

# RESEARCH ARTICLE

# "TO MEASURE SATISFACTION OF TOURISTS VISITING THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE OF AJANTA CAVES"

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#### Abstract

..... To create effective marketing strategies for Heritage Destination in the tourism industry, an in depth knowledge of tourists is crucial. The aim of this study is to measure tourist satisfaction of the highly trafficked destination of the World Heritage Site of Ajanta Caves in Aurangabad (Maharashtra, India). Primary data was collected from 100 tourists (foreign & domestic tourists) visited Ajanta caves in the month of January 2020 using questionnaire. Data Analysis was done by using independent sample t-test and descriptive statistics. The findings of the study suggested that tourists were strongly satisfied with the appealing monument, facilities at the monument, scenic beauty of Ajanta caves and conservation of the monument. On the contrary tourists were let down with the accessibility & connectivity. It was also observed that there is no significant difference between satisfaction of foreign tourists and domestic tourists. Further researcher has come up with the suggestions for the destination planners and promoters to improve tourists footfall at the destination.

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#### Introduction:-

Ajanta Caves are one of the major tourist attractions in the world and since 1983 a UNESCO world Heritage site located in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra State in India. After years of neglect and desertion, John Smith, a member of the British hunting party in 1819CE had accidentally discovered Ajanta Caves. With growing popularity within a few years of its rediscovery the caves became famous for their fascinating setting, extraordinary architecture and especially their exceptional unique paintings.

The site presents a cluster of 32 rock cut Buddhist caves, the caves are chronologically divided into two phases that is the early Buddhist caves of 2nd century BCE to 1st century CE and the Mahayana caves dating to 5th century CE. Among the early caves, 9 and 10 are 'chaityas' which include the earliest known remnants of paintings in the history of India while 8, 12, 13, and 15A are 'viharas'. Caves 19, 26 and 29 are chaityas of the Mahayana period and all the other caves are viharas. Majority of the caves are the finest surviving example of ancient Indian wall-painting. On the other hand in bright and warm colours, the murals in these caves portray Buddha's past lives and rebirths along with rock-cut sculptures of Buddhist deities. The site is a protected monument in the care of the Archaeological Survey of India.

**Corresponding Author:-Sonali Tirath Gaikwad** Address:-RGNF-SRF, Department of Tourism Administration, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad (M.S). The study of customer satisfaction in tourism began in the year 1960's (Wang et al., 2009). Literally the meaning of satisfaction is vague because there is no universal scale to estimate the consumer satisfaction (Rahman & Shil, 2012). Further heritage tourism and its significance have been appreciated across the world in recent times, and its many-fold benefits have been realized. Like other sections of the tourism industry, it offers the possibility for several economic and civic benefits in the attraction areas by promoting visits to monuments and providing all necessary infrastructures for its support. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in building identification of a site or area as of historical or cultural importance not only among the residents of the region but also among tourists visiting the place. It strengthens citizenship values, builds community pride, and improves quality of life. Thereby paves way for its preservation in the future (ASI, 2014; AUCTUS ADVISORS, 2019; Green, 2010; Thomas, 2010).

However a lot of work has been done on the World Heritage Site of Ajanta Caves, no systematic attempt has been made to study tourist's satisfaction. Therefore the present research paper aimed to measure tourist's satisfaction at the World Heritage sites of Ajanta caves in Maharashtra, India.

#### **Review of Literature:-**

#### Heritage Tourism:

Heritage tourism is defined as "travelling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past." It is also known by the names of cultural tourism or cultural heritage tourism (AUCTUS\_ADVISORS, 2019).

Heritage also includes socially recognized material and cultural wealth kept by society for maintenance of social and ethnic identity and also for transfer to the succeeding generations (Ismagilova et al., 2015). These heritage sites are products, or perhaps constructions of history, which owe distinctiveness to the past (Thomas, 2010).

One important study on the aspect of heritage tourism and tourist satisfaction was conducted by Ghosh & Sofique (2012) at Kolkata, West Bengal.

