

**CAN INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS HAVE A BETTER  
EXPERIENCE AT THE TAJ MAHAL?**

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## **ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

Sukhmani Bains

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## ACRONYMS

ADA	Agra Development Authority
AUT	Auckland University of Technology
ASI	Archaeological Survey of India
BIMSTECountries	Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Myanmar
CISF	Central Industrial Security Force
DOT	Department of Tourism
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIS	Indian Heritage Society
INTACH	Indian National Trust for Art, Culture and Heritage
INR	Indian Rupee
NCF	National Culture Fund
NZ	New Zealand
NZD	New Zealand Dollar
SAARCountries	Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives and Afghanistan
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
TGA	Tourism Guild of Agra
TMS	Taj Mahotsav Samiti
UP	Uttar Pradesh
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Social and Cultural Organisation
UNWTO	United Nation World Tourism Organisation
WHB	World Heritage Bureau
WHC	World Heritage Committee
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
WTO	World Tourism Organisation

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis was born from my personal experiences and encounters with irate international tourists who visited the Taj Mahal and swore never to come back. Despite being advertised as one of the must-see locations in India, these days the Taj Mahal, a monument of love, is proving to be a disappointment to tourists from all over the world. Therefore, I decided to focus on understanding the nature of the current international tourist satisfaction at the Taj Mahal and the holistic management situation which is causing the poor satisfaction levels.

With the rapid expansion and growth of tourism sectors on an international scale, the need to study visitor satisfaction and the constructs of effective stakeholder management and collaborative efforts are on the increase. Surprisingly, although the Taj Mahal is the most famous UNESCO World Heritage Site in India, the gap observed was that there is a lack of academic material and studies conducted on the Taj Mahal as a destination in regards to international/domestic visitor experience. This is despite there being a large quantity of literature on tourism and visitor experience regarding India as a whole. Consequently, to fill in the literature gap and the above-stated topics I utilized visitor satisfaction and collaboration theory through the analyses of expectancy-disconfirmation theory and management stakeholders at the Taj Mahal, respectively.

I analysed expectancy-disconfirmation within visitor satisfaction theory from the international visitor's point-of-view because if international tourists derive satisfaction from a destination then domestic visitors will experience the same. With the intention to increase visitor satisfaction levels, it is essential that the relevant stakeholders involved in the process effectively manage the destination. In order to understand how managers can effectively manage the stakeholders involved and the destination, this research overviews the concepts and constructs of stakeholder theory and collaboration theory; these are then applied with respect to the current managerial situation at the Taj Mahal.

The research employs a mixed-method approach which utilises quantitative and qualitative methods. First, I collected quantitative data from international visitors who had just visited the Taj Mahal. One hundred surveys were usable. The structured questionnaire aimed to gauge the level of visitor satisfaction with respect to thirty-four attributes. This attribute set conforms to the tourism literature but also reflects my own prior experience of the Taj Mahal combined with tourist experiences posted on the internet.

The visitor satisfaction levels were measured during three stages of the visit – pre-visit; during; post-visit – using Likert-like scale questions and one open-ended question. The data collected was analysed using SPSS (PASW statistics 18) and statistical tests such as mean analysis, gap analysis, and paired *t*-tests were conducted to produce statistical outputs. The result showed that international visitor satisfaction level was poor for 32 of 34 attributes that were selected for measurement over all the three stages of the experience.

The qualitative research involved face-to-face interviews with ten managers of relevant organisations (i.e. at international, central, state and local levels) who had an active stake in the management and operations of the Taj Mahal. The interview questions were set in two parts. In the first part of the interview semi-structured questions with five different themes were asked so as to get an understanding of the organisation as a whole. The final and main part of the interviews was based on the data obtained from the surveys. The data gathered was presented to the managers and their perspectives and opinions were sought on the reasons for low international tourist satisfaction. I concluded that the existing collaborative arrangements were ineffective because of poor communication channels and unequal levels of power distribution.

Following this, the theoretical and practical linkages of the constructs of visitor satisfaction theory, and stakeholder/collaboration theory towards my research were synthesized. The discussion leads into the current visitor satisfaction levels at the Taj Mahal during all the three stages of the visit. Furthermore, based on the linkages I developed a network model which describes the degree of involvement and flow of power and authority between existing management stakeholders in the Taj Mahal context. This qualifies as a partial stakeholder analysis. On the whole, it was concluded that there is much room for improvement in terms of visitor's satisfaction at the Taj Mahal and the managerial situation has much scope for improvement in terms of the collaborative efforts among them and also in terms of appropriate stakeholder management. The problem preventing the improvement was identified as the network of management stakeholders involved at the Taj Mahal to be too intricate and multifarious. "Can international tourist have a better experience at the Taj Mahal?" It is unlikely to happen until the situation becomes simpler to manage!

# 1 A CALL TO ADVENTURE/ INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

*“In youth we learn; in age we understand.”* – Marie Von Ebner-Eschenbach (1830 – 1916)

It is my belief that a person's experiences in their youth have a strong effect on their personal views and beliefs as an adult. Reminiscing about my school days brings back memories about class excursions and visits, and the most popular destination for these excursions would always be the Taj Mahal because the Taj Mahal found its place in every subject of our school curriculum. If it was my 8<sup>th</sup> grade history class, the teacher would ask “children, which Indian monument is one of the Seven Wonders of the World?”; if it was my 7<sup>th</sup> grade geography class, “which city houses the famous Taj Mahal?”; if it was our 9<sup>th</sup> science class, “why is the marble of the Taj Mahal turning yellow?”; and if it was our 5<sup>th</sup> grade English class, we studied the undying love story of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal. This goes to show what an integral part of Indian culture the Taj Mahal is.

As a youth, my visits were purely for pleasure and more importance was given to enjoying the monument and Agra city. However, as I matured, I began to notice that things were not always as rosy as I had perceived them as a child. During my years as a flight attendant with one of the Indian airlines, I was on board several flights that routed between Delhi and Agra. I would have chats with the customers and they would share their experiences at the Taj and it surprised me that many of them had negative experiences. Their recollections really made me think about the Taj Mahal, and why these negative experiences were happening, because I was very proud of the Taj Mahal as an Indian and I could not relate to their experiences. However, one visit to the Taj Mahal in 2009 had a deep impact on me.

This visit was with family and we were accompanied by a Dutch companion who was in India on a study project. Showing our guests the tourist spots of the area is a mandatory part of entertaining them during their visit, so naturally the Taj Mahal was on the agenda. While we were waiting at the entry queues, we were all excited to enter the Taj and after a three hour wait in the never-ending queue and blistering sun, we finally reached the ticketing counter. As the ticketing attendant counted my payment, he said,

for them its INR 750 ((NZD 19.25)<sup>1</sup>, while pointing at the Dutchman. This really dampened the trip for us all because he was a student, and not too keen on spending INR 750 to enter the Taj; however, seeing that all of us were ready to go, he felt obliged to pay it. It was quite apparent that he did not want to see the Taj Mahal at thirty-two and half times of what we had paid. This visit really made me question my perspective because it was the first time I had a poor experience at the Taj Mahal; and only because of one incident at the ticketing counter. Now I could relate to the angry recollections of those unsatisfied passengers on board the flights on which I worked, and this made me really want to do something about it. This experience was a turning point in the sense that every time I visited the Taj after this, I would always observe the number of frustrated and angry visitors around me (which I had never noticed before). This made me really think whether the Taj Mahal experience is actually all that I had perceived it to be. This thesis was born of such experiences, observations and thinking.

The Taj Mahal is considered to be an iconic symbol of India. It is located in Agra city on the right bank of the River Yamuna and is one of the finest and most flawless creations of Mughal architecture. Its history dates back to the 17th century; the construction of the mausoleum started in 1633 with a labour-force of 20,000 and it took 17 years to build (Edensor, 1998). The most experienced and best-trained architects, builders, rock-carvers and calligraphers from all parts of India and places as far as Persia and Turkey came to contribute to the building of the Taj Mahal. Semi-precious stones for inlay ornamentation were brought from distant regions of India, Ceylon and Afghanistan, whereas, red sandstone of different tints was requisitioned from the neighbouring areas of Sikri, Dholpur, etc (Sui, 2006). The Taj Mahal was built as symbol of eternal love for Shah Jahan's wife, Mumtaz Mahal; and it certainly did stand the test of time and has become a global symbol of romanticism and love. Every effort is to be made to preserve this monument for future generations to come.

