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Chief Editors

Prof. S. P. Bansal

Vice Chancellor

*Central University of Himachal Pradesh,
Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh*

Dr. Sandeep Kulshrestha

*Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel
Management, (IITTM)*



Indian Tourism and Hospitality Congress

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All Correspondence Should be Address to :

Managing Editor

Tourism Innovations

Bharti Publications

4819/24, 3rd Floor, Mathur Lane

Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002

Ph: 011-2324-7537, 011-46172797

Email: journal.itc@gmail.com, bhartipublications@gmail.com

Editor's Note

As of February 2023, the global tourism industry continues its journey towards recovery from the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the sector has made significant strides, it remains in a state of flux, with several key trends and developments shaping its trajectory.

The tourism industry has shown resilience and adaptability in the face of the pandemic. Many countries have eased travel restrictions, leading to a gradual increase in tourism activities, both domestically and internationally. However, recovery rates vary across regions. Domestic tourism has been a lifeline for the industry. Travelers have been exploring their own countries, contributing to the revival of local tourism economies. This trend is expected to continue as people prioritize safety and convenience. The vaccination campaigns worldwide have been a critical factor in reopening borders and restoring traveler confidence. Vaccine passports and proof of vaccination are becoming commonplace for international travel.

The digital transformation of the tourism sector has accelerated. Online booking platforms, contactless payments, and virtual experiences have become standard, enhancing both convenience and safety for travelers. Environmental and social sustainability have gained prominence. Travelers are increasingly interested in eco-friendly and responsible tourism options, pushing the industry to adopt more sustainable practices.

Traveler behavior has shifted, with a greater emphasis on health and wellness. Wellness tourism, outdoor activities, and remote destinations have seen increased interest. The integration of technology, including artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR), has enhanced the travel experience. AI-driven chatbots and AR-enhanced tours are examples of these innovations. The aviation sector has seen a gradual recovery in passenger numbers. Airlines have implemented safety measures, such as improved air filtration systems, to mitigate health risks during flights. Challenges persist, including uncertainty about the emergence of new variants, sporadic travel restrictions, and a need for industry-wide standardization of health and safety protocols.

The tourism industry's recovery journey is ongoing, marked by a mix of optimism and caution. While the path ahead may still be uncertain, the industry's ability to adapt, embrace sustainability, and prioritize traveler safety positions it well for future growth and resilience. Monitoring the evolving landscape and embracing innovation will continue to be essential in the months to come.

Chief Editors

Prof. S.P. Bansal

Dr. Sandeep Kulshrestha

‘Heritage Walks’ as Emerging Tourism Product in Delhi, India

Mohd Saleem Mir & Ruth Nengneilhing

Abstract

The landscape of Delhi is covered by heritage monuments and filled with myriad stories and anecdotes. It has been the seat of power since time immemorial. Kings and kingdoms have shaped this region through the process of building and rebuilding over time. Heritage walks are the means of bringing this history alive for the visitors. Interpretation by walk leaders makes such walks interesting, knowledgeable and fun. This study has attempted to understand heritage walks as a new and emerging product of tourism in Delhi. Online media has been used to collect the data and qualitative analysis is done to understand the impacts and importance of such heritage walks on the participants. It is concluded that heritage walks are emerging as one of the important tourism products and the participants are highly satisfied. There is a need to have innovatively designed heritage walks so that the lesser known heritage of the city is explored, highlighted, interpreted and preserved.

Keywords: Heritage walks, tourism product, walk leader, heritage interpretation, Delhi Walks

Introduction

“Every nook and corner of the Walled City has a story to tell—from the sprawling havelis that have witnessed the glory of Mughal and British empires, to the many galis, chowks and bazaars that have evolved over generations.”¹ This was the first line of an article published in The Economics Times on December 12, 2015. This is true but whole Delhi has much more to offer to tourists than just the Walled City. In fact there is a story in every corner of old and New Delhi as well as the areas adjacent to the India’s capital. Tourists, both domestic and foreign, have always considered Delhi as the most important part of their itinerary. The landscape of Delhi is covered by heritage monuments and filled with myriad stories and anecdotes. It has been the seat of power since time immemorial. Kings and kingdoms have shaped this region through the process of building and rebuilding over time.