Further, Huh, Uysal, & Mccleary (2006) identified that recent studies of cultural/heritage tourism have focused on identifying the characteristics, development, and management of cultural/heritage tourism, as well as on investigating demographic and travel behaviour characteristics of tourists who visit cultural/heritage destinations. The demographic, socioeconomic, and behavioural characteristics of tourists are important factors when the researcher analyzes satisfaction with cultural/heritage destinations. The findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between destination attributes and overall satisfaction with the cultural/heritage destination attributes, the relationship between cultural/heritage destination attributes and satisfaction, and market segmentation for cultural/heritage tourism.

#### **Tourist satisfaction:**

A crucial element of successful destination marketing is tourist satisfaction, which influences the choice of destination and the decision to return (Yoon & Usyal, 2005).

The subject of Customer satisfaction has been of discussions in marketing and tourism literature since long-time and it has been defined in various ways (Prayag, 2008).

According to Rahman & Shil (2012) and Somaskanthan & Rosmalina (2016) consumer service satisfaction measurement is important for successful management of the tourism industry and it has long been an important requirement in satisfaction studies.

Very commonly cited definition of tourist satisfaction is of Baker & Crompton (2000) who defined it as the emotional state of tourists after exposure to the opportunity or experience.

Satisfaction / dissatisfaction is derived from tourist's experience with the tourist destination (Mohamad et al., 2011). Nowacki (2013)elaborated that satisfaction is the reason why people visit attractions. It is also a determinant of the quality of the visit as well as of the attraction quality, that is, the performance of attraction providers in terms of providing service to their visitors. The major indicators of visitor satisfaction include experiences from the visit and visitors' behavioural intentions towards attractions.

Banki, Ismail, Dalil, & Kawu (2014) discussed the role of satisfaction in the consumer behaviour literature. They explained that satisfaction is consumer fulfilment responses which depend on the experience of using the services. It reflects tourist's post-purchase assessment of the destination which helps in understanding the performance of destinations. It is the result of evaluation of the tourists' experience of destination visit and expectations about the destination. When this experience exceeds expectations, it leads to tourist satisfaction. In the event that expectations surpass the experience, it results in tourist dissatisfaction (Gnanapala, 2016; Guntoro & Hui, 2014; Somaskanthan & Rosmalina, 2016).

One of the most remarked definitions explained satisfaction is the degree of positive feelings' activation for the experience (Hikmah et al., 2018).

#### Importance of Tourist satisfaction:

Maintaining and measuring tourist satisfaction is one of the fundamental challenges of tourism management and planning of marketable tourism products and services for destinations (Mohamad & Izzati, 2014; Yoon & Usyal, 2005).

Enhanced tourist satisfaction may lead to increased revenues and profits for service providers (Dmitrovic et al., 2009).

Further, it is considered to be one of the most important outcomes of all marketing activities, linking the processes of purchasing and consumption with post-purchase phenomena (Kandampully & Suharanto, 2000).

Satisfaction helps to create, develop, and maintain a favourable publicity and goodwill about a tourist destination or a resort. Therefore, tourism and hospitality organizations need to pay more attention in this regard (Gnanapala, 2016).

In addition, Dmitrovic et al. (2009) mentioned specifically that enhancing customer satisfaction should be one of a DMO's primary functions and a prerequisite for the strategy development leading to a destination's enhanced attractiveness and its competitive positioning. Moreover, they added that monitoring of tourist satisfaction is a continuous process which provides inputs for a trend analysis and strategic decision making.

According to Heung and Quf (2000) Travel attributes are a set of attributes that describe a place as a travel destination (cited in Raghavan, Subramonian, & Pahlevan, 2014). These attributes are nothing but the number of basic elements of destination which should be harmonized with each other and overall satisfaction is related to satisfaction with these all attributes (Roy et al., 2017; Shirazi & Som, 2013).

Nowacki (2013) identified them as attraction features (heritage resources, forms of heritage interpretation and presentation, quality of services and tourist infrastructure and attraction authenticity) and visitor features (socio-demographic features).