The World Heritage Convention was created by UNESCO (United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation) in 1972. This convention was enforced in 1975. The World Heritage Convention aims to encourage co-operation and co-ordination between countries in order to protect sites that are of cultural and historical value to the world and its main goal is sustainability of these sites for future generations (UNESCO, 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> Exchange rate as per 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2011 i.e. 1 NZD = 38.95 INR  
Source: [http://www.exchangerate.com/currency-converter/NZD/INR/1.00/?XR-QuickConverter=convert&calc\\_short\\_from\\_iso=168&calc\\_short\\_to\\_iso=109](http://www.exchangerate.com/currency-converter/NZD/INR/1.00/?XR-QuickConverter=convert&calc_short_from_iso=168&calc_short_to_iso=109)

India was introduced as a signed member of the World Heritage Convention in 1977 and lobbied for the Taj Mahal to be included in the list of Heritage Sites; this was recognised in 1983. The inclusion of the Taj Mahal in the World Heritage Sites List signifies the need for sustainability in tourism practices (Singh, 2010). The responsibility of regulating sustainable tourism rests with managerial authorities and individuals, however, the tourists are an important part of a destination as well.

Tourist perception of a destination is quite important. During past visits to the Taj, I made several observations about the state of affairs regarding services provided for visitors. The Taj is a site of resplendent beauty and aesthetic value, and inadequate efforts are taken to preserve these values. The tourist can be considered as the customer of the tourism industry, and it is important to have satisfied tourists in order to develop the brand names of a destination. As with any industry, the golden rule is that the customer always comes first. This implies that it is India's and its tourism offices' responsibilities to deliver quality experiences to the visitors. The problem here is that there are many aspects of the tourist experience which are not up to par, and result in lowered satisfaction levels. The tourist experience is a sum of all the individual experiences that are encountered during the whole visit, and lowered satisfaction in some aspects result in a poorer overall experience. This thesis attempts to identify the areas where the tourists experience poor satisfaction, and what are those factors that are resulting in a low visitor experience. It is important to review the perspectives of the tourists because they present the feedback that can initiate change.

Initially, the Taj Mahal was a centre of natural beauty with large number of parks and gardens. However, it recently has been the victim of degradation due to mismanagement and poor planning. Agra became a highly industrialized city during India's industrial revolution which occurred in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Following these years, it was observed that the marble of the Taj Mahal began to take on a yellow tinge. The degradation of the marble surfaces resulted in the formation of an Air Pollution Monitoring Laboratory in the city of Agra which found that the yellowing occurred due to the pollution and dirt in the air from nearby factories, which resulted in the softening of the sandstone structure of the Taj (Edensor, 1998). This caused UNESCO to work in conjunction with the Indian Supreme Court to amend policies regarding environmental issues; this resulted in the closure of many factories within the perimeter of the Taj and a ban on the functioning of any small scale industry or oil refineries within a 50 km radius around Agra. This project was named the 'Taj Trapezium' and was launched in

1982, but it proved to be ineffective with regard to environmental concerns. There was a ban on motor vehicles being driven within a 500 metre radius of the Taj, and a mandate stating that all fuel powered vehicles to be parked at a radius of two kilometres away (UNESCO, 2007). These are few measures the government took to counter the negative effects. The main conflict is between the economic development of Agra and the conservation of the Taj as a heritage site.

The Government of Uttar Pradesh plans to join the Taj Mahal on its western boundaries with the Red Fort along a two kilometre riverside walkway surrounded by shopping malls, restaurants and a theme park via means of an ecological strip (Nelson, 2009, August 03). This project is estimated to cost about \$44 million US dollars. Now, although the project is aimed at boosting tourism levels via commercialization it may come at the cost of environmental degradation to the site. This project was halted by the Supreme Court of India due to flaws in the planning and design of work within the Taj Trapezium (Indian Express, 2011).

Another prospective plan was to develop the river Yamuna to provide a ‘gazing ground’ for tourists. However, this project was interrupted due to the actions of the federal tourism and culture minister in 2003 (Edensor, 2004). A complaint by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) concluded that such a project would destroy the ambience and surface of the site. UNESCO observed that this project involved diversion of the natural course of the river which caused the water table to change and a mass landfill. UNESCO expressed its concern that this would risk the foundation of the Taj itself as well of other heritage sites along the river. This caused UNESCO to re-evaluate the position of the Taj in its heritage site list and the issue became whether to include the Taj in the “*World Heritage in Danger*” list (United Nations System Staff College, 1994). This problem in conjunction with scandals ruined the face of Taj Mahal tourism. The Chief Minister at the time, Mayawati Kumari was accused of corruption charges but no verdict was passed due to political pressures, which clearly shows that the Taj faces mismanagement at the state level and nationals level (Outlook India, 2003).

However, measures have been taken at the governmental and private sector levels to maintain modern cultural aspects of the Taj Mahal, while protecting its cultural legacy. The authorities to protect, conserve and preserve heritage sites have been delegated to the ASI, the Indian National Trust for Art, Culture and Heritage (INTACH) and the

Indian Heritage Society (HIS). Recently, the Department of Tourism advertised programs for sustainable heritage at Central and State levels (Singh, 2010).

The Taj Mahal, one of the most breath-taking monuments in the world, has always been beautiful, but recently it has been subjected to degradation and mismanagement. The information gathered from various journals, articles, live news and books, some of the other gaps and challenges in the tourism of Taj Mahal indicate: negative destination image and post-visitor's experience, inadequate online information, cleanliness issues, inefficient facilities available and managerial chaos in terms of maintenance, conservation and preservation. Existing literature on visitor satisfaction theory shows that all these aspects are an integral part of the visitor experience, and that they influence the overall satisfaction that tourists experience in a visit. The literature reviewed in chapter two explains the psychological process that visitors or customers undergo while determining their satisfaction levels. It presents the various factors that influence the tourist's satisfaction levels. Additionally, there are many individual components or attributes that add to a holistic visitor experience, and these factors are identified and explained in chapter two. The problem at the Taj is that tourists experience low satisfaction levels in regard to the individual components that influence satisfaction, thereby resulting in low overall satisfaction levels.

According to Gunn (1988) and Inskeep (1991), the main problem facing sustainable tourism is the lack of co-ordination within the industry. The whole tourist system is made up of many individual components. These components are tourists, tourist destination regions, transit route regions, traveller generation regions, tourism industries and the tourism environment itself (Leiper, 2004). The previous paragraphs attempt to show that the Indian tourism industry lacks co-ordination and requires a planning segment that integrates the tourism sector at the state and central levels. The Taj Mahal is a good example of lack of co-ordination between these components. This problem can only be rectified by a practical planning segment that works together at the local, state and central levels, i.e. whole integration of the planning segment into the tourism sector. To better understand the conflicts between conservation and development of tourism with regard to the Taj Mahal, theories of visitor satisfaction and stakeholder/collaboration theory need to be applied. This is the basic premise of this research: that there are existing inefficiencies in planning and management which require a sound study of the current scenario if any changes are to be incorporated.

The reason this is the chosen area for this research is two-fold. Firstly, because there is lack of existing knowledge via previous literature or academic studies on the subject of Taj Mahal and visitor satisfaction experiences. This thesis studies the concept of visitor satisfaction theory with respect to international visitors and their experiences at the Taj Mahal. The reason visitor satisfaction theory is used is because it aims to understand the current situation at the Taj Mahal and attempts to gauge the satisfaction levels visitors obtain from the visit. The information collected using visitor satisfaction theory is then analysed and viewed against the current managerial situation, which is where the real solution to improving the tourist satisfaction lies. The tourist satisfaction process can be directly influenced or controlled by the management at any destination. Site or destination management requires a great deal of interaction and collaboration between all concerned parties. This is the basic premise of stakeholder theory and collaboration theory. The research describes a comprehensive view on stakeholder theory and management, and also on collaboration theory and its implications for management. The problem at the Taj Mahal is that there are collaborative efforts in place, however, the level of stakeholder management and implementation of the collaborative efforts are low.