Tourists visiting Delhi can choose any of the following places and activities:

1. Visit religious places (Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Bahai, Christian, Sikh etc.)

2. Visit Monuments (Mughal, British, post-independence)
3. Visit bazars (weekly markets, haats, spice markets etc.)
4. Visit gardens (There are a large number of parks and gardens distributed all over Delhi.)
5. Delhi is also food haven where one can find cuisines of all the states of India as well as the most countries of the world.
6. And many more recreational and other activities available in Delhi.

Apart from these traditional activities tourists have now the option of experiencing the city in a more engaging way, through heritage walks offered by various organizations and individuals. The first heritage walk in India was probably conducted in Ahmedabad (Karim et.al., n.d.) but Delhi has become the major city offering myriad thematic walks. Apart from usual stakeholders Delhi Metro also started heritage walks² in 2015, when it announced the heritage walk to explore Old Delhi.³ By 2016 there were already 85 different walks offered in Delhi by different organizations (including Delhi Metro

Mohd Saleem Mir

Assistant Professor, Cluster Innovation Centre, University of Delhi,

Ruth Nengneilhing

ICSSR Post-Doctoral Fellow, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, JNU, New Delhi

Rail Corporation) under different themes of nature, heritage, food and photography. Delhi Walk Festival was organized by 'I Love You' to showcase these different walks offered.⁴

Heritage Walks in Delhi is an important strategy to achieve the following objectives:

1. Create awareness among citizens about the key historic areas within Delhi.
2. Help citizens and tourists to relate to the historic parts of the city in a more personal and intimate manner.
3. Draw the citizens of Delhi and tourists into areas of rich cultural and architectural Heritage, which are not yet on the tourist itinerary.
4. Heightening sensitivity of the local populace towards the historic value of settlements and encouraging local communities to conserve and preserve their own heritage and inculcate a sense of pride and appreciation among them.
5. Initiate community based conservation efforts involving citizens, volunteers and other organizations.

Brief Literature Review

Markwell, Stevenson and Rowe (2004) have conceptualized "the heritage walks as a form of cultural interpretation situated within a cultural planning context, with links to strategies of urban re-imagining and economic development". Heritage Walks have been considered and recommended as an important tool for promoting sustainable historical tourism (Thomas 2010). Walks are exhibiting of heritage as a category of living exhibit by interacting with and encountering heritage in its natural habitat. This is different from the usual category of living exhibit where an environment and space for representation is created artificially for a specific time to showcase culture (Jafa 2012). Delhi Chapter of INTACH (2014) has two types of heritage walks provided in Delhi - regular walk and customized walk. There are a few individual specialized heritage walk providers like Navina Jafa, Sohail Hashmi, Surekha Narayan, Sanjeev Chaturvedi and Manjit Singh (Dubey, 2013). Liddle (2011) and Barton & Malone (2014) have provided extensive details about the heritage walks that could be conducted in Delhi. INTACH (Delhi Chapter) has also brought out a book depicting twenty walking trails in Delhi (2014). Smith (2015) through his book makes one walk through the labyrinths of Delhi city and provides stories behind the street names, stories behind the forgotten buildings which can be very useful for a walk leader to make the interpretation interesting. Heritage Walks are supposed to provide an insight into the historic era and heritage structures which tell the story of Civilizations in Delhi (Srivastava, 2015). According to (Jafa, 2012) the potential of exhibiting culture through heritage walks has not been

fully explored in India, though walks have become a popular activity in many cities. Most of the literature in the form of books on heritage walks in India is actually the guide books depicting the walks the one can take in different cities.

Objectives

1. Explore the 'heritage walks' providers and organizers in Delhi.
2. Understand the perception of participants of 'heritage walks' towards the concept and their satisfaction levels.
3. Examine 'heritage walks' as an emerging tourism product.

Data and Methodology

The data for this study was collected from the online sources. Many of the participants of heritage walks have commented on the online platforms. The comments were selected randomly from a total of 207 reviewers or posters (those who posted reviews) on tripadvisor. in. 'Voyant Tools' was used for the qualitative analysis of the comments. Voyant Tools is a web-based open and free software for the qualitative text analysis of a corpus of textual data.

'Heritage Walks' Organizers in Delhi

A list of some of the Heritage Walk Organizers in Delhi is given in Table 1. This information has been collected from their respective facebook pages, showing the 'followers' and 'likes'. It must be noted that facebook, though a good criterion to judge the popularity, cannot be considered the only source for categorizing the walk organizers.

