Guest editorial

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India's incredible cities: anticipating the future, respecting the past tourism in Indian cities: special issue editorial

The mission of the International Tourism Studies Association (ITSA) is to encourage interaction and cooperation between members in developing and developed countries. Essentially, part of this mission means providing more venues and opportunities for scholars in developing countries to present and publish their research and to engage with academics from more developed nations. As the owner of the *International Journal of Tourism Cities* (*IJTC*), ITSA and the *IJTC* Co-Editors-in-Chief envisaged a series of Special Issues with a focus on urban tourism and tourism cities in the developing world. *Tourism in Indian cities* is the first in the series and will be followed later by *Contemporary trends, issues and challenges in Southeast Asia Tourism Cities*. More will come in the future.

Cities are places where economic and industrial activities are concentrated in a defined area that facilitate production and consumption of goods and services (Page and Connell, 2014). Cities have a history of being major tourist destinations for a variety of reasons (Ashworth and Page, 2011). They attract visitors from within the country and overseas. As points of departure and ports of entry for visitors, most cities function as gateways to domestic and international tourism. A vast majority of cities evolved around centres of industries and economic activities, which drew populaces from both surrounding and far flung regions in search of employment and enterprise. A large number of cities have their origin as centres of political power, where kingdoms and political elites were located, and many of them continue to remain national capitals. As Maitland and Ritchie (2009) note, national capitals are characterised by their centrality (as centres of transactions or government), wide variety of interests, images symbolising national identity and power, ability to command national resources and exercise control over territory. An upshot of these political and economic endeavours was the growth of art, culture, recreation and leisure amenities, which led to the emergence of a visitor economy in cities. Cities, thus, served a number of functions such as meeting places, tourist gateways, accommodation and transportation hubs, centres of economic, political and cultural activities. Cities have also emerged as centres of multiculturalism, mega-events, exhibitions, fairs and festivals. However, very few cities owe their origin to the visitor economy, rather the tourism and leisure economy was an adjunct to the main economic or political activities of the area, where the visitor economy gradually emerged as an additional source of revenue (Page and Connell, 2014). As Ashworth (1989) points out cities were traditionally considered mainly as the source of a tourist demand which spilled out over the surrounding rural areas in search of leisure facilities, and travel gateways for visitors on their way to tourist destinations.

A significant number of cities that flourished during the industrialisation and the post-war era faced major challenges from globalisation, emergence of a service and knowledge economy and technological advancements and were in severe decline with major economic, industrial, social and environmental consequences. Further, a constantly evolving global economic order has created the need for many well-established cities to reinvent themselves to maintain their economic competitiveness, if not survival (Marques and Borba, 2017). For example, cities such as Glasgow, which was once a major global centre of ship building experienced significant decline in its fortunes in the 1980s and 1990s, when its ship building

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dominance was challenged by other countries in the far east. Many such cities turned to tourism and leisure as strategies for urban regeneration and economic survival in recent years. National governments, urban planners, local authorities and the tourism industry have begun to take tourism in cities seriously as an alternative to traditional mass tourism that focused on coastal resorts and winter destinations. At the same time, urban areas became more fashionable, both as places to live, work, study and visit. The rise in popularity of urban tourism, and the consequent increase in urban tourist facilities and attractions, has been a common trend in many developed countries since the emergence of mass tourism in the 1960s (Maitland and Ritchie, 2009). In fact, tourism has increased competitiveness of many urban destinations and fostered rivalry between cities to attract tourists and tourism business. Globalisation, access to cheap transportation, longer holidays and better pay have meant that people are more willing and able to travel to different locations. Opportunities offered by new ways of marketing urban tourism using digital and new media meant that people were bombarded with ideas of holidaying in exciting, stimulating urban tourism destinations (Page and Connell, 2014). This growth of urban tourism in many developed countries was also due to the increasing popularity of short breaks taken at weekends. Short break holidays to cities have become popular supplements to the traditional longer annual holiday in many European countries, with some of the East European cities becoming major beneficiaries of this trend (Dunne *et al.*, 2010). The increase in the demand for city breaks has been due to the increasing number of public holidays and holiday entitlement as well as the economic prosperity of many developed and emerging economies that left more disposable income and time to spend on holidays (Davis, 1990). Increased regional integration across the globe such as the European Union and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has removed travel barriers, making international travel easier (Chheang, 2013). The emergence of low-cost flights and short-term rentals gave a major fillip to short break holidays to urban destinations (Dunne *et al.*, 2010).

Given tourism's importance as a source of economic revenue, employment opportunities and physical and environmental improvement, it was only natural that urban planners and governments turned to tourism as a development and regeneration strategy. While some cities such as London, Paris, and New York were traditionally rich in visitor facilities and attractions, many others, especially in the developing world, lacked them. Many of the cities that were in dire need of urban regeneration lacked tourist attractions and amenities. It was thus a major challenge to urban and tourism planners to create visitor attractions, amenities and a destination image that attracted tourists and helped achieve the goals of economic regeneration and development (Owen, 1990; Lee *et al.*, 2014).