These attributes are evaluated on a "satisfaction scale". These items are then observed individually, summated, or assigned to dimensions of a construct measuring tourist satisfaction (Dmitrovic et al., 2009).

The major indicators of the satisfaction are behavioural intentions: revisit intentions, word-of-mouth and willingness to pay. The main factors influencing satisfaction include:, motivations, experiences from the visit, benefits and education (Nowacki, 2013).

Another attempt to measure the satisfaction level of tourists in Kashmir Valley was carried out by Bhat & Qadir (2013). They employed a performance based approach (SERVPERF) of service quality for measuring satisfaction. Outcome of the study found that the tourists were satisfied and intended to return to the destination. They suggested providing some attractive services to exceed their expectations.

Hence Maharashtra being a leading tourism state in India, no systematic attempt has been made to measure satisfaction of tourists visiting the world heritage site of Ajanta Caves. Thus this is a sincere attempt to fill the research gap by studying tourist's satisfaction. The hypothesis of the study is there is no significant difference between satisfaction of foreign tourists and domestic tourists.

## **Research Methodology:-**

The objective of this research paper is to measure tourist's satisfaction of the World Heritage sites of Ajanta caves. Primary data was collected from 100 tourists (foreign tourists & domestic tourists) who visited Ajanta caves in the month of October 2019; questionnaire was used as a research tool. The first part of the questionnaire included 29 attributes of tourist's satisfaction and the second part included demographic profile of the respondents at the sample destination. Each item in the scale was subjected to a 5point likert scale (Poor=1, Unsatisfactory=2, Can't say=3, Good=4, Excellent=5) for measuring Tourist satisfaction.

The face validity of the construct was tested with help of eight tourism experts and tourism researchers. They were asked for their opinion on the suitability of the satisfaction attributes. To resolve the ambiguity raised by the experts about a few word and attributes, some of them were replaced and for few of them proper explanation was provided. Thus face validity of the construct was deemed satisfactory.

Additionally, Cronbach's Alpha test was used to test the reliability. For this 60 responses of tourists were collected from the pilot survey at Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra. The result of Cronbach's Alpha test produced the value of 0.956 (>.7) for satisfaction attributes which indicated strong reliability of the scale.

#### **Data Analysis:**

Initially descriptive statistics was applied to study the mean value of satisfaction of foreign tourists and domestic tourists (Table No.1). The gap is measured statistically by comparing the difference between the mean value of foreign tourists and mean value of domestic tourists by using Independent Sample T test (Table No.2).

Table No1:-Mean values of foreign tourists and domestic tourists.

	Nationality	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Highly appealing monument	Indian	57	4.6491	.69414	.09194
	Foreign	43	4.6977	.55784	.08507
Scenic Beauty around the Caves	Indian	57	4.6842	.50561	.06697
•	Foreign	43	4.7209	.50359	.07680
Shopping	Indian	57	2.6842	1.29777	.17189
	Foreign	43	2.9302	1.31648	.20076
Conservation of Heritage Sites	Indian	57	3.3158	1.40354	.18590
	Foreign	43	3.9070	1.17136	.17863
Architectural Beauty	Indian	57	4.5965	.62277	.08249
•	Foreign	43	4.7907	.41163	.06277
Overall Tourist Satisfaction at Caves	Indian	57	4.1579	.92175	.12209
	Foreign	43	4.3953	.72832	.11107
Your experience about Caves visitor centre	Indian	57	4.1930	.78918	.10453
	Foreign	43	4.2558	.81920	.12493
Get away from stress	Indian	57	3.9123	.91184	.12078
	Foreign	43	4.0465	.87160	.13292
Get away from noise & pollution	Indian	57	3.4561	1.16604	.15445
	Foreign	43	3.5116	1.20262	.18340
Cultural experiences	Indian	57	4.6667	.57735	.07647
	Foreign	43	4.7442	.58117	.08863
Get energy	Indian	57	3.7544	1.05696	.14000
	Foreign	43	4.0465	.92462	.14100
Connectivity	Indian	57	2.8421	1.25056	.16564
	Foreign	43	2.9767	1.40557	.21435
Availability of authorised Tour Operators	Indian	57	2.9649	1.20956	.16021
	Foreign	43	2.9767	1.20492	.18375