Table 1 Some Heritage Walk Organisers in Delhi

Organization/Individual	Facebook page	
	Followers	Likes
Delhi Food Walks	2,62,052	2,06,887
Delhi Heritage Walks	11586	11705
Delhi Heritage Walks with Sohail Hashmi	8415	8303
INTACH Heritage Walks	7364	7268
Walk to Heritage	2828	2836
Heritage Walks Old Delhi	385	390
OLD DELHI Heritage Walks	89	86

Source: Compiled by the author from (list is not exhaustive)

Delhi Food Walks

This is the most popular heritage walks organiser on the social media and has verified facebook page. This was founded on May 20, 2012. It is an initiative that connects all the foodies and let them share food secrets with the people around. It is a multi cuisine platform that serves

the delicious delights on wheels in pocket fitting price. This has got recognition by Outlook Traveller, Indian Express and HT City featuring its stories. It has a total of 676 reviews, with average of 4.3 of 5 stars (see Fig. 1). It has a large foreign tourist fan base.

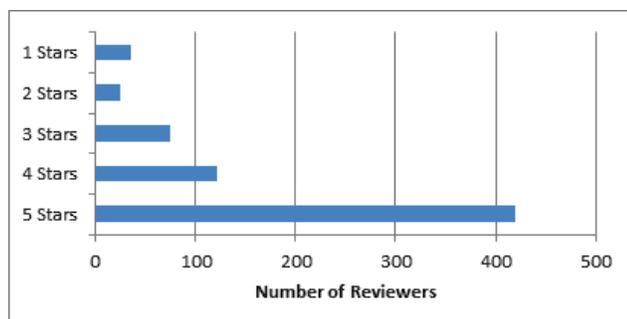


Fig. 1 Reviews of Heritage Walks in Delhi (N=676)

Some recent walks organised by Delhi Food Walks are given in the Table 2.

Table 2 Some Trails of Delhi Food Walks

Date	Theme of the Walk
March 4 2018	Mother Earth, Sister Seeds: A farmland food trail
December 31 2017	The Great Bakra Feast
November 5 2017	Delhi Walk Festival - Kebab and Biryani Trail in Old Delhi
October 14, 2017	NBT Flavour Food Festival - Delhi's first street food fusion fest
September 27, 2017	Durga Puja Food Trail
August 11, 2017	50 must eats in Delhi by Delhi Food Walks
June 17, 2017	Iftar and Sehri Food Walks
December 4, 2016	Momo Mania at Majnu Ka Tila by Delhi Food Walks
December 4, 2016	Breakfast food walk in Kamla Nagar
December 3, 2016	CR Park Food Walk - The Bong Connection

Source: Compiled from facebook page of Delhi Food Walks

Delhi Heritage Walks (DHW)

This was started in 2009, according to the information given on their facebook page. No information is provided about the rate of walks. It has a total of nine reviews (eight are five star and one is one star). Although DHW is an important stakeholder in Delhi walks, its online facebook reviews are not many. The reason is that DHW has its own website dedicated to providing the information about its walks. The site is very interactive and people can book the walk online, customise their walks according

to the availability of time and location and choose the walks of their interest or even suggest new walks. This shows that only social media can't be used as authentic source to judge the popularity. This is again an important stakeholder in organising and managing the heritage walks in Delhi. The major objectives of their walks are to: 1) Experience the city of Delhi, its neighbourhoods, as never before; 2) Explore the lesser known parts of the city; and 3) Enjoy heritage as not only the past but a living tradition.⁵ Some of the walks recently conducted by DHW are given in Table 3.

Table 3 Some Trails of Delhi Heritage Walks

Date	Theme of the Walk
April 29, 2018	Exploring Mehrauli Archaeological Park
April 22, 2018	Stories of Shahjahanabad: Heritage Walk to Chandni Chowk
March 10, 2018	Landmarks of 1857: Northern Ridge
February 25, 2018	Exploring Tughluqabad
February 18, 2018	Heritage Walk to Lodi Garden
November 5, 2017	Phoolwalon ki Sair: Festival of Flower Sellers
October 8, 2017	Delhi in 1857: Heritage Walk in Kashmiri Gate
September 24, 2017	The Hall of Thousand Columns: Heritage Walk to Jahanpanah
September 10, 2017	Medieval Tombs in English Garden: A Walk through Lodi Garden
July 23, 2017	Heritage Walk to Qutub Complex

Source: Compiled by author, 2018

Delhi Heritage Walks with Sohail Hashmi

Sohail Hashmi is a well known face of Heritage Walk organisers in Delhi. He operates alone and is also associated with other organisers as senior Walk Leader. His heritage interpretation skills are highly appreciated. Hashmi also offers out of Delhi tours also. His Mango Walk is highly popular in which more than 30 varieties of mangoes are offered with the history and stories related to mangoes that make the walk highly interesting. Some of his recent walks are given in the Table 4.

Table 4 Some Trails of Heritage Walks by Sohail Hashmi

Date	Theme of the Walk
March 18, 2018	Kashmiri Gate Walk
March 11, 2018	Turkman Gate Walk
February 18, 2018	Aravali Biodiversity Park Walk
February 11, 2018	Matia Mahal+Non-Veg Food Walk

January 21, 2018	Chawri to Chandni Chowk Walk
December 24, 2017	Humayun's Tomb Walk
December 17, 2017	Lodhi Garden Walk + Picnic
December 3, 2017	Nizamuddin Walk
November 11, 2017	Delhi Walk Festival - Urdu Bazar, Jama Masjid, Non-veg Street Food
October 29, 2017	Tughlaqabad and Adilabad Walk

Source: Compiled by author, 2018

Other Organizers / Stakeholders

There are many other players offering heritage walks in Delhi. Many Tour Operators are also conducting such walks. Delhi Metro also started organising heritage walks in 2015. These are known as Delhi Metro Walks. It offers its passengers to participate in Heritage Walk in Old Delhi every Saturday.⁶ Surekha Narain also conducts walks in Delhi as well as other cities. Delhi Walks⁷ is also a popular walk organiser in Delhi. It offers walks ranging from INR 600 to INR 2000. Some of its popular walks are: The Djinn Story, Nazm-e-Nizamuddin, Delhi's First City, The Khilji & Tughlaq Story, Mehrauli Archaeological Park Walk, Leading from the Front - Gandhi Tour, Built Legacy of Mughals etc.

There are many online platforms where tourists can book these walks. These participants then review the walks. On tripadvisor.in, 207 participants of heritage walks have reviewed the trails offered in Delhi. Out of 207 reviewers more than 65 per cent (135 reviews) have said that the walks are excellent and about 33 per cent (68 reviews) considered them very good (See Fig. 2).

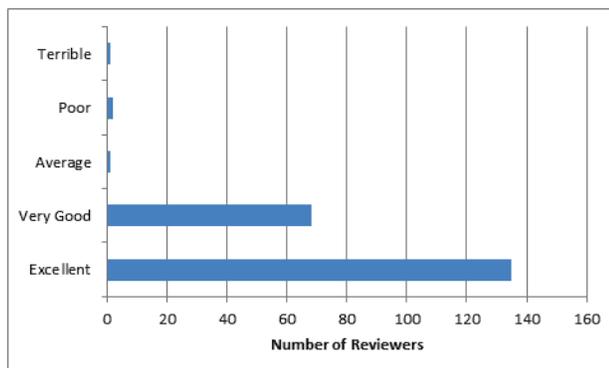


Fig. 2 Online Reviews of Heritage Walks in Delhi (N=207)

Qualitative Content Analysis of Online Reviews Using Voyant Tools

A corpus had a total of 963 words with 400 unique word forms. Vocabulary density is 0.413. A word cloud (also called as cirrus) of the corpus reveals that the participants have considered the walks as 'interesting', 'knowledgeable' and did 'recommend' to the people to take up such walks (See Fig. 3). Word cloud is a visual display of the most frequent words in the text corpus.

This word cloud consists of 75 most frequently used words. Mostly the words used are positive, pointing to the satisfaction levels of participants.



Fig. 3 Word Cloud of the Corpus of Comments by Participants

The ten most frequent words/terms used by the participants of heritage walks are given in the Table 5. From the table it is clear that participants have very positive attitude towards the heritage walks conducted by different walk-leaders. This is further clear by looking at the contexts that these most frequent words have been used.