City tourism research has evolved into an important branch of tourism research. The increased focus on urban tourism research was a consequence of the realisation tourism can be an effective solution to revive many urban areas, especially in the developed world that were in severe need of renewal and regeneration in response to years of industrial decline, urban decay and economic failure (Hall, 2005). Interest in city tourism research can be attributed, first, to the increasing demand for urban tourism that has brought severe pressure to urban environments, especially in historical cities that had limited infrastructure to service the growing number of tourists (Pearce, 2001). Issues and implications of over tourism are a major concern to urban planners (Dodds and Butler, 2019). Second, tourism's potential for regeneration of cities in decline is now widely recognised, and city authorities and development scholars are trying to understand ways in which tourism can be effectively used as a strategy for urban regeneration (García, 2004). Thirdly, tourism in cities poses major challenges as urban centres are spaces not just limited to visitors but are linked with a wide range of economic and industrial activities leading to competition for urban infrastructure and resources (Mullins, 1991). Fourthly, tourism facilities in cities are not solely used by the visitors, they are also used by local residents and are thus multi-functional, leading to major challenges in maintaining healthy guest – host relationships (Seraphin *et al.*, 2018). Recent developments in designing smart cities and smart tourism destinations are a challenge as well as an opportunity to urban planners and represent a

major research interest (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015). A major theme topic of interest in urban tourism research in recent years relates to safety and security as many tourist destinations have been targets of terrorist activities (Seraphin, 2017). The increasing interest in researching city tourism also reflects its significance in global tourism and the role tourism has played in the regeneration and economic development of cities.

As discussed earlier, many ancient civilisations have had their identity created around urban centres of governance, commerce, religion, culture and knowledge. India was home to some of the oldest civilisations and great empires, which had seen the emergence of affluent cities that were home to culture, science, politics and commerce. India became a magnet to invaders and explorers from near and far, ranging from the Greeks, Persians and Central Asians and European Colonisers. The invaders and colonisers established many new cities that became associated with their own contribution to the country's heritage and political economy. Major cities such as Calcutta, Bombay (Mumbai), Madras (Chennai) are some of the examples. The post-colonial India witnessed the political organisation of the country based on language and a further reorganisation later for practical administrative reasons, which resulted in the emergence of a number of new urban centres. India thus has a combination of cities that are ancient, medieval and modern. A new typology of cities may have to be created to define the diversity of cities in India. The identity of Indian cities ranges from religion, commerce, culture, history, politics, commerce, technology, industry, education and agriculture. The cities in India have traditionally attracted visitors from the surrounding rural areas and other regions, who travelled in search of education, jobs, business opportunities and sightseeing. Compared to major cities in the world, tourism development as an urban development and regeneration strategy is relatively less popular in India. Most tourism development activities in the country are still focused on coastal, cultural, historical, wildlife and mountain destinations.

The ten cities in India with the highest GDPs are (in order) Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Pune, Surat and Visakhapatnam (MapsofIndia.com, 2020). According to the CIA World Factbook (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020), just 35% of the Indian population of around 1.33 billion live in urban areas compared to 61.4% in the People's Republic of China (PRC). However, the World Economic Forum (Prasad, 2019) predicted that the largest urban transformation in the 21st century of any country will be in India. Also, according to the World Economic Forum (Wood, 2018), the ten fastest growing cities in the world are all in India. These include Agra, Nagpur, Tirupur, Rajkot, Tiruchirappalli and Vijayawada, as well as the previously mentioned Surat, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai. Many of the 16 cities highlighted so far are unknown to most foreigners; a situation which also exists with the major urban centres of the PRC. As these and the others among the approximately 300 cities in India continue to grow so will urban tourism flourish. The burgeoning domestic tourism market in India will be the major urban tourism growth catalyst.

The large number of traditional and emerging urban centres in India represent a tremendous opportunity for Indian tourism to add to its large inventory of tourism resources. Since 2002, India has been the home of Incredible! India, a tourism branding and marketing campaign that has won worldwide acclaim (Kant, 2009). This campaign singlehandedly changed the global perceptions of India as a tourism destination and positioned the country as a one-of-a-kind place to visit (Kerrigan *et al.*, 2012).

Most of the Indian cities are over-populated, have crumpling infrastructure, shortage of electricity, housing, health facilities, water and sanitation (Morris, 2017). The pull factors of Indian cities to the rural poor has led to a constant stream of urban migration that has led to a rapid increase in urban population which exacerbate the situation. The development and management of tourism in Indian cities thus pose a major challenge to tourism planners and tourism businesses. There has been relatively very little research on tourism in Indian cities. Researching urban tourism in India to develop an understanding of the supply and demand factors; issues and challenges in dealing with environmental pressures; current practices and emerging trends; and development problems and prospects is long overdue.

Tourism in India special issue

This Special Issue seeks to contribute to the literature on urban tourism in developing countries in general as well as the challenges and experiences of its development and management in India in particular. All three Guest Editors have spent significant time in India and can attest to its incredibility. That label certainly can be hung on India's cities as they offer such great diversity in culture, history and heritage, gastronomy and much more.

Axiomatically, economic and tourism growth in urban centres come along with associated issues, problems and challenges. This Special Issue of IJTC highlights some of these as have previous issues of the journal. These include loss of authenticity, overcrowding, pollution, traffic congestion, gentrification, beggarism, scams and crime. Indian cities, as with other rapidly expanding urban areas in Asia, are having to find solutions quickly. However, despite these negative impacts, the future for urban tourism and tourism cities in India seems to be positive and bright. Against this backdrop, the Special Issue on Tourism in Indian Cities proposes a range of articles on key issues affecting Indian cities; the goal is to bring out opportunities and ambiguities, faced by tourism practitioners in India.

The article entitled "Art event image in city brand equity: mediating role of city branch attachment" by Deepa Jawahar investigates event image through functional and affective aspects, and its influence on city attachment and city brand equity. The study examined the mediating role of 'city attachment' in the relationship between event image and city brand equity. The findings help destination marketers in building an understanding of art-events in city branding.

The article by Vikas Gupta, Kavita Khanna and Raj Kumar Gupta on "Preferential analysis of street food among the foreign tourists: a case of Delhi region" provides an interesting insight on foreign tourists' food preferences in India. The study was conducted in Delhi, and the findings show that Indian street food represents a huge market, and these may be used as a unique selling proposition (USP) while marketing the destination. The study is of benefit to destination marketers and tourism street entrepreneurs.

The article, "Local stakeholders' perspectives on religious heritage and tourism development in Varanasi", by P.J. Shyju, Iqbal Bhat, Katheryn Myers and Naresh Tanwar, analyses the perspectives of local people from various backgrounds on how the promotion of tourism alters the heritage-scape and sacredness of Varanasi. It examines the motivation of visitors from the understanding of local people, and transformation of the city for tourism benefits thereby transformation of an ancient city which features spirituality and traditions to an experiencescape.

The article by Rhulia Nukhu and Sapna Singh on "Branding dilemma: the case of branding Hyderabad City" highlights the USPs of Hyderabad, an old city, and brings out its attribute in the marketing of the destination. The purpose of the study was to analyse its existing city image and the execution of a clear brand message in the face of ambiguous essence of the place. The findings reveal that the blend of the two aspects as a brand is complex. The study enriches tourism practitioners on the branding and positioning of the city by bringing out the complexity based on its essence.

The article based on Thailand paints an interesting picture of India, as a tourism destination, among foreigners. The author, Theera Erawan, researched "India's image and loyalty perception in Thailand". The findings provide useful information for India's tourism industry, specifically for the marketing of historical cities as travel destinations. The study is helpful to marketers as it provides valuable information on key pull factors for city tourism.

The article by Vikash Gupta entitled "Talent management dimensions and its relationship with Generation Y employee's intention to quit: an Indian hotel perspective" throws considerable light on retention factors in the hospitality sector in India. The research established a causal

relationship between talent management dimensions and intentions of Generation Y employees to quit jobs.

The article entitled "Effect of customer relationship management (CRM) dimensions on hotel customer's satisfaction in Kashmir" by Maraj Sofi aimed at investigating the effect of customer relationship management (CRM) dimensions on customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector of Kashmir. The study addressed CRM strategy from a customer perspective, and it shows a strong relationship between customer relationship management and customer satisfaction.

The article of Prerna Garg and Anoop Pandey on "Moderating role of personal identifying information in travel related decisions" analysed the role of determinants of information quality in shaping attitudes and intentions of respondents from major metro cities of India towards electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) using personal identifying information (PII) as a moderator. The findings show that online travel agencies (OTAs) in this competitive time must harmonize their systems to create content that is timely updated, unique, convincing and useful to build long-term relationships and generate continued revenues.

The article entitled "Blending foodscapes and urban touristscapes: International tourism and city marketing in Indian cities" by Alberto Amore and Hiran Roy show that food tourism is still an unexplored niche market in India. Gateway cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata are central in the tourist experience to India, yet the official government authorities and destination marketing organizations tend to underestimate the potential of these destinations to prospective and returning international tourists. This study developed a conceptual framework for the analysis of food tourism and urban branding and shed light on a currently overlooked aspect of incoming tourism to India.

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