



Oriental to Cosmopolitan Destination-A Transformational Journey of Lucknow

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ABSTRACT

Lucknow was among world's 50 Greatest Cultural Destinations, according to a year 2012 special supplement on Greatest Cultural Destinations brought out by The Sunday Telegraph, London and travel experts Page and Moy. Lucknow occupies a very prominent place in the history of Avadh region. The modernization and population pressure, in the era of globalization, upon the cities are changing their façade, which has both positive and negative consequences. Earlier researches have either concentrated on the oriental landmarks closing their eyes towards the culture of emerging cosmopolitan Lucknow. The present work aims at holistically studying the changing landscapes of Lucknow which is an amalgam. The development of city especially in the past ten years has made Lucknow a cosmopolitan destination. Researcher has made an attempt to probe the city's transformation.

KEYWORDS : Old Lucknow, Comopolitan Lucknow, Culture and Tourism

Introduction

In terms of cultural heritage, India is a giant on the South Asian scene. Few countries, with the possible exception of China, in this entire region of South and Southeast Asia can match India's rich natural and cultural diversity, history, economy and heritage. Lucknow, capital of the state of Uttar Pradesh in India, was among world's 50 Greatest Cultural Destinations, according to a year 2012 special supplement on Greatest Cultural Destinations brought out by The Sunday Telegraph, London and travel experts Page and Moy. The other two cities on the list are Agra and Jaipur. Lucknow apart from its core cultural value which used to attract visitors and still does, now offers a cosmopolitan buzz to the tourists. The itinerary offered to a visitor in the present times is very diverse containing an amalgamation of Emerging/Cosmopolitan Lucknow as well as Old/Cultural Lucknow. Creating a strong relationship between tourism and culture can help destinations to become more attractive as well as more competitive as locations to live, visit, work and invest in. (OECD2009)

Methodology and Objective

Present study follows the positivistic approach. It is empirical in nature with quantitative approach providing support. Present study has used primary, secondary and tertiary resources. It is based upon basal information, physical surveys and consultation of journals, magazines, CD, books, district gazetteer, travelogues; both on cultural change management and tourism, world over and in Lucknow. The facts were checked with living human memory. Observation methods were employed. The present work aims at holistically studying the changing landscapes of Lucknow which is an amalgam. The development of city especially in the past ten years has made Lucknow a cosmopolitan destination. Researcher has made an attempt to probe the city's transformation.

Holistic Lucknow

The modernization and population pressure, in the era of globalization, upon the cities are changing their façade, which has both positive and negative consequences. Lucknow is a unique city which portrays characteristics of 'traditionalism', roots of which can be traced in the life and times of people of old Lucknow (*Luckhnawis*) which was an affluent section of society in its search for knowledge, academic achievements and activities, hedonistic pastimes, social and religious ceremonies, and artistic pursuits (Sharar1989). Lucknow as a city has a personality of its own. It has a vibrant history. The city has experienced the Hindu rule, the Muslim rule, a passing Mughal touch, feudal lord's regime and colonial rule so closely. The exception lies not only in the variety, but also in the manner, in which all the colours of these periods have been amalgamated, absorbed and exhibited, explicitly visible even in the present times (Rizwan2012). The process of evolution has transformed the physical, social and cultural landscape of the people of Lucknow beyond recognition. The culture of Lucknow, therefore, like that of other countries at different times and places could not retain its status quo and 'modernity' seeped in, more strongly with the advent of shopping malls, architectural structures erected by a democratically elected chief of the state with an

objective to display power and position of a class which has been oppressed for years in the region, new colonies emerging in the periphery due to population explosion and the city being the capital was able to provide infrastructural base to prosper. Areas exhibiting these features is popularly known as the 'New Lucknow', having a cosmopolitan appeal, which has its own tourism edifices gaining popularity slowly and steadily. These serve as recreational areas/leisure areas for the locals also. Tradition and modernity are viewed as a continuum (Shills 2006) and the co-existence of two can be seen very uniquely in the city of Lucknow.

The commonest sight anywhere you go in the city of Lucknow at any time is construction material and men at work. But the major chunk of all these activities is *Shaheed Path*. From housing projects to roads and from railway over bridges to IT parks, buildings are coming up around the 23 –km stretch from Faizabad Road to Kanpur Road. Construction work continues at a hectic pace and every project is directed towards solving one urban problem or the other or creating one facility better than the previous. In times to come, Lucknow seems poised to be looked at as the hot new proposition for investors, the favourite destination of the immigrants and a provider of employment.

The turn of the century was a watershed year on Lucknow's development calendar. This was the time when the city's old master plan, drafted in 1992, was losing its relevance. The old city was bursting at the seams and even newer areas like Gomtinagar were fast approaching the saturation point. Lucknow was waiting for a new plan to tackle the population boom –triggered by steady influx of immigrants from eastern UP and Bihar-it was already witnessing. Then in 2001, a city road project-Shaheed Path –crossed the moorings of the conceptual stage. Nobody would then have imagined that it would become the new artery of the city of Nawabs in another 10 years around which all the major development would be positioned. A smooth, planned and controlled pattern of development of a tourist destination along a predetermined and anticipated route is an exception rather than the rule (Butler1980). In the new master plan that came out in 2005, the area beyond Gomtinagar stretching between Faizabad Road and Kanpur Road was tuned in as new hub of development.

Culture and Tourism

Culture is a word that has rather different meaning in philosophy, aesthetics, anthropology, sociology and elsewhere, it is considered to be one of the most complicated words in the English language because of its diverse usages in distinct systems of thought. WTO report says "There is no tourism without culture". Richards (1996) suggested that early approaches to the relationship between tourism and culture tends to be based on the "sites and monuments" approach, Gradually, however, a broader view of culture in tourism emerged, which included the performing arts (Hughes 2000), crafts (Richards 1999), cultural events, architecture and design, and more recently, creative activities (Richards and Wilson 2006), and intangible heritage (UNESCO). Based on UN World Tourism Organization estimates, cultural tourism accounts for 40% of international tourism (Richards 2007). This has

also stimulated a move away from product-based to process based or “way of life” definitions of culture. Tourists increasingly visit destinations to experience the lifestyles, everyday culture and customs of the people they visit. The combination of tourism and culture is therefore an extremely potent economic engine. According to Europa Nostra 2005 “more than 50% of tourist activity in Europe was driven by cultural heritage and cultural tourism is expected to grow the most in the tourism sector.” Similar positive assessments can be found elsewhere and especially with cities like Lucknow where the main driver is the core cultural product.

Lucknow is still a predominantly cultural tourism destination. The city can be neatly divided in terms of development into four well defined periods (Singh 1994), (i) Pre- Nawabian (ii) Nawabian (iii) Post Nawabian (iv) Post Independence. Lucknow’s destiny was manifested when Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula selected it as the site for his new capital of Oudh (Awadh) in 1775, to distance himself from his imperious mother in Faizabad. In eight intense and inspired decades (1775-1856); it grew magically from an unremarkable township into the sophisticated and widely admired court city of Nawabs of Oudh. Lucknow gained a reputation as a center for the finest cuisine, for more Urdu poets than lived in the rest of India, for music and dance, for religious men and littérateurs, for fairs and grand *Moharram* processions, and for what is considered best in taste, manners, refinement and culture (Oldenburg 1984). New forms of tourism (products) that are an offering of the modern times, especially Dalit Tourism, Ethnic Tourism/ Indigenous Tourism (Kalagaon Resort), Heritage Walk of the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department and similar product offerings by private players like TORNOS, Fashion Tourism (*Chikan* works), Pro-Poor Tourism (SEWA) etc.

Conclusion and Suggestions

It is clear that culture is important for tourism and for the attractiveness and competitiveness of destinations. The most successful destinations are those that can create a positive synergy between culture and tourism. But this synergy does not happen automatically: it has to be created, developed and managed. Following aspects have to be taken care of at macro level:

1. Branding and image development.
2. Internet platforms, including accommodation and event booking functionality.
3. Joint promotions with tour operators.
4. Themed products (events, attractions, cultural routes).
5. Theme years and events.
6. Cultural and creative clusters.
7. Encouraging filming in the region.
8. Discount cards.

Major suggestions on a micro level to optimize the emerging cosmopolitan shade of Lucknow would include the following:

1. Innovation and Role of Cultural Entrepreneurs- Cultural entrepreneurs operating in the city like Sanatkada, which is primarily an NGO (Non Government Organization) has been doing commendable work in revitalizing the culture of the city especially its oriental facets, both tangible and non tangible. They should be supported both by government and residents.
2. Construction of a Tourism Calendar: A destination in order to grow in terms of tourism should have well chalked out events calendar. This should be displayed well in advance on the website of Uttar Pradesh tourism as it portrays a destination more strongly, especially in the international market. The city of Lucknow has immense potential in terms of both cosmopolitan facets and traditional tourism products. The transformation has added almost every possible variety of tourism apart from the core cultural products. This variety which is enough to make the city a 365 day destination has to be reflected in the tourism calendar.
3. Rebranding of Lucknow: There seems to be a major conflict between theory and practice while the city is promoted as city of Nawabs, who filled the city with cultural colours, but there is a dominant co-existence of emerging cosmopolitan Lucknow. This change has brought many opportunities. Lucknow should be re-branded as a cocktail that has shades of tradition as well as modernity.

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