There are vast quantities of literature on stakeholder theory and its applicability, and also of collaboration theory and its applicability. However, there is a shortage of academic literature or studies conducted on these theoretical constructs in regards to the Taj Mahal. Therefore, this research aims to fill these gaps in existing literature base to the best possible extent.

## **1.2 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

All of the above problems are affecting the image of the monument and also tourism in the country as a whole. This has resulted in declining satisfaction for visitors over the years. Thus, the aim of this research is to study the quality of tourists' experience at the Taj Mahal, which will create a link between existing management problems of the Taj Mahal tourism, which is adversely affecting visitor satisfaction as well as its image world-wide. Therefore, the objectives of this research are as follows:

- 1) To understand the nature of the current international tourist experience at the Taj Mahal site in terms of their expectation and satisfaction levels;
- 2) To comprehend the existing holistic management situation at the Taj Mahal;
- 3) To synthesize objectives 1 and 2 with the literature reviewed, which will lead to an overall discussion for achieving the research aim.

I deem meeting these objectives will allow me to achieve my overall aim. In order to meet my first objective, it is necessary to understand the problems resulting in low quality visitor experiences. I have utilized expectancy-disconfirmation within visitor satisfaction theory focussing on international visitors. This will allow me to determine what specific areas the tourists experience declining satisfaction in, and also help to gain an understanding of the factors that influence level of satisfaction for tourists.

With the intention to increase visitor satisfaction levels, it is essential to effectively manage the destination and the relevant stakeholders involved in the process. In order to understand how managers can effectively manage the stakeholders involved and the destination, this research overviews the concepts and constructs of stakeholder theory, and collaboration theory, which are then applied with respect to the current managerial situation at the Taj Mahal (second objective).

The third objective seeks to provide a clear link between the findings of the first and second objectives. Therefore, this objective will be accomplished by closely comparing the findings of the tourist and their connection with visitor satisfaction theory, with that of the findings of the managers and their implications from the stakeholder/collaboration theory point of view. Hence, the findings lead towards providing an overall discussion on the linkage and achieving the research aim.

### **1.3 METHODOLOGY**

The research employs a mixed-method approach which utilises quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve my objectives. My intention was to understand tourist satisfaction and management issues affecting the tourist experience at the Taj Mahal. This method allows an understanding of the tourist perspective with quantitative data and managerial perspectives from a qualitative approach. Although both approaches are similar in nature, they must not be confused, and differ by some fundamental characteristics (Neuman, 2006)

In quantitative research, it is essential to employ scientific methods in an unbiased manner, thus maintaining the integrity of the analysis and conclusions. Quantitative research is highly beneficial when it comes to social research and predicting social trends (Black, 1999). The initial phase of the research involves collecting data from international visitors that had completed their experience at the Taj Mahal. One hundred and fifteen face-to-face surveys (10-15 minutes) using convenience sampling, were administered out of which one hundred were usable. The structured questionnaire aimed

to gauge the level of visitor satisfaction with respect to thirty-four attributes. This set conforms to the tourism literature but also reflects my own prior experience of the Taj Mahal. The visitor satisfaction levels were measured during three stages of the visit which are pre-, during and post-visit using Likert-like scale and one open-ended question. The data collected was entered, coded and analysed using the SPSS software (PASW statistics 18) and statistical tests such as the mean analysis, gap analysis and paired *t*-tests were conducted to obtain clear numerical data from which inferences or patterns can be drawn.

The qualitative research on the other hand is more of an interpretative form of research. It investigates aspects of human conduct and the rationale behind them. The importance is given to the “*trustworthiness*” of the research, over the number of respondents. This makes it a very subjective form of research (Neuman, 2006). The qualitative method formed the second phase of my research. It involved face-to-face interviews (30-45 minutes) with ten managers of relevant organisations i.e. at international, central, state and local levels, which had an active stake in the management and operations of the Taj Mahal. In the first part of the interview, semi-structured questions with five different themes were asked to get an understanding of the organisation as a whole, whereas the final and main part of the interviews with the managers was based on the data obtained from the surveys. The data gathered was presented to the managers and their perspectives and opinions on the reasons for low international tourist satisfaction were sought.

In addition to the quantitative method, the applicability of the stakeholder based approach was tested. This method segregates factors such as key personalities, factions or institutions that affect overall outcomes. Secondly, stakeholder analysis is important because it recognises and acknowledges stakeholder needs, concerns, wants, authority etc. (Brugha & Varvasovszky, 2000; Llewellyn, 2009). The methodology of this approach involves: Identification of stakeholders that have internal or external relevance to the Taj management; appropriate classification of the key managerial stakeholders; organisation of stakeholders according to power, interest and authority levels. I developed a network model that represents my observations of the level of stakeholder collaboration with regard to the Taj Mahal (as presented in Chapter 6), and this shows the degrees of involvement that various stakeholders have in the management of Taj Mahal. This qualifies as a partial stakeholder analysis. The flow chart was intended to contribute to an understanding the level of power and managerial involvement of

stakeholder departments/organizations and also where the lowered satisfaction levels of the tourists stemmed from.

The quantitative and the qualitative data collected was juxtaposed with the theoretical constructs of visitor satisfaction, stakeholder and collaboration theory (as detailed in chapter 2), in order to gain an understanding of existing problems in Taj Mahal management. The mixed-method data collected addresses the first two objectives of this research project, which will finally be integrated and discussed, thereby addressing the third and final objective of this research.

#### **1.4 STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS**

Capmbell (2008) described the life cycle of a hero in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In this literary work, he describes different stages that an individual must overcome in order to become the true hero. My journey in the thesis can be compared to that of the monomythic life cycle of the hero. I began my journey by answering the call to adventure, and the journey was a long one; in the end I walked away with the most precious elixir of knowledge.

Chapter 1 serves as the introduction to this paper and it intends to provide the reader with the main aim and objectives that the research wishes to address. This chapter can be compared to the first stage in the life cycle of a hero, where I answered the call to adventure by undertaking the research project.

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to conduct an in-depth analysis and presentation of existing literature on the various theoretical ideas regarding visitor satisfaction, and present the various factors that are found to influence visitor satisfaction. After this, the chapter presents the reader with detailed literature review on stakeholder theory, and existing literatures on collaboration theory and its applicability to the management of heritage sites, which finally leads to a presentation of the theoretical framework.

Chapter 3 briefly presents a summary of the Agra and the tourism scenario there. From here, the focus gradually shifts to the Taj Mahal, its historical background, the wonder of its construction, the symbolic purity of its romanticism and an account of all the facts and myths surrounding it. The chapter also focuses on tourism at the Taj Mahal, and gives the reader an idea of the volume of tourism taking place there. The purpose of the chapter is to relate visitors, their experiences and the overall experience with the Taj. The Taj Mahal and its management display a high level of stakeholder participation and

collaborative measures and the collaboration between them is also presented to the reader.

Chapter 4 presents the reader with the study design that is employed during the research process. This research employs quantitative and qualitative research methods for data collection during the process. The first part involved survey administration with international visitors and the second part of my research process involved face-to-face interviewing with managers, where they were presented with the findings of the survey research, and this chapter outlines the research methods used in that. Prior to undertaking the research, consent was required from the Ethics Committee to ensure that my research methods and objectives did not breach ethical codes of conduct, and this chapter presents the ethical approval matter to the reader which is followed by the limitations to the study as well.

Chapter 5 displays the first hand observations that were made during the field research phase to the reader. The various survey findings acquired by means of data analysis are described using statistical analysis tools such as mean analysis, gap analysis and paired *t*-tests. The next part of this chapter focuses on the interviews that were conducted with managers and presents the data collected with respect to three themes that relate to the overall managerial responsibilities.

