

# ICOA1810: UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT PREFERENCES OF VISITORS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTENANCE OF WORLD HERITAGE SITES: A CASE OF ELLORA CAVES

## Subtheme 01: Integrating Heritage and Sustainable Urban Development by engaging diverse Communities for Heritage Management

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**Abstract:** Evaluation of Heritage and its conservation should be based on the values that are perceived by various stakeholders. This makes the process of conservation, complex and sometimes difficult. Visitors at heritage sites, have different motivations of visit. They have expectations from heritage sites, different from those of the local communities. Hence their preferences for development at these sites may differ with the local communities, thereby posing challenges in conservation and development of the heritage sites. This paper presents the findings of research carried out at Ellora, the World heritage site in Maharashtra. Face to face interviews were carried out using a structured interview schedule. 141 local communities and 319 visitors were interviewed. Preferences for developmental activities formed an important part of the schedule. Preferences were solicited for 19 items on a five point Likert scale. Preferences of the visitors and local communities were compared using Mann-Whitney test. Of the 19 variables, visitors and local communities differ on 17 variables, indicating differences in preferences for development of heritage sites. The median values show that they are more preferred by Local communities than visitors, showing keen interest in the developmental activities in and around Ellora caves. Difference in means values of home stay facility shows higher interest of local communities in providing accommodation for the visitors for more economic benefits. Preference for Space and facilities for Art and Cultural festival and Space and facilities for religious festivals is higher of local communities; shows not only economic dimension but also the cultural dimension of the community. It can be concluded that Local communities have social and cultural associations with World Heritage Site and other religious structures in the region. It is suggested that the conservation and development should not be tourism centric but inclusive of needs and aspirations of the local communities for sustainable development of World Heritage Sites.

**Key words:** stakeholders, values, heritage conservation and development, sustainability

## Introduction

The World Tourism Organization in 2005 defines sustainable tourism as the one *‘.....that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities’*<sup>1</sup>

There is rising discussion on tourism, environment and culture, and on the ways tourism could be used as a tool to enhance protection of important natural and cultural heritage sites and its values; and for economic progress of the place and people<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, for sustainable tourism development it is significant to consider local perspective, local priorities and local knowledge<sup>3</sup>, thus highlighting the role of local communities in the sustainable development. The Kyoto Vision of 2012 in World Heritage Convention and Sustainable Development: the Role of Local Communities discussed the importance of people-centred conservation of World Heritage to contribute to sustainable development and ensure a harmonious relationship between communities and the environment, as the best way to ensure long-term protection of the outstanding universal value of World Heritage sites<sup>4</sup>.

Based upon these foundations, research was conducted for understanding the preferences of both the visitors and the local communities for development. In light of this, the aim of the paper is to understand the development preferences of the visitors and the local communities at the World Heritage site of Ellora caves, near Aurangabad, an extremely popular site amongst domestic and international tourists. The objective is to understand the priorities and preferences of visitors and local communities with respect to development, to see whether there are agreements or conflict.

## The Study Area

The paper is based upon the study carried out at Ellora, near Aurangabad, [Maharashtra state, India]. Ellora was inscribed by UNESCO in 1983 as a Cultural heritage of World Heritage Status. However, the MTDC [Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation] reported a huge gap in attaining the statement of Outstanding Universal value and World Heritage site status for Ellora caves<sup>5</sup>. These include, lack of site management plan and larger economic benefits to Aurangabad rather than local communities of Ellora and nearby villages; and compromise of visitors safety, security and comfort<sup>6</sup>. Subsequently, UNESCO report mentions management and conservation plan of the Ellora Caves being carried out by various branches of the Archaeological Survey of India, who is responsible for the conservation and development of the Heritage site along with other agencies like the State Forest Department and the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation<sup>7</sup>.

The site has also received major funding from Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for Ajanta– Ellora conservation and development for preserving monument and natural resources, improving

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<sup>1</sup>UNEP, & UNWTO,2005

<sup>2</sup>McCool & Moisey 2009

<sup>3</sup>UNESCO, 2011

<sup>4</sup>UNESCO, 2012

<sup>5</sup>Tourism Working Group of MTDC , 2010

<sup>6</sup>Tourism Working Group of MTDC , 2010

<sup>7</sup>UNESCO, 2002

the infrastructure and visitor management and providing training for high quality of tourism<sup>8</sup>. Ellora caves precinct has 2 villages in close proximity of the site – Verul/ Ellora village and Khuldabad. The Prohibited area of 100 m is surrounded by 200m regulated zone which has an Ashram, hotels, restaurants, handicraft shops.

Ghrushneshwara Tirtha, one of the twelve pan-Indian  *jyotirlingas*  of Saivism, frequented by pilgrims and tourists, also lies in the Ellora precinct.



Photo 1: Kailas temple ,Ellora caves



Photo 2: Ghrushneshwar temple



Photo 3: Ahilyabai Kund

## Method and tools

Face to face interviews are conducted with visitors and local communities. Separate schedules were prepared for the visitors and local communities. Question pertaining to the development Preferences was common for both. The questions pertaining to the development preferences were formulated based upon literature and also based upon the expert interviews and observations. The questions are broadly based to understand the preferences for physical, environmental and ecological, Socio-cultural and economic development of the heritage site. Developmental aspects contain 19 items, 12 related to environment and ecology of Ellora caves and surrounds, 2 related to socio-cultural aspects and 5 related to economic activities. Stratified random sampling was employed to select respondents from the local communities and visitors. Attempt was made to select almost equal number of males and females. Respondents (both visitors and local community members) above the age of 18 years were selected.

Statistical test- Mann-Whitney test is used to understand if there is significant difference in preferences visitors attach to the development activities and similar for local communities; and to understand commonalities and differences in preferences of visitors and local communities through comparison, Mann-Whitney test is used. Level of significance is 0.05. *Null hypothesis formulated was “There is no difference between the preferences of local communities and visitors”*.

- Rows in which Null Hypotheses are rejected are highlighted with grey colour
- Hypothesis is rejected if the P value <0.05 (Level of significance)

	Variable	Group	Mean	Median	Skewness	Kurtosis	P value	Result
1	Conservation and restoration of Ellora caves	Visitors	4.88	5	-5.569	34.326	<b>0.040</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.96</b>	5				

<sup>8</sup>JICA,2013

2	Conservation and Restoration of Paintings and Sculptures in Ellora caves	Visitors	4.86	5	-4.611	25.119	0.212	Null accepted
		Local	4.93	5				
3	Space and Facilities for Art and Cultural festival like Ellora festival , in Ellora	Visitors	3.75	4	-0.721	-0.416	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.57</b>	5				
4	Space and Facilities for Religious festivals like Mahashivratri, Urus etc	Visitors	3.36	3	-0.367	-0.918	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.53</b>	5				
5	Space for Shops selling flowers, fruits related to puja and other Religious activities	Visitors	2.57	2	11.562	173.002	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.05</b>	4				
6	More Hotels in Ellora	Visitors	2.85	3	123	-1.267	0.126	Null accepted
		Local	3.08					
7	Space for Shops of local handicrafts	Visitors	2.98	3	-0.003	-1.225	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.24</b>	3				
8	Home stays for tourists in homes of local people/ residents	Visitors	2.96	3	.051	-1.227	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>3.84</b>	5				
9	Guided tours inside Ellora , Ellora village and other important buildings	Visitors	3.86	4	-0.846	-0.297	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.55</b>	4.5				
10	Seating facility along the movement path	Visitors	4.06	4	-1.100	.185	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.66</b>	5				
11	Accessibility features for disabled such as ramps, hand railing, Braille script etc	Visitors	4.28	5	-1.353	1.321	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.72</b>	5				
12	Lighting for seeing the caves	Visitors	4.11	5	-1.340	.804	<b>0.012</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.38</b>	5				

13	Toilets and drinking water facility	Visitors	4.53	5	-2.042	4.308	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.87</b>	5				
14	Improvement in roads quality	Visitors	4.19	5	-1.236	.821	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.72</b>	5				
15	Increase in parking facility	Visitors	3.62	4	-.511	-.596	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.38</b>	5				
16	Planting more trees	Visitors	4.28	5	-1.084	.609	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.71</b>	5				
17	Garbage disposal facility and Waste management	Visitors	4.42	5	-1.767	2.677	<b>0.006</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.68</b>	5				
18	Airport Near Ellora caves for easy access	Visitors	2.27	2	.787	-.612	<b>0.002</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>2.88</b>	3				
19	State Highway Road to be widened and shifted away from the Ellora caves	Visitors	3.53	4	-.467	-1.241	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Null rejected</b>
		Local	<b>4.07</b>	5				

*Table.1- Mann-Whitney test for Comparative Analysis of Visitors and Local Communities' Development Preferences*

## Findings

From the above observations in the table, it is seen that –

**Visitors and local communities lay unequal importance to development aspects related to Ellora caves and its surrounds.**

1. Out of 19 variables, local communities and visitors differ on 17 variables namely, space and facilities for cultural festivals, religious festivals, shops selling flowers, local handicrafts; infrastructure facilities like seating facility, toilets and drinking water, home stays; accessibility aspects like accessibility features like ramps, etc; airport, improved roads, parking facility and State Highway Road to be widened and shifted away from the Ellora caves; environmental and ecological aspects like conservation of Ellora caves, planting more trees, guided tours, lighting inside the caves to enhance experiential quality. The median values show that these are very much preferred by Local communities than visitors, shows their keen interest in the developmental activities in and around the Ellora caves.
2. There is difference in preferences of visitors and local communities with reference to home stays. Difference in means values show higher interest of local communities in providing accommodation for the visitors for more economic benefits.
3. Preference for Space and facilities for Art and Cultural festival like Ellora festival in Ellora and Space and facilities for religious festivals like Mahashivratri, Urus is higher of local communities; shows not

only the economic benefit but also the cultural dimension of the community which is observed to be thriving despite the lack of space and facilities.

4. Guided tours inside Ellora, Ellora village and other religious buildings are more preferred by local communities and quite preferred by visitors though there is significant difference between the mean values. Most of the visitors' intent of visit is knowing more about the historic place and the historic layers are not just confined to Ellora caves, but extend beyond it and are part of the larger regional canvas including structures in Verul village, Khuldabad and nearby places like Shulibhanjan and Mhaismal. To local communities, higher mean values show their place identity and place attachment due to the heritage inside the Verul village, especially the religious ones.
5. Planting more trees is important to local communities more than visitors because of its resource values. The forest provides them fuel, fodder, ground for grazing their cattle, fruits and other non-timber products. From the focused group discussion it is observed that water is a major problem in Ellora and Khuldabad and that local communities realize that planting more trees will resolve the issue of water.
6. Local communities and visitors do not differ on remaining 2 variables - Conservation and Restoration of Paintings and Sculptures in Ellora caves, More Hotels in Ellora. Both of them agree that conservation and Restoration of paintings and sculptures in Ellora caves is very important for experience of the past history, where as more hotels in Ellora are somewhat important for enhanced stay in Ellora.

## **Conclusions:**

From the analysis, it can be concluded that conservation and restoration is of top priority for the visitors as also legibility of the paintings and sculptures by appropriate lighting. Garbage and waste management and public facilities are also of top priority to the visitors. Space and facilities for festivals, handicrafts and selling religious goods are not at all important to visitors. It is also noted that space and facilities for Art and Cultural festival reflect their cultural ethos over religious ethos.

To visitors, conservation and protection of heritage is of top-most priority along with good quality environment and tourism infrastructure, however no comfort at the cost of the threat to the heritage e.g. Airport, road widening etc. Though addressing partially to the needs of the tourists/ visitors, the current development is done to some extent is tourism-centric; and not addressing the needs of the local people.

Importance of Living heritage in and around the World Heritage site highlights local values, their sense of place and well-being, their place identity and place attachment. Conservation and development of World Heritage sites should recognize local cultural values in planning and development in and around World Heritage sites for retaining cultural identity and place identity; especially in the context of increasing forces of global on local. For long term sustainability, the development should take into consideration the development preferences of both- the visitors and local communities and seek a balance between sustainable development and sustainable tourism, where sustainable development goes beyond sustainable tourism extending the benefits to the local communities and inclusive of their aspirations.

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