Table 5 Word Count (10 most frequent words/terms)

Word/Term	Count/Frequency
Walks	25
Delhi	23
Walk-Leader	15
Heritage	12
History	12
Highly	7
Interesting	7
Recommend	7
Knowledgeable	6
Great	5

Contexts of Most Frequently Occurring Words and Terms

The voyant tools processes the text corpus into 'contexts' where a part of sentence is put on the left and right side of the given word to show how that word is placed within the text. Knowing the context in which the most frequently occurring words are used, we can get an insight of the perceptions and feelings of participants towards their respective walks and walk-leaders. The contexts for the most frequently occurring word 'walks' is given in the Table 6. I have italicized the important words that give us the sense of perception of participants. The words *interesting*, *pleasant*, *impressed*, *planned* and *organized* point towards the success of the organizing agency. The terms

knowledgeable, committed, and specialized show that the walk-leaders are doing their job well and participants are liking their interpretation of the heritage. Apart from having fun the participants seem to gain knowledge about the history and heritage of Delhi as is obvious from the words *convinced, informative, interactive, alive etc.* The participants seem to want more such walks as well as recommend to others. The terms like *went on numerous, been to many, am dying to go, will join more etc.* show that heritage walks are becoming a passion for some participants. However, one participant has considered the walk *longish*.

Table 6 Context of the word 'walks'

Left	Term	Right
spent and definitely recommend these	walks	. I have started going for
going for most of the	walks	and find them <i>well planned</i>
<i>knowledgeable</i> . I highly recommend the	walks	It is so pleasant to
so <i>pleasant</i> to join this	walks	As you look back at
<i>went on numerous</i> of their	walks	. Always <i>interesting</i> , with very good
<i>been to many times</i> for	walks	, but today I learnt the
I have been through one	walks	and <i>am dying to go</i>
Walk-Leader! I <i>highly recommend</i> heritage	walks	. One knows a lot about
I <i>will join more</i> such	walks	. I was highly <i>impressed</i> , not
the Mutiny Memorial. Delhi Heritage	walks	is done by very <i>committed</i>
the history <i>alive</i> by organizing	walks	to the monuments in Delhi
the monuments in Delhi. The	walks	are a blend of history
that Walk-Leader share during the	walks	, I have become <i>convinced</i> that
have attended so far 03	walks	(Mehrauli village, Lodhi garden & Firoz..
one of their Walk-Leader . The	walks	as always are <i>well organized</i>
of participating in "Jahapanah & Begumpur"	walks	Some facets of Delhi history
University. Thanks to Delhi Heritage	walks	for exposing me to and
of our history. A <i>longish</i>	walks	(2.5 Km) over slightly rough

worth every bit of the	walks	<i>Strongly recommend</i> it to all
exploring it via the heritage	walks	was a different experience altogether
a different experience altogether. These	walks	are fairly <i>specialized</i> (each in
my third walks with Delhi Heritage	walks	, and I would highly recommend
history. Attend Phoolwalon ki Sair	walks	<i>Very informative, interactive</i> and VFM
Very informative, interactive and VFM	walks	Must do! This was my
and its historical perspective. These	walks	are recommended as a must

It is well known that the success and failure of heritage walks depends on the walk leader and her knowledge of the subject and interpretation skills. She has to be well prepared for any question that participants may ask. She has to act like a human resource manager who can manage a large group of diverse personalities having unique expectations from the same walk. The comments of participants show they have lauded the overall characteristics of walk leaders. Looking at the context associated with the term 'walk-leader' we can see that the walk-leaders play an important role in the success of a heritage walk (Table 7). Participants used many adjectives to praise the walk-leaders – *lovely, wonderful, extremely knowledgeable, enthusiastic, verbose, interesting and very good*. These terms and words provide an insight as to how a walk leader should be.

Table 7 Contexts of the Term 'walk-leader'

Left	Term	Right
Informative and easy... Our	Walk-leader	was <i>lovely</i> and we would
Old Delhi. Beautiful, Informative walk!	Walk-leader	was a <i>wonderful, knowledgeable</i> and
a wonderful, knowledgeable and <i>enthusiastic</i>	Walk-leader	. We <i>really enjoyed</i> the time
well planned and great knowledgeable	Walk-leader	especially Walk-Leader who really knows
great knowledgeable Walk-Leader especially	Walk-leader	who really knows her stuff
Always interesting, with <i>very good</i>	Walk-leader	. Some interesting new places June
all my expectations. Our tour	Walk-leader	was <i>extremely knowledgeable</i> and <i>enthusiastic</i>
on hot summer day... Our	Walk-leader	was <i>verbose</i> - taking us back

heritage walks under the guidance	Walk-leader	was quite <i>interesting...</i> Though it
Really enjoyed the walk! Amazing	Walk-leader	! I highly recommend heritage walks
about the history and the	Walk-leader	are amazing. I will join
interesting chunks of information that	Walk-leader	share during the walks, I
thanks to our very knowledgeable	Walk-leader	. I'm not giving this a
(Kotla) with one of their	Walk-leader	. The walks as always are
I think I'm hooked. Our	Walk-leader	took us thoroughly what looked

The five of the top 10 frequently used words in all the comments are in praise of the walks, walk-leaders and the overall concept of heritage walks. These words are 'highly', 'interesting', 'knowledgeable', 'great' and 'recommend'. Table 8 shows the interesting contexts with which the terms heritage and tourism have been used by the participants of heritage walks. These contexts show us that the participants enjoyed the walks while learning about the history and heritage of the city. The heritage walks are actually a way of educating the population about their cultural heritage. While on heritage walks you come across many stories about the places that you think you knew very well and these anecdotes change your perception. You realise how less you knew about a place you have been walking through and witnessing everyday. These walks bring history alive and one knows a lot about the otherwise hidden gems of the culture, history and heritage. It instills pride in people and make them aware of their heritage, thereby inspiring them to preserve it.

Table 8 Contexts of the terms 'heritage' and 'history'

Left	Term	Right
Sunday free. I joined this	heritage	Walks of Lodi Gardens. It surpassed
weekend time. Really <i>enjoyed</i> the	heritage	Walks to Feroz Shah Kotla Fort
little about our <i>city's rich</i>	heritage	. I have been through one
Visited Lodi gardens today. The	heritage	Walks under the guidance of
Amazing Walk-Leader! I highly recommend	heritage	walks. <i>One knows a lot</i>
and the Mutiny Memorial. Delhi	heritage	Walks is done by very

have visited with them. A	heritage	Walks was the <i>best way to</i>
who is intrigued by Delhi	heritage	and history. I had an
number of times, but the	heritage	Walks <i>gave the insights</i> which I
Delhi University. Thanks to Delhi	heritage	Walks for <i>exposing me to</i>
But, exploring it via the	heritage	walks was a <i>different experience</i>
is my third walks with Delhi	heritage	Walks, and I would highly
looking to <i>better understand</i> the	history	and stories of Old Delhi
but today <i>I learnt</i> the	history	of all the wonderful monuments
interesting facts about the place.	history	<i>comes alive</i> . Really enjoyed the
<i>knows a lot about</i> the	history	and the Walk-Leader are amazing
young people who bring the	history	<i>alive</i> by organizing walks to
walks are a <i>blend of</i>	history	, architecture, stories and rich discussions
are well-versed with the	history	of every brick and stone
intrigued by Delhi heritage and	history	. I had an <i>opportunity</i> of
walks Some <i>facets of Delhi</i>	history	, which were, otherwise unknown to
<i>so many hidden gems of</i>	history	in the Northern Ridge which
about this period of our	history	. A longish walks (2.5 Km

Finally, if participants are happy with the walks this must be clear from their comments. In tourism the visitor is the best advertiser as the satisfied customer brings back more customers. This is exactly what is happening with the heritage walks. The participants are recommending these walks to others.

Conclusion

'Heritage walks' is emerging as one of the most sought after activities to explore and experience in Delhi. Although these walks have been offered for almost a decade now their popularity has increased recently. People are more interested in knowing the history of place and engaging with it than mere visiting and gazing the monuments. The traditional guide system might ultimately change and give way to this form of heritage interpretation, which can prove more sustainable in the long run, especially in urban settings. There are many stakeholders and heritage

walks organizers but many more such service providers will be needed in the near future. The participants of heritage walks are highly satisfied with the service being provided. With increasing interest of people in heritage walks, it is imperative to have skilled, knowledgeable walk-leaders available. Innovative ways need to be used to devise walks that are more comprehensive and suitable to majority of the participants. More researches are needed in this field so as to guide the service providers and government agencies about the policies and guidelines to be framed for heritage interpretation. The covid-19 and the associated lockdowns have affected the tourism in general and heritage walks in particular, as these include the participation of people in groups. However, the organizers and individual walk leaders have come up with the innovative ideas and did offer online heritage walks. There is the need to explore and analyze the perception of participants and the walk organizers regarding such new formats.

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