Chapter 6 presents a synthesis of an overall perspective of visitor satisfaction and it conjoins the theoretical constructs with the current managerial situation at the Taj Mahal. It also aims to provide a foundation where stakeholder and collaboration theory can be applied to management situations at the Taj. The visitors' experiences and perspectives on satisfaction during all three phases of the visit are related to managerial conditions and problems.

Chapter 7 concludes the entire research and my journey. This chapter aims to provide a final overview of the relevant subject matter that was covered in this thesis. This chapter is a wrap up of the reason for the research topic; its background, literature review; the various methodologies that were employed in the achieving the objectives, and their advantages; and the benefits of this research. This chapter closes with a section on need for further research.

## **2 SUPERNATURAL AID/ MEETING THE MENTOR/ LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter relates to that stage of the hero's lifecycle where the hero has committed to the adventure. Prior to this he/she may either accept or reject the call. The mentor is the individual or force that guides the hero in this adventure (Campbell, 2008). This relates to my journey during the research process because it was when I began my in-depth study of literature that I fully committed to the research project. The literature studied was my supernatural aid and the mentor was my supervisor, who carefully guided me in my journey with his wisdom and thoughts.

Any function that generates economic benefits towards an economy can be considered an economic activity. Tourism is an economic activity, however the main difference between tourism and other economic activities is that it is not the actual tourist sector that is generating economic benefit, but the interactions between the tourist, the destination and its local residents. As the tourist engages in economic transactions with the local economy, and this is why qualifies it as an economic activity. Tourists have a wide range of factors that motivate determine their expenditure patterns (Drummond and Yeoman, 2001).

Alternate sites and destinations are easily available to tourists; therefore, the responsibility of ensuring a high standard experience for tourists rests with the concerned managers at the destination, because tourists can always switch to other site if the experience proves to be unsatisfactory. Another implication for managers is that if tourists have an unsatisfactory experience, it may result in lower number of re-visits and recommendations, and also in tarnishing the destination image of the site.

Heritage sites and the assets they provide to the tourism sector are of intrinsic value to a country. This stresses the need for effective site management in order to preserve these sites and facilities, thereby enhancing visitor satisfaction. The third portion of this chapter presents the reader with a detailed literature review on stakeholder theory, collaboration theory and their applicability to the management of heritage sites. The theoretical framework of the research is also included in this chapter, which aligns the research objectives with the three focal aspects of this study (visitor satisfaction, stakeholder and collaboration theories).

The purpose of this chapter is to conduct an in-depth analysis and presentation of existing literature on the relevant research topics. Here, we look at various theoretical

ideas contributed by leading academics regarding visitor satisfaction, and present the reader with the various factors that are found to influence visitor satisfaction. It has been observed that there are degrees of relation between existing theoretical constructs and these relations are presented in this chapter as well. The scope of this research is to describe clear links between existing literatures on visitor satisfaction theory, stakeholder theory, and collaboration theory and their applicability with regard to the current situation at the Taj Mahal. These links will give insights into why tourist satisfaction at the Taj is on the decline.

## **2.2 VISITING CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES**

Specifically, ‘tourists’ can be anyone who travels to a foreign location for a period under one year, and their main goal is leisure within the location (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). Tourists embark on travel for reasons such as pleasure, business, due to familial obligations, for relocation purposes and, but not limited to, educational purposes. The outlook that tourists assumes on travels is governed factors like the demographic, sociological, economic, cultural and behavioural patterns of the tourist (Huh, 2002). According to Silberberg, (1995) the cultural tourist can be identified as; a person who is different from the rest of the tourists because he/she enjoys more spending power, higher education than general tourists, tends to be female than males, and has tendency to be older in age.

McKercher and Cros (2002) define cultural tourism as the tourism that arises from tourists’ need to satisfy their cultural needs. Cultural heritage on the other hand signifies the sum of all aspects gained through peoples’ lives (Fyall & Garrod, 2000). It is that form of tourism whereby a person wishes to gain an insight into the natural, historical and cultural backgrounds and values of a destination. A cultural heritage site is one that represents the values and constructs of past, present and future of a destination (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2007).

### **2.2.1 VISITOR SATISFACTION AS A CONCEPT**

The word ‘satisfaction’ has many connotations in the English language. The New Oxford Dictionary of English (2011a) defines satisfaction as “*fulfilment of one’s wishes, expectations, or needs, or the pleasure derived from this.*” Although this is the literary definition of the word satisfaction, there is a difference when it is juxtaposed with the word tourism.

There have been developments in tourist satisfaction studies because the tourism industry and its growth are strongly dependent on innovative marketing, and business and management plans. The concept of customer satisfaction was developed with regard to consumer products but it has merged with different sectors since the 1980's. Oliver (1981) expresses that customer satisfaction is the resulting state after consumers make a complete psychological decision based on their previous feelings towards consumption, and the confirmed/disconfirmed expectations they had.

There are several theories that explain the relationship between the level of expectation that customers have, and the level of satisfaction that they actually derive from a product. *Cognitive dissonance* theory states that people often over or underestimate performance, so that they do not undergo psychological distress from differences in expected and perceived satisfaction (Festinger, 1957). According to La Tour and Peat (1979), *contrast* theory states that satisfaction is the function of the differences in the expected performance of a product versus the actual perception of the performance of the product. These same authors describe the *assimilation-contrast* theory as when the differences in expected performance and actual perception are not high, assimilation takes place by which the performance is overestimated, and vice versa.

As is well known visitor/ tourist satisfaction differs from customer satisfaction in the sense that a visitor has to actually consume the visitor experience first-hand to have any idea of the level of satisfaction that may be derived. Whereas, a customer need not purchase the good first hand to derive satisfaction. The tourism industry is highly segmented as it is made up of various sectors (Foster, 1999). With regard to tourist studies, it is very relevant to measure visitor satisfaction from a tourist point of view as well as organisational point of view because tourists use satisfaction to evaluate a destination and satisfaction is the basis for marketing and promotional measures that organisations employ. Appropriate feedback from tourists aids in developing the quality of services provided and improves employee morale, which in turn results in a higher level of satisfaction for tourists via better services (Naidoo, Munhurrun & Ladsawut, 2011).

There have been a large number of studies conducted on tourist satisfaction which were further developed into theoretical premises. Some of these theories are; the performance-only model Pizam, Neumann & Reichel, 1978), Oliver's expectancy-disconfirmation model (Oliver, 1980), the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml

& Berry, 1985), the critical incident method (Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988; Alegre & Garau, 2010), the cognitive-affective model (Oliver, 1993; Bosque & Martin, 2008), the pleasure-tourism behaviours framework (Currie, 1997), the HOLSAT approach (Tribe & Snaith, 1998), and the tourist satisfaction model (Wang, Zhang, Gu & Zhen, 2009). Yu & Goulden (2004) outline four approaches to modern tourist satisfaction research employed today, they are; performance-only method, expectation-performance method, importance-performance method and disconfirmation method. The performance-only method outlined by Yu & Goulden (2004) draws heavily from the performance-only model described by Pizam, Neumann and Reichel in 1978.

According to their performance-only model, Pizam et al., (1978) concluded that tourist satisfaction is the result of a gap between the level of preconceived satisfaction, and the post travel state of the tourist. The destination image that visitors have of a site is very important because it is the built up expectations prior to actually visiting the site and if they actually experience live up to the destination image, the tourist would leave the destination satisfied and happy. This is why tourism marketing strategies and business plans aim on improving the level of satisfaction.

Parasuraman et al., (1988) identified that the personal wants and needs, factors that intensify the service experience, factors that intensify services in transit, the perception of services and roles and factors that are situational in nature influence the level of satisfaction derived from a product or experience. Lovelock, Patterson and Walker (1998) state that the consumers' values, beliefs, attitudes, characteristics and existing knowledge of the product also influence the level of satisfaction. Additionally, the experiences of others also may influence a person's viewpoint on satisfaction.