Availability Accommodation	Indian	57	2.8246	1.19706	.15855
	Foreign	43	3.1163	1.17937	.17985
Behaviour of the staff of the service providers	Indian	57	2.9649	1.33584	.17694
-	Foreign	43	3.2558	1.36439	.20807
Affordability of accommodation facilities	Indian	57	2.7544	1.27168	.16844
	Foreign	43	3.0233	1.18499	.18071
Hygiene at wayside restaurants	Indian	57	2.4386	1.38896	.18397
	Foreign	43	2.4419	1.36804	.20862
General cleanliness at caves	Indian	57	2.8246	1.44077	.19083
	Foreign	43	2.6047	1.32987	.20280
Public Utilities	Indian	57	2.1930	1.23112	.16307
	Foreign	43	2.1860	1.09666	.16724
Parking Facilities	Indian	57	3.2982	1.34914	.17870
	Foreign	43	3.0698	1.22271	.18646
Availability of Tourist Information centres	Indian	57	3.0175	1.28857	.17067
	Foreign	43	3.0000	1.23443	.18825
Availability of approved tourist guides	Indian	57	2.7368	1.31647	.17437
	Foreign	43	2.9535	1.41343	.21555
Behaviour of the guides	Indian	57	2.7193	1.30595	.17298
¥	Foreign	43	3.0233	1.31816	.20102
Promptness at the ticketing window	Indian	57	3.0000	1.25357	.16604
•	Foreign	43	3.2558	1.21681	.18556
Drinking water facility	Indian	57	2.7719	1.37604	.18226
ž ř	Foreign	43	2.6744	1.28584	.19609
Garbage disposal facility	Indian	57	2.7895	1.43598	.19020
	Foreign	43	2.8140	1.34971	.20583
Availability of recreation and entertainment facilities	Indian	57	2.0351	1.34914	.17870
	Foreign	43	2.0698	1.24203	.18941
Telephone/Mobile services	Indian	57	2.5263	1.40287	.18581
•	Foreign	43	2.4186	1.25798	.19184
Bank/ATM facilities	Indian	57	2.4211	1.37513	.18214
	Foreign	43	2.6279	1.27285	.19411

Through the analysis, it was observed that tourists were overwhelmed by the highly appealing monument, scenic beauty, architectural beauty, overall tourist's satisfaction, caves visitor orientation centre and cultural experience, while dissatisfaction mean value was observed with respect to the attributes such as shopping, connectivity, availability of authorised tour operators, hygiene at wayside restaurants, general cleanliness, approved tourists guides, drinking water facility, availability of recreation and entertainment facilities, telephone/mobile and bank/ATM facilities.

To conclude overall tourist's satisfaction achieved the mean value of 4.15 (Indian) and 4.39 (Foreign) which reflected satisfaction of the optimistic tourists.

	luality	T-test for Equality of Means						
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-	Mean Differen	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the	

						tailed)	ce	Differe Diffe nce		erence	
									Lower	Upper	
Highly appealing monument	Equal variances assumed	.672	.414	376	98	.708	04855	.12913	30481	.20770	
	Equal variances not assumed			388	97.575	.699	04855	.12526	29714	.20004	
ScenicBeautyaroundtheCaves	Equal variances assumed	.293	.589	360	98	.719	03672	.10195	23904	.16560	
	Equal variances not assumed			360	90.789	.719	03672	.10189	23913	.16569	
Shopping	Equal variances assumed	.029	.864	933	98	.353	24602	.26376	76945	.27740	
	Equal variances not assumed			931	89.911	.354	24602	.26430	77110	.27906	
Conservation of Heritage Sites	Equal variances assumed	5.215	.025	2.236	98	.028	59119	.26442	- 1.1159 2	06645	
	Equal variances not assumed			- 2.293	96.951	.024	59119	.25782	- 1.1028 8	07949	
Architectural Beauty	Equal variances assumed	10.53 3	.002	- 1.772	98	.079	19421	.10957	41164	.02323	
	Equal variances not assumed			- 1.874	96.493	.064	19421	.10366	39995	.01154	
Overall Tourist Satisfaction at Caves	Equal variances assumed	.667	.416	1.392	98	.167	23745	.17054	57588	.10097	
	Equal variances not assumed			- 1.439	97.765	.153	23745	.16505	56500	.09009	
Your experience about Caves visitor centre	Equal variances assumed	.383	.537	388	98	.699	06283	.16203	38438	.25872	
	Equal variances not assumed			386	88.764	.701	06283	.16289	38650	.26084	
Get away from stress	Equal variances assumed	.523	.471	743	98	.459	13423	.18074	49291	.22445	

	1	1	1							
	Equal									
	variances			747	92.628	.457	13423	.17959	49089	.22243
	not assumed									
Get away from	Equal									
noise &	variances	.000	.999	232	98	.817	05549	.23872	52922	.41825
pollution	assumed	.000	.,,,,	.232	70	.017	.00019	.23072	.52722	.11025
	Equal									
	variances			001	00.000	010	05540	00077	52100	10000
	not			231	89.090	.818	05549	.23977	53189	.42092
	assumed									
Cultural	Equal									
experiences	variances	.721	.398	663	98	.509	07752	.11695	30960	.15456
	assumed									
	Equal									
	variances			662	90.285	.510	07752	.11706	31007	.15503
	not									
Cataparay	assumed Equal									
Get energy	variances	2.915	.091	-	98	.152	29213	.20247	69392	.10967
	assumed	2.915	.091	1.443	90	.132	29213	.20247	09392	.10907
	Equal									
	variances			-	05 500	1.4.5	20212	10070	(0(55	10220
	not			1.470	95.799	.145	29213	.19870	68655	.10230
	assumed									
Connectivity	Equal									
	variances	.716	.399	505	98	.615	13464	.26647	66344	.39416
	assumed									
	Equal									
	variances			497	84.531	.620	13464	.27089	67329	.40401
	not									
Availability of	assumed Equal									
authorised Tour	variances	.049	.826	049	98	.961	01183	.24392	49588	.47221
Operators	assumed	.015	.020	.019	70	.901	.01105	.21372	. 19900	. 17221
operators	Equal									
	variances			0.40	00.702	0(1	01102	04270	40(00	470.40
	not			049	90.782	.961	01183	.24378	49609	.47243
	assumed									
Availability	Equal									
Accommodatio	variances	.191	.663	1.214	98	.228	29172	.24027	76852	.18509
n	assumed									
	Equal									
	variances not			- 1.217	91.295	.227	29172	.23976	76796	.18452
	assumed			1.21/						
Behaviour of	Equal									
the staff of the	variances	o 4 -	c • -	-		• • • •				
service	assumed	.049	.825	1.068	98	.288	29090	.27231	83130	.24949
providers										
	Equal									
	variances			-	89.575	.290	29090	.27313	83355	.25175
	not			1.065	07.075	.270	.27070	.2,315	.055555	.20170
	assumed	0.00	0.7-		0.2	•••	<b>a</b> (aa <del>-</del>	0.40.54	<b>B</b> (10 <b>4</b> )	22.520
Affordability of	Equal	.820	.367	-	98	.284	26887	.24951	76402	.22628

.24704	75939	.22165
.27875	55644	.54991
.27815	55576	.54923
.28164	33899	.77881
.27847	33300	.77282
.23741	46420	.47808
.23358	45676	.47063
.26187	29120	.74815
.25826	28426	.74122
.25565	48978	.52487
25410	40700	50017
.25410	48/08	.52217
07440	7(124	22004
.2/448	/0134	.32804
07705		22441
.27725	/6//0	.33441
0(405	00051	221/2
.26485	82954	.22162
<u> </u>		
.26520	83080	.22289
-		
	.24704 .27875 .27875 .27815 .28164 .27847 .23741 .23358 .26187 .25826 .25565 .25565 .25565 .255410 .277448 .27725 .26485 .26520	.27875 55644    .27815 55576    .28164 33899    .27847 33300    .23741 46420    .23358 45676    .26187 29120    .25826 28426    .25565 48978    .25410 48708    .27725 76770    .26485 82954

	assumed									
Promptness at	Equal									
the ticketing	variances	.042	.838	1.023	98	.309	25581	.25005	75203	.24041
window	assumed			1.023						
	Equal									
	variances			-	91.964	.307	25581	.24900	75036	.23873
	not			1.027	,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,		.20001	.21900	.10000	.23075
	assumed									
Drinking water	Equal					-10			10000	(
facility	variances	1.205	.275	.361	98	.719	.09751	.27029	43886	.63389
	assumed									
	Equal									
	variances			.364	93.550	.717	.09751	.26771	43407	.62909
	not									
<b>a</b> 1	assumed									
Garbage	Equal	505	446	0.07	00	021	02440	20272	50550	52656
disposal facility	variances	.585	.446	087	98	.931	02448	.28272	58552	.53656
	assumed									
	Equal									
	variances			087	93.319	.931	02448	.28025	58098	.53202
	not									
Availability of	assumed									
recreation and	Equal variances									
entertainment		.607	.438	132	98	.896	03468	.26346	55750	.48814
facilities	assumed									
lacinties	Equal									
	variances									
	not			133	94.118	.894	03468	.26040	55170	.48234
	assumed									
Telephone/Mob	Equal									
ile services	variances	1.427	.235	.397	98	.692	.10771	.27121	43049	.64592
	assumed	1.127	.200	.577	20	.072	.10//1	.27121	. 15 0 15	.01072
	Equal									
	variances						10			<
	not			.403	95.037	.688	.10771	.26708	42250	.63792
	assumed									
Bank/ATM	Equal									
facilities	variances	.337	.563	769	98	.444	20685	.26910	74088	.32717
	assumed				-					
	Equal									
	variances			777	02.015	420	20/05	26610	72527	22166
	not			777	93.915	.439	20685	.26618	73537	.32166
	assumed									

Secondly Independent sample T-Test was applied to study the significant difference between satisfaction of foreign tourists and domestic tourists using SPSS (Table no 2). The p value is less than 0.05 only for 1 variable namely conservation of heritage site that is .028 for equal variance assumed and .024 for equal variance not assumed.

Therefore null hypothesis is rejected only for 1 variable that is conservation of heritage site and alternate hypothesis is accepted for remaining 28 variables as the p value is more than 0.05.

# **Conclusion and Suggestions:-**

To create a fulfilling heritage experience, the results of this research relate to the planning and management of the heritage tourism destinations. Even though there is tourist's satisfaction at the caves, monitoring of tourist's

satisfaction should be performed on a continuous basis. Thus the results of the research study indicated that tourist's are generally satisfied with their visit to the caves.

Moreover tourists were overwhelmed by the highly appealing monument, scenic beauty, architectural beauty, overall tourist's satisfaction, caves visitor orientation centre and cultural experience.

Other than that tourism operators at Ajanta Caves should continue to upgrade the accommodation and surrounding environment to reach to the destination and some respondents recommended that bigger or clearer signage at the roadside and at the destination should be made visible in the future.

It was also notable that the majority of the respondents were not content with the cleanliness of public utilities. Therefore having toilets tidy is of great importance.

However the lowest level of satisfaction mean value was observed in both domestic and foreign tourists with respect to the attributes such as shopping, connectivity, availability of authorised tour operators, hygiene at wayside restaurants, general cleanliness, approved tourists guides, drinking water facility, availability of recreation and entertainment facilities, telephone/mobile and bank/ATM facilities.

Many respondents also suggested that connectivity was the major issue, however this issue needed to be taken into consideration by the destination managers to revamp overall tourist's satisfaction and should pay higher attention to enhancing their services and facilities which were adversely evaluated in this research study.

On the other hand this research has some limitations about the small sample size and the uneven footfall of tourists visiting Ajanta caves due to the seasonality which may have significant impact on the findings.

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