

The Cinematic Journey: Film Tourism's Crucial Role in Economic Growth and Cultural Preservation

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India assumed the Presidency of G20 for the year 2023, a significant responsibility to showcase our commitment in shaping international economic policies and fostering cooperation among the world's major economies. One of the notable events under India's G20 Presidency was focused on Film Tourism held at picturesque Kashmir, which was attended by Hon'ble Minister of Tourism, Govt. of India - Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Hon'ble Minister of State for Tourism - Shri Ajay Bhatt, G20 Sherpa - Shri Amitabh Kant and the then Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India - Shri Arvind Singh. The decision to include this topic highlights India's strategic approach to leveraging its vibrant film industry, known as Bollywood, as a tool for economic growth and global engagement. This summit not only shed light on the cultural richness of India's cinema but also signified the recognition of film tourism as a pivotal driver of the tourism sector worldwide.

When a film captures the essence of a place, it bestows an unparalleled promotional opportunity for it. Tourists are drawn to destinations they recognize from the big screen, yearning to immerse themselves in the cinematic narrative. The mesmerising landscapes and iconic locales that serve as backdrops for Indian films have got transformed into pilgrimage sites for movie fans and tourists alike. However the impact of cinema is much more than just entertainment - it has become a potent force in driving economic growth and preserving cultural heritage.

The enchanting vistas showcased in films have witnessed a surge in visitors eager to experience these locations. As a result local businesses - from hotels, restaurants, tour guides and shopping flourish benefitting from the influx of visitors seeking an authentic experience. Merchandise inspired by films, exploring iconic scenes and even the rejuvenation of underutilized destinations for tourism contribute to the economic upswing and creating job opportunities for the locals.

Cultural heritage, traditions & customs and historical treasures, face the challenge of preservation in our rapidly evolving world. Indian cinema, however, emerges as a powerful guardian of these legacies. Take for instance, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Jaipur - Hawa Mahal, featured prominently in films such as "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" and "Jodhaa Akbar." The cinematic spotlight has not only amplified its historical significance but also impelled local authorities to prioritize conservation efforts. The convergence of film and heritage emboldens the

commitment to preserving these landmarks, ensuring that their stories are etched in the annals of time.

However, it also presents challenges that require careful navigation. The influx of tourists can strain infrastructure, disrupt local rhythms, and stress fragile ecosystems. To harness the full potential of film tourism, collaboration between governments, filmmakers, and local communities is essential. The implementation of sustainable practices ensures that the benefits of film tourism are harnessed without sacrificing the integrity of heritage sites or the well-being of locals.

The digital age has magnified the journey from reel to real in monumental ways, with movie fans traversing the digital realm to relive their favourite cinematic moments. The world is witnessing a confluence of storytelling and tourism by creating a narrative where the allure of the silver screen nurtures both financial vitality and the timeless tapestry of heritage. As countries realise the importance of film tourism, in India we have been actively engaged in this for almost 100 years at Kashmir - the heaven on Earth.

The G-20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar was a great initiative by India to boost tourism & hospitality sector and enhance economic prosperity of the region that will leave a lasting impact on the film and tourism sectors.