Customers have a tendency to “*form pre-consumption expectancies, observe product (attribute) performance, compare performance with expectations, form disconfirmation perceptions, combine these perceptions with expectation level and form satisfaction judgements*” (Oliver, 1993). In the two psychological affective states, cognitive factors are those that are influenced by the external environment and allow the tourist to make personal judgements. Affective factors are those that are influenced by the emotional and psychological state of the tourist and form an equally important part while measuring satisfaction Westbrook (1987) as cited in Oliver (1993).

Dowling (1997) declares that in order for the tourist experience to be genuine, the destination must at least match tourist expectations and related marketing schemes must

be a true reflection of the destination and its opportunities. With regard to the Taj Mahal, private and public advertisement campaigns represent the Taj Mahal as a pure white marble structure in pristine surroundings when the reality is that the Taj is in dirty surroundings and the Yamuna River is unclean with a large number of boats travelling in it. Tourists should be presented with the experience that they are promised before arrival by such advertisements, because when they are not given what was described in the advertisements', it reduces their final satisfaction level. It is particularly important that individual perceptual differences are monitored, before, during and after the tourism experience if the venue is to maintain tourist satisfaction.

Bosque and Martin (2008) conducted a research utilising the cognitive-affective model of satisfaction. The study aimed at understanding the process of how a tourist derives satisfaction based on the various cognitive and affective factors that influence their psyche. Ten independent hypotheses were constructed to measure their customer satisfaction levels, and were investigated using a Likert-scale survey. A total of eight hundred and seven valid responses were received and it was observed from these results that expectations were the primary factor in determining satisfaction. The research displayed a significant positive relationship between expectation-disconfirmation. It was shown that positive and negative effects were shaped by disconfirmation, and positive and negative emotions also affected satisfaction. Thus it can be concluded that affective components occurred due to the cognitive appraisal of the external environment.

Satisfaction at every tourist destination is composed of different cultural and physical attributes, and in addition, the reaction of the destination to foreign tourists and the quality of services provided to them. Additionally, it has been observed that factors like material factors, product and service pricing, non-material and psychological factors like the quality of services provided and the sociability of the locals influence tourist satisfaction (Yu & Goulden, 2010). Thus, tourist satisfaction is the sum of all the events that a tourist undertakes during his visit and also the quality of service and prices.

Arabatzis and Grigoroudis (2010) conducted a research with regard to tourists' satisfaction, their perceptions and performed a gap analysis between the two. The purpose of this research was to interpret tourists' satisfaction with regard to various factors such as environmental attributes, services provided and accommodation facilities. The research was carried out at the Dadia-Lefkimi-Souflion National Park and employed a Multicriteria Satisfaction Analysis (MUSA) method. The findings showed

that tourists experienced satisfaction in all of the attributes which were included in the research design.

The various researches mentioned above and their approaches provide the theoretical and methodological foundation for my research. The paradigms and antecedents that were used in these researches are relevant, and were used in achieving the research objective one.

### **2.2.2 EXPECTANCY-DISCONFIRMATION PARADIGM**

The findings of above stated studies were based on previous literature, theories and studies conducted by a number of researchers after the 1960's. Of all the various approaches, Oliver's (1980) expectation-disconfirmation model has gained popularity due to its relevance to modern consumerism, and the tourism industry qualifies as a large consumer industry today. Oliver's model expresses visitor/customer satisfaction as a functional relationship between initial expectation and expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation. This paradigm is of importance to my research because it forms the basis for the quantitative research aspects. The survey research undertaken and the analysis of the data depends on the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm in the sense that the holistic visitors satisfaction picture is gained by observing the expectations and satisfaction of visitors, and the difference between these two determines the level of disconfirmation.

Oliver's model (1980) is based on the premise that consumers/tourists experience satisfaction/dissatisfaction (CS/D) during an experience (Zehrer, et al., 2010). Yu & Goulden (2004) state that Oliver's model (1980) outlined four elements related to the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm; *“pre-purchase expectations, perceived performance, disconfirmation, and satisfaction.”* This model states that the consumer is satisfied when he experiences positive disconfirmation. A state of positive disconfirmation occurs when the tourist experiences a higher overall satisfaction than initially expected. Similarly, negative disconfirmation occurs when the tourists attains lower overall satisfaction than initially expected (Weber, 1997). A state of confirmation denotes a situation when the tourist obtains just as much satisfaction from the experience as initially expected. Thus, the tourists satisfaction is driven by the whether the quality of service meets the tourists expectations or not.

According to Wirtz (1993), the level of expectations and perceived performance of the good or service determine the expectancy-disconfirmation model such that if the

perceived performance exceeds the prior expectations, it will result in achieved satisfaction. However, it is difficult to measure the difference in the two as they are perceived psychologically. In a study conducted by Parasuraman et al., (1988), respondents were asked to give an empirical measure of their level of expectation of service quality and their perceptions of the service quality of the subject organisation; this study shows that also it is hard to have a true measure of satisfaction, it is possible to arrive at a measure through qualitative means. Woodruff et al (1981) claims that evaluating expectations of customers is controversial because it is done purely on the preconceptions of the customer.

Weber (1997) conducted research which utilised Oliver's (1980) expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of overall expectations of Germans travelling to Australia, by measuring their initial perceptions and overall level of satisfaction at the end of the visit. The possible advantage of this method is that the experience is still fresh in the minds of the visitors and this is a good time to evaluate satisfaction. For this pre-expectations and post – satisfaction method was employed. Three hundred surveys were handed out; however, only sixty nine completed ones were returned. The survey concluded that there was confirmation between expectations and perceptions.

### **2.2.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING VISITOR SATISFACTION**

Studies on visitor satisfaction show that attributes or those factors that determine satisfaction are important; however all have not been empirically validated before. Various researchers give importance to different attributes in the visitor satisfaction process; the values, perspectives, attitudes, outlook and personal knowledge (Lovelock et al, 1998); the personal requirements of the visitor, service quality factors during the entire visit and situational factors (Parasuraman et al., 1988); rich natural and cultural heritage (Dwivedi, 2009); safety (Sommez & Graefe (2007) as cited in Boakye (2011); accommodation facilities (Ispas Constantin & Candrea, 2010); the presence of site attractions, and attributes that measure the attractiveness of the site (Richards, 2002 as cited in Zhou, 2005). Pigram (1983) as cited in Leask (2010), share that without attractions at a destination or site there would be no tourism.

Additionally, Sorupia (2005) links transport facilities with increases in tourism numbers but Thomas & Schofield (2007) reject the effect of local transport facilities on satisfaction; friendly and informed guides (Prakash & Chowdhary, 2008); directional

signage (Drummond & Yeoman, 2001); leisure shopping (Lau & Au, 2000) as cited in Tosun, 2007). Negative satisfaction can be related to factors like; unsatisfactory pricing schemes, time delays, poor location, inconveniences and poor service quality of staff members (Lovelock et al, 1998) and overcrowding and environmental problems (Garrod, Fyall & Leask, 2002).

There are numerous other attributes which can add or detract from visitor satisfaction. Table 2.1 outlines numerous studies that have been undertaken regarding tourism and visitor satisfaction levels. The first column describes the names of the author(s) and the year in which the research was published; the second column states the research topic; the third indicates the approach used in the research (based on previous theoretical models); the fourth, fifth and sixth columns show us the sample size, sample population and the sample destination, respectively and last column sixth denotes the various attributes found to influence satisfaction (as detailed by the researcher(s) pertaining to that topic). This table is further subdivided into three categorical arrangements (a, b, c). Table 2.1 (a) describes those factors that were found to influence visitor satisfaction in an international context (i.e. the research was undertaken in foreign countries); Table 2.1 (b) shows the factor influencing tourist satisfaction using expectancy-disconfirmation model and, (c) lists research done in India.

**Table 2.1 (a): Factors Influencing Tourists' Satisfaction Internationally**

Author & Year	Research Title	Approach Used	Sample Size	Sample Population	Sample Destination	Attributes/Factors found to influence satisfaction
Pizam, Neumann & Reichel (1978)	Dimensions Of Tourist Satisfaction With A Destination Area.	Performance Only; Factor-analytic Approach;	685	Vacationing tourists	Cape Cod, USA	Good beaches; costs; wine and dining options; hospitable locals; drinking facilities; campground and forms of accommodation; good environment & commercialisation
Tribe & Snaith (1998)	From SERVQUAL To HOLSAT: Holiday Satisfaction In Varadero, Cuba.	Expectation-Performance; HOLSAT	102	UK Citizens	Varadero, Cuba	Clean beaches and water; good resorts; optimal room temperature control; adequate airports and facilities; cost; variety of experience; comfortable climate
Yu & Goulden (2006)	A Comparative Analysis of International Tourists' Satisfaction	Comparative Analysis	530	Departing tourists at the airport	Mongolia	Nature; nomadic lifestyle of locals; Ger camps; historical and cultural value; tour of flora and fauna; sunny climate; festivals
Poria, Reichel & Biran (2006)	Heritage Site Management: Motivations & Expectations	Expectation Only	188	International Tourists	Israel	Willingness to; connect to their heritage; and the willingness to learn.
Hui, Wan & Ho, (2007)	Tourist Satisfaction: Re-Recommendation And Re-Visiting Singapore.	Disconfirmation & Perception only	50	Departing tourists at the airport	Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Americans – Accommodation facilities; dining facilities.</li> <li>• Asian &amp; Europeans – Tourist attractions</li> <li>• Oceanic Tourists – Culture</li> </ul>
Hanim, Salleh & Othman, (2010)	Importance – Satisfaction Analysis For Tioman Island Marine Park	Importance – Satisfaction Analysis	165	85 foreign tourists & 80 local tourists	Tioman Island Marine Park, Malaysia	Environmental attractions; no overcrowding of tourists and their venues; serene fisherman's village
Naidoo et al., (2010)	Tourists Satisfaction With Mauritius As A Holiday Destination	Expectation-Performance	339	Departing International tourists	Mauritius	Shopping facilities; spa facilities; cultural and historical sites; sunny and warm weather; peaceful environment; quality of hotels etc.

**Table 2.1 (b): Factors Influencing Tourists' Satisfaction Using Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm**

Author & Year	Research Topic	Approach Used	Sample Size	Sample Population	Sample Destination	Attributes/Factors found to influence satisfaction.
Weber (1997)	The assessment of tourist satisfaction	Expectation – Performance	300	German travellers	Australia	Seeing spectacular landscape; experiencing such an expansive country; unique fauna and flora; photography; relaxation; meeting friendly natives; shopping; sightseeing and nature friendly activities; wining and dining.
Pizam & Milman (1993)	Predicting satisfaction among first time visitor to a destination	Expectation – Performance	181	USA	Spain	Safety from petty crimes found to be high; originality of cuisine; ideal duration; good quality roads; good nightlife; honesty of locals and a strong resemblance to American-Hispanic community.
Kozak & Rimmington (2000)	Tourist satisfaction with Mallorca, Spain as an off-season holiday destination.	Performance only	220	British	Mallorca, Spain	Attractive destinations; plentiful attractions, facilities and services for tourists; Quality of services provided at airports.
Kozak (2001)	Comparative assessment of tourists' satisfaction with destinations across two nationalities.	Performance only	1872	British & German	Mallorca (Spain) & Turkey.	Overall satisfaction – hygienic, sanitary and cleanliness.

**Table 2.1 (c): Factors Influencing Tourists' Satisfaction in India**

Author & Year	Research Title	Approach Used	Sample Size	Sample Population	Sample Destination	Attributes/Factors Observed to Influence Satisfaction
Chaudhary (2000)	India's image as a tourist destination, a perspective of foreign tourists	Expectation-Satisfaction	152	Foreign Tourists	India	Positively - Rich cultural heritage; Variety of good arts; Inexpensive destinations; Good transport facilities.  Negatively – Unsafe destination; Poor guide services.
D'Silva & D'Silva (2008)	Perception of tourists towards India as a preferred destination – An empirical research.	Expectation – Importance	340	Foreigners	Gateway of India; Taj Mahal; Baga Beach; Jaisalmer – India	Friendliness of people; natural attraction; diverse geography; variety of experiences; cuisine.
Dwivedi (2009)	Online destination image of India: A consumer based perspective.	Performance only	100 posts downloaded	Independent tourists (Lonely Planet's The Thorn Tree & Indiamike.com)	India	Rich natural and cultural heritage; mystic
Kulshrestha & Gautam (2010)	Measurement of service quality in hospitality industry with special context to the tourism industry in Agra.	Expectation – Performance; SERVQUAL Model	400	200 foreign tourists; 200 domestic tourists.	Agra, India.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assurance – Appropriate service from personnel; Promoting confidence</li> <li>Responsiveness – Alignment of solutions to tourists' problems and understanding their needs; sound advice; local entertainment services;</li> <li>Reliability – detailed and punctual itinerary; no hidden costs or surprises; appropriate timings for activities.</li> <li>Service Responsibility – understanding distinct needs of customers.</li> <li>Tangibility – Availability of quality transport and food items; Personal security for customers.</li> <li>Service Product – Easily accessible locations; provision of hotel escorts.</li> <li>Quantitative – Unity and ease of services provided.</li> </ul>

This research relates to measurement of visitor satisfaction using attributes within the Indian tourism context, no relevant research with the focus on attributes influencing visitor satisfaction with the Taj Mahal as the destination has been done. The studies of Ahmed and Krohn (1992) related to marketing strategies in Northern America concerning India as an attractive destination for tourists; Chaudhary (2000) relate to the destination image of India; D'Silva and D'Silva (2008) covers tourist perception of India as a destination; Dwivedi (2009) analyses the destination image of India from an online perspective. Existing confusion in the findings of various researches conducted on visitor satisfaction, its constructs, and measures of satisfaction such as service quality and performance were noted. This is reasonable as the total satisfaction recorded for a visitor at any destination is a sum of a variety of factors, and also because various models, research methods and analysis methods are used by various researchers.

With regard to studies pertaining to the city of the Taj Mahal, Agra; Gupta (2008) studied and made recommendations in regard to marketing strategies; Gupta and Gupta (2008) performed a case study regarding the implementation and practice of information and communication technologies towards tourism. On a similar tangent, Singh (2008) researched the links between economic development and sustainable tourism practices with specific regard to Agra and Varanasi while Kulshrestha and Gautam (2010) studied service quality measurement with regard to the hospitality industry there.

This section provides an overview of the concepts of visitor's satisfaction and the developments that have taken place in visitor satisfaction studies. It evaluates the concepts of satisfaction from the tourism point of views, and explains previous researchers' efforts towards understanding the same. Oliver's (1980) concept of the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm is explained here and this is an important component of my quantitative research aspect; the interconnection with theoretical constructs is explained here as well. An important aspect of studying visitor satisfaction is in determining the various factors that influence level of satisfaction; this section explains the attributes found to be influencing the same. It can be seen that there is some literature on the visitor satisfaction process within India, and with regard to Agra city, however, there is no existing published literature on visitor satisfaction in context to Taj Mahal. There are gaps in research pertaining to visitor satisfaction and importance of attributes, and my research aims to fill these gaps using Taj Mahal as the sample destination.

### 2.2.3 INTERCONNECTION WITH CONSTRUCTS

This section discusses the tourist life-cycle during a visit, and it seeks the relation between these stages and their influence on the level of satisfaction that the tourist derives from the visit. Gunn (1988) outlines the various stages that a tourist experiences from the pre-planning stage of a visit; and he divided the entire process into seven stages. They are; initial preparation of destination image; modification of the destination image based on more sources; the decision whether to undertake travel or otherwise; the actual travel to the destination; experiencing the destination and its offerings; the return back to their domicile; the creation of the final image of the destination based on the whole travel process outlined in the previous six stages. After these stages, the level of satisfaction the tourist derives will determine whether their visit results in a positive or negative recommendation to others.

Bowen and Clarke (2002) found that there were many “constructs” and “antecedents” that measured satisfaction. The constructs include; “*expectation, performance, expectancy disconfirmation (expectation minus performance), attribution, emotion and equity*” (p. 297). Wang et al., (2009) elucidates antecedents such as, “*tourist expectations, perceived quality, perceived value and destination image*” (p. 397). There are a large number of factors that tourists consider when deciding how satisfied they are from a visit, and these factors are highly interrelated. There have been differences in opinions as to what is a suitable measure of customer satisfaction and according to Peterson and Wilson (1992), “*it is not possible to measure true satisfaction*” (p. 69). What this means is, due to the high interrelation that factors share, a holistic measure of satisfaction is hard to achieve.

With this in mind, it becomes important to measure tourist satisfaction with regard to each individual component of the entire industry, because the overall satisfaction a tourist derives is the sum of satisfaction derived from each of the components. The overall satisfaction derived depends on the positive and negative aspects that the tourist encounters during the visit (Pizam et al., 1978). Thus, it can be said that improving satisfaction lies in reducing or eliminating negative aspects a tourist encounters.

Reynolds (1965) details the various sources that a customer obtains their expectations from such as travel guides, advertisements, word-of-mouth, and recommendations of friends or family. These sources of expectations are applicable to visitor satisfaction studies as well, and increases in the forms of media such as television, printed material

and the internet have greatly affected pre-destination image making process of tourists. Although these qualify as secondary information sources, the actual visit may cause the destination image to be altered.

When tourists plan a visit to a destination, they hope to indulge in a variety of experiences at the destination. These experiences are not provided by one single body or organisation, but the sum of different components provided by different sectors of the tourism industry. Coltman (1989) defines the tourist destination as; “an area with different natural attributes features or attractions that appeal to non-local visitors - that is tourists or excursionists.” For example, when a tourist visits a destination, accommodation, travel, food and beverages, site visits and leisure activities are all provided by different organisations, that compose the tourism sector. Therefore, the satisfaction a tourist derives is gauged by the overall efficiency and team work of all the individual components of the industry.

According to Parenteau (1995), the destination image is the good or bad preconceived notions that tourists or visitors have of the destination. Echtner and Ritchie (2003) remark that the destination image is composed of attributes that can be subdivided into intangible or tangible ones, which includes all the psychological and functional factors in the experience. Beerli and Martin (2004) explain that factors such as the availability of resources, public and private infrastructural facilities in general and with specific regard to tourism shape the destination image of a tourist. The destination image has strong relations with the level of satisfaction derived because if the destination doesn't live up to the preconceived image, satisfaction levels are low. Richards (2002) and Shoval & Raveh (2004) as cited in Leask (2010) identify that information must be easily and readily available to prospective visitors because this determines their pre-visit stage, during which many decisions and judgments are made.

Table 2.1 (c) describes the positive attributes influencing visitor satisfaction in India. However, the studies of Chaudhary (2000), D'Silva and D'Silva (2008) and Dwivedi (2009) concern the destination image of India that international tourists develop using a variety of sources, and the destination image of India had more negative feelings than positive. Often when tourists commence a travel to a destination, they have a variety of pre-conceived notions about the place they are about to visit, and the kind of experience they are to have there. People develop these notions based on a variety of sources, such

as existing literature on the destination, experiences of friends, family members or acquaintances, the internet or by hearsay.

The most recent study regarding India's online destination image (Dwivedi, 2009) looked into the various online sources that tourists use to develop their image. He uses information sourced from blogs and travel websites. His results were presented according to classifications described by Beerli and Martin (2004), where unique and positive features of India's destination image such as friendly locals and rich cultural history were highlighted, but highly negative adjectives such as nightmare, unhygienic, unclean, lack of maintenance of monuments, pollution and petty criminal activity were also associated with India as a destination.

This research aims to gauge the level of tourist satisfaction/dissatisfaction derived from visiting the Taj Mahal, how they perceived the destination and whether their experience would result in recommendations about the Taj as a satisfying destination. However, the final level of satisfaction derived is quite often different from what was initially expected. This difference occurs because there are a variety of unforeseen circumstances that shape the final opinion on the experience.

### **2.3 MANAGING WORLD HERITAGE SITES**

The reason World Heritage Sites are selected from all the various sites and destinations in the world is because they require a higher level of management and protection measures in order to preserve their heritage and culture. Heritage sites have good potential to benefit tourism sectors of their host countries. Tourism is like other service industries such that it also contains elements of non-tangibility, heterogeneity of services, integration and expiry of services (Cowell, 1986 as cited in Drummond and Yeoman, 2001). These factors pose as challenges to those in charge of delivering satisfaction levels to their clients (heritage tourists); however the uniqueness of each individual site enhances or diminishes the possibility of attaining visitor satisfaction. Zemke and Schaaf (1989) expand on features of firms that provide successful service as those which have; highly responsible managers which are aware of customer needs; wants and expectations; appropriate customer oriented strategies; delivery strategies which maintain customer oriented values and customer-friendly front staff (as cited in Drummond and Yeoman, 2001).

Heritage tourism is like a double edged sword in the sense that it provides great opportunities for economic growth, development of domestic markets, increase in

foreign exchange and increase in local trade. At the same time, increases in tourism result in threats such as degradation of heritage sites, as well as the environment. This is detrimental to communities as it deprives them of the possible benefits of heritage tourism in the future. Thus it becomes of great importance to protect heritage sites, and to practice sustainability in tourism. The challenges facing the tourism sector are that; they lack integration and are characterised by lack of cohesion between governmental authorities, public sector and private sector entities (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Leask (2010) explains that other industries such as the leisure and tourism ones take advantage of heritage sites by commercialising and profiting from them. At the same time, she mentions that these exploitative activities have proven beneficial for the entire tourism system. With increasing saturation of tourism sectors and increasing competition, it becomes essential for a destination to exploit its core competencies in order to maintain their competitive advantages.

It has been found that visitors will spend more in order to have a more fulfilling experience and access to symmetric information. Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher (2005) propose that heritage tourists don't mind paying admittance fees and related costs at heritage sites; in fact heritage tourists are the ones that contribute towards a better visitor experience when they pay these fees.

With the expansion of the tourism industry on a global scale, the need to address environmental and cultural concerns is on the rise. When relating collaboration and tourism, it is important to determine the level of collaboration that is possible between various parties, and also to identify the most favourable environment or conditions for a collaboration to be a success. Costa & Buhalis (2005) as cited in Leask (2010) identify that collaboration between key stakeholders is an essential part of any sustainable tourism project. The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate collaboration as a process, its key theoretical basis and its applicability to heritage tourism viz. the Taj Mahal.

### **2.3.1 STAKEHOLDER THEORY**

Stakeholders are an integral part of the management process in any organisation or business and they are the individuals that have an active interest in an organisation. The obligation of the organisation is to give priority to the needs of the stakeholders. According to Evan & Freeman (1993), the stakeholder is so relevant to the organisation, that if a stakeholder was to give up participation, the organisation would fail to function. Donaldson and Preston (1995) say that, a person or group can be classified as

stakeholders if they have a genuine concern for the activities and practices of the organisation. Similarly, Friedman and Miles (2006) reasoned that a widely accepted method of individuating stakeholders was by identifying groups of individuals that had identifiable connections with the organisation.

Stakeholders can be further sub-divided within these groups; however, if stakeholders are classified too explicitly there is a chance that there might be a conflict of interests between them. Donaldson and Preston (1995) also argue that the basis of the stakeholder theory approach lies in the proper identification of the morals and values that govern the management and operations of an organisation. Stakeholder theory is a theoretical approach to strategic management that applies the identified range of morals and values towards the management of an organisation (Sautter & Leisen, 1999).

The stakeholder approach and theoretical constructs were first pioneered by Freeman (1984), which provided the basis for identification and formulation of the groups of stakeholders. He concludes; the relationship which an organisation shares with its relevant stakeholders is a direct reflection of the success that the organisation might achieve. Freeman (1994) explains that the stakeholder theory is based on two primary questions:

1. *What is the purpose of the firm?*

This is a very relevant question to a manager. It is in this question that a manager provides a coherent idea of the value creation process and the current position of the organization with regard to value creation, and it allows for clear identification of legitimate stakeholders. This is the motivational force that drives the organization to perform to its maximum capacity.

2. *What responsibility does the management have to stakeholders?*

This question defines the managerial approaches to business operations and focuses on the nature of relationships that the organization wants with its stakeholders. It is here that the responsibility of the manager to the stakeholders of the organization is outlined; it is the duty of the manager to inspire functional relationships that allow the firm to distribute expected value over the range of groups/stakeholders.

According to Freeman, Wicks & Parmar (2004), stakeholder theory is based on the assumption that values and morals are an explicit part of an organisation's operations and the onus is placed on managers to enhance the value creation process. Similarly

Fontaine et al. (2006) citing Aoki (1984) observed that the role of the manager lies in being a fair mediator between “*investors and employees*”.

While discussing models of stakeholder theory, Donaldson & Preston’s (1995) model states that the classic “*input-output*” method is that where the main role of the firm is to convert inputs from capital investors, product and service suppliers and efforts from employees into outputs that can be delivered to customers. This conflicts with the traditional basis of the stakeholder theory that states that stakeholders participate in the functions of the organisation solely to gain rewards/benefits (Freeman, 1984).

Based on this incongruence, four main tenets were proposed to clearly define stakeholder theory; firstly, it is *descriptive* in nature and characterises the functional model of the organisation (Friedman and Miles, 2006). Secondly, it is *normative* in nature (Donaldson & Peterson, 1995). Thirdly, it offers frameworks that link the organisations performance with stakeholder needs, wants and expectations. It is the platform for stakeholder management (Hill & Jones, 1992). All stakeholders are of value to the organisation and their interests are fundamentally valuable to the firm. Although this is in difference with the first tenet, it is still an essential part of stakeholder theory. Finally, managers are responsible for the identification of key stakeholders and their needs and interests and in ensuring equal and unbiased attention to all relevant stakeholders and their interests (Wadhwa, Saxena & Chan, 2008).

According to Friedman and Miles (2006), the *descriptive approach* to stakeholder theory relates to how stakeholders and managers interact, and how they regard their interests, actions, goals and their role in joint decision making. An organisation is regarded as a collection of interests and these interests complement each other or clash with each other. Stakeholder theory is very relevant in aligning the interests of stakeholders. Another approach outlined by Donaldson and Preston (1995) is known as the *instrumental* stakeholder approach and this describes the outlook a manager must assume whilst working towards their own interests. It is sometimes viewed that interests in this context mean the interests of the organisation and the interest of any organisation will always be to maximise profits.

According to Friedman and Miles (2006), the normative approach describes how managers should interact with stakeholders and how they should view the fundamental goals of the organisation based on certain ethical criteria. Donaldson and Preston (1995) stated stakeholders always have a genuine interest in organisations and the stakeholders

interests are always of value to the organisation. According to Freeman (1994) there is a moral obligation on behalf of the organisations that is often implied but not specified. The normative approach mandates that the organisation practices must be ethical as their actions directly affect stakeholders (Fontaine Haarman & Stefan, 2006). The organisation has a responsibility towards claims made by stakeholders, and these claims cannot be ignored just because it does not align with the strategic competencies of the organisation.

A model described by Evan and Freeman (1990) as cited in Fontaine et al. (2006), state that the purpose of the organisation lies in coordinating needs and interests of various stakeholders. They postulated two axioms of stakeholder management: *corporate legitimacy* where the organisation must endeavour to distribute benefits amongst stakeholders and the stakeholders must be an integral part of the decision making process; and *stakeholder fiduciary* where managers must act in a manner where priority is given to the stakeholder's interests and also act as an agent for the interests of the organisation. Once stakeholders are identified and management plans are in effect, it is essential to realise approaches to stakeholder theory which help in maintaining relations between stakeholders and managers.

Savage et al (1991) as cited in Fontaine et al (2006), identifies the types of stakeholder as, supportive, marginal, non-supportive and mixed blessings. The stakeholders are classified according to the potential for cooperation and the degree to which they are competitively threatening. *Supportive* stakeholders have high potential and pose as a low threat to competition. *Marginal* stakeholders are those that have low potential for cooperation as well as low threat. *Non-supportive* stakeholders on the other hand are those that have low potential but a high threat to competition and finally the *mixed blessing* category are those that have a high potential for cooperation as well as a high degree of threat (Fontaine et al, 2006).

Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997) distinguished stakeholders on the basis of authority they possessed. The sources of authority are; from physical assets (coercive power); from financial assets (utilitarian power) and from symbolic assets (normative power). Based on these sources of power, three major categories can be described, which can be further sub-divided into seven different groups of stakeholders. They are; dormant, discretionary, demanding [Latent stakeholders], dominant, dangerous, dependent [Expectant stakeholders], and definitive [Highly salient stakeholders]. However,

stakeholders are a very dynamic group of people and are constantly evolving with regard to power and authority, which makes it almost impossible to differentiate and organise them at times (Gray, 1989).

With these difficulties in mind, Freeman et al., (2004) suggests four strategies that can be used depending on which types of stakeholders are present. They are; *Offensive strategy* which should be employed when supportive stakeholders are present; *Defensive strategy* which should be employed when non-supportive stakeholders are present; *Swing strategy* which should be employed when a mixed-blessing category of stakeholders are present and *Hold strategy* which should be employed when marginal stakeholders are present.

It is the role of the manager to choose the optimal set of functions that will result in the most advantageous outcomes for all identified stakeholders (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). It is important to note that management should view all stakeholders equally and although some stakeholders may have more authority, it does not mean that they should be given any priority over other stakeholders. Thus, the role of the organisation is to harmonize all the interests of various stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Friedman and Miles (2006) suggest that an organisation should be viewed as a collection of stakeholders and the role of the organisation is to manage their needs and interest. Leask (2010) states that a destination may face closure if the managerial efforts in place are ineffective. She says that when the aims and objectives decided by the stakeholders are achieved, the managerial efforts have been successful.

According to Murphy (1985), as tourism assumes the role of a public good or service, its advantages can be distributed over a range of stakeholders within the destination and requires collaboration between all relevant stakeholders in order to eliminate possible conflicts and promote joint partnership. Jamal and Getz (1995) analysed the importance of strategic alliances with regard to development of tourism sector and growth in visitors at a destination. They concluded that attributes of a destination such as infrastructure, facilities and recreational provisions were intensely being utilised by domestic residents, foreign visitors and various stakeholders. The basis of their study was that with the rapid increases in tourism levels, the need for sustainable tourism practices was imminent. Sautter & Leisen (1999) formulated the *relationship/transaction strategy continuum* to aid in application of stakeholder theory to planning and development, which is a tool that analyses the marketing trends and patterns

employed and the strategic options that an organisation utilises in the delivery of processes and outcomes. Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) conducted an empirical study where the stakeholder theory was applied in the observation of various Chief Executive Officers' (CEO) of tourism management firms to measure how efficiently CEO's were able to identify and manage legitimate stakeholders.

Stakeholder theory forms an integral part of the theoretical foundation of this research, and it is the basic issue that this research is trying to address. It is essential to understand the theoretical concepts and their applicability to the Taj Mahal as a destination, because successful destination management is often the result of efficient stakeholder relationships. Effective stakeholder management leads to improvement of overall quality of collaborative efforts, and this addresses objective two of the research, in the sense that the Taj Mahal experience can be achieved by improving the state of stakeholder collaboration between managerial organisations and individuals

### **2.3.2 COLLABORATION THEORY**

The New Oxford Dictionary of English (2011b) defines collaboration as; "*The action of working with someone to produce something.*" The tourism industry is highly fragmented which increases the requirement for improved collaboration in planning (Gunn, 1988). At the same time, societies are highly complex and great care should be taken to implement the right policies and ensure their efficiency. He outlines the importance of tourism planning and when it is integrated with socio-economic planning which brings about a new tourist system. This system is more efficient than isolated efforts of any stakeholder, and gives rise to higher levels of cooperation and collaborