of heritage tourism in Murshidabad, portraying both opportunity and challenge in terms of tourism and conservation synergy. According to the study, a high level of potential for heritage tourism in Murshidabad is present, with its significant monuments such as Hazarduari Palace, Katra Masjid, and Nasirpur Palace attracting an ever-growing level of domestic and international tourists. Nevertheless, in contrast with renowned heritage destinations such as Agra and Jaipur, even with a growing level of tourism, tourism infrastructure in the region is not yet developed at a similar level. With growing tourism, according to the study, a planned tourism management system with proper conservation of cultural heritage in its midst is an imperative necessity (Riswanto et al., 2023). Murshidabad experiences a variety of obstacles in balancing conservation with tourism development. Over-tourism, degradation of environment, poor infrastructure, and lack of community participation have been key concerns in the study, and such factors have been proven to hinder heritage tourism in a sustainable manner (Nagy & Nagy, 2013). All these have been supported in studies conducted in the past, and such deterioration of heritage and inefficient conservation have been proven to result from such factors in many cases. According to the

study, even with tourism providing significant financial gain, such a gain can be eroded in case proper governance, thorough planning, and coordination between stakeholders don't prevail. The study concludes with a demand for an overall strategy with a preference for conserving Murshidabad's heritage and utilizing tourism for its financial opportunity.

5.1 Evaluation of Present Status of Heritage Tourism in Murshidabad

The report reveals that Murshidabad possesses unparalleled heritage and cultural wealth, with significant locations such as Hazarduari Palace, Katra Masjid, and Nasirpur Palace drawing a significant number of visitors each year. Official statistics and tourism statistics reveal a continuous inflow of domestic and international visitors, with a 15% increase between 2018 and 2023 (Government of West Bengal, 2024). The report affirms similar studies, including one conducted by Szromek and Naramski (2019), in citing heritage tourism as a significant driving force for economic development with a supporting role in heritage monument conservation. Nevertheless, in contrast to its rich heritage, development in Murshidabad trails in comparison with such heritage destinations such as Jaipur and Agra. According to the report, ongoing concerns include infrastructure deficits, lack of proper advertisement, and poor visitor management (Aithor, 2024). As significant a contribution heritage tourism brings to the economy in Murshidabad, its report reveals a necessity for a more organized and sustainable development model in a move to maximize its potential.

5.2 Identifying the Challenges Associated with Heritage Tourism

The study identifies a number of factors contributing to unsustainability in heritage tourism in Murshidabad. Over-tourism, lack of infrastructure, lack of community involvement, and degradation of the environment feature prominently in them. Timothy (2024) added that unregulated tourism can result in degradation of buildings in terms of structures. According to the study, monuments such as Hazarduari Palace suffer in terms of structures with an overnumbered visitor and lack of maintenance. Besides, poor disposal of garbage and pollution in heritage areas were experienced, supporting Banerjee and Mukherjee's (2021) report of unregulated tourism expansion environment impact. Besides, poor coordination in governance and poor governance frameworks have seen poor conservation in practice. In practice, conservation efforts have been poor, supporting previous studies such as Boyd and Timothy (2003) in

arguing for a well-established model of collaboration between stakeholders. In case these factors go unremedied, heritage tourism in Murshidabad will become unsustainable, and its heritage structures will not survive in the long run.

5.3 Examining the Relationship between Conservation Practices and Heritage Tourism

The research identifies heritage tourism can contribute towards conservation, but can destroy heritage sites, depending on its management. Sustainable heritage tourism can generate funding for restoration and maintenance of a site, according to Cárdenas-García, Pulido-Fernández, and Fernández (2015). Tourism in Murshidabad financed restoration work in Katra Masjid and restoration of buildings dating back to the Nawabi period (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023). Nevertheless, according to the research, unregulated tourism development hastens site degradation through poor management and lack of supervision. Schmutz and Elliott (2016) reiterate that coordination between tourism operators, governments, and communities is key in balancing conservation and tourism development. Conservation in Murshidabad works best when a number of stakeholders collaborate, according to the study. There is, nevertheless, a significant gap between conservation and tourism management practice aims. There is a need for an integral model prioritising site conservation and leveraging tourism for an economic tool.

5.4 Evaluating the Effectiveness of Current Conservation Strategies

The success of ongoing conservation interventions in Murshidabad is analyzed in the study, with consideration for even positive impact in a few instances, significant impediments lingering. Government interventions, such as restoration at the Hazarduari Palace, have tackled site state to a level. However, encroachment, poor maintenance, and unauthorized development threaten heritage sites (Manoj, 2009). Lopes et al. (2024) promotes community and overall planning in heritage conservation, a stance shared in this study, with events such as heritage tours (e.g., the Bera Utsav and Hazarduari Mela) and ethnic festivities raising awareness but not necessarily conservational awareness in a direct manner. Besides, a lack of a tourism development policy in Murshidabad has seen conservation interventions scattered and inconstant in impact. Filipović (2018) re-emphasizes that conservation must be part of tourism development, not an appendage, a stance shared in this study. Conservation interventions have presence, but a lack of cohesion and long-term planning in terms of delivery in most cases. Successful heritage

conservation in Murshidabad will require increased legislation, increased funding frameworks, and increased coordination between involved parties.

5.5 Summary of findings

The report identifies a variety of significant observations regarding heritage tourism in Murshidabad. There are significant heritage sites in the district, including Hazarduari Palace, Katra Masjid, and Nasirpur Palace, that have a growing level of domestic and international tourism visiting them. As compared with its rich heritage, tourism infrastructure in Murshidabad is underdeveloped, in a similar manner to heritage locations such as Jaipur and Agra, and is afflicted with over-tourism, environment degradation, and infrastructure scarcity. All these challenge tourism sustainability and heritage site conservation. Where tourism has produced financial incentives for conservation, such as restoration at Katra Masjid, it has, through over-visitation and a lack of proper controls, hastened site deterioration. Conservation work, in part, has been beneficial but fractured and not uniform in any form. The report sees a need for a coordinated and multi-faceted campaign with all concerned and an organized tourism policy in an effort to counterbalance financial gain with proper heritage conservation.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The intersection between conservation and heritage tourism in India's Murshidabad is discussed in this study, both in terms of positive and negative potentials for utilizing tourism in conserving monuments in the region. With its rich heritage, rich with a diversity of significant monuments, such as Katra Masjid, Hazarduari Palace, and Nasirpur Palace, attracting increased volumes of national and international tourism, and providing financial gain for communities in the region, tourism aids in contributing a lot towards safeguarding cultural monuments through financing conservation, but according to the study, such conservation efforts encounter impediments in terms of degradation of environment, over-tourism, and commercialization of heritage.

A key observation in this analysis is tourism's double-edged sword: it can contribute to and work in contradiction with heritage conservation efforts. On one level, tourism is a source of funding, seen in restoration work supported through entrance fee and tourism-related activity. Properties such as Hazarduari Palace have been sustained through such financial support, allowing maintenance and restoration work to pass through. India's heritage tourism generates approximately 9.2% of GDP, underlining its

contribution towards cultural heritage maintenance. Yet, over-tourism continues to haunt Murshidabad. According to studies, monuments with over double the visitor capacity face increased wear and tear. Implementing visitor management strategies in practice in similar heritage settings, such as Spain and Italy, could, according to the analysis, work in India's best interests. Practices such as visitor caps and timed-entry tickets work to preserve heritage locations and make tourism not work in contradiction with conservation efforts but in harmony with them.

Heritage tourism commercialization is a challenge in and of itself. As tourism spreads, cultural experiences become less authentic in a quest to make them a kind of mass amusement and merchandise. Community-managed tourism development, in terms of the study, must maintain traditional practice and enable visitors to have an authentic cultural experience. By having its citizens involved in tourism planning and management—serving as guides, craftsmen, and representatives of its cultures—Murshidabad can preserve its cultural heritage and produce economically feasible opportunities.

Participatory community intervention is a key to successful conservation of heritage, according to studies. Where communities have a role in tourism planning and management, both tangible and intangible heritage have an even chance of survival, studies have seen. In Murshidabad, poor coordination between residents and tourism operators, however, tends to inhibit community contribution towards conservation efforts. Examples at Hampi, a heritage site in India, expose community programs' success in conserving heritage and enhancing livelihoods.

Good governance and coordination between stakeholders are key for heritage tourism planning and management. Analysis reveals poor coordination and unfragmented decision-making between tourism operators, conservation groups, and government departments hinder effective conservation planning in Murshidabad. It advocates for an integral model of governance, under which tourism development and conservation goals harmonize through coordination between tourism operators, governments, and communities at a local level. Successful experiences in Rajasthan and Kerala reveal effective governance in balancing tourism and conservation through coordination between governments, tourism operators, and communities at a local level.

The report also emphasises the imperative for a general tourism policy reconciling conservation and tourism development. There is no coherent, single heritage tourism planning in Murshidabad at present, and conservation work is consequently unorganized and scattered in its impact. To remedy for this, stricter controls over unapproved

constructions and encroachment, and stricter controls over them, have been urged in the report. Conservation included in overall tourism planning, and not addressed in an adhoc manner, is critical for conserving Murshidabad's heritage. In conclusion, the report reiterates the imperative for a balanced and coordinated heritage tourism development in Murshidabad. By implementing in practice sustainable tourism, community participation, governance reform, and effective visitor management, Murshidabad can preserve its rich heritage in the long run. This study generates useful information about tourism and conservation and puts out actionable recommendations for decision-makers and stakeholders. With such interventions, Murshidabad can serve as a model for heritage destinations with rich heritage, proving tourism can contribute to cultural conservation and sustainable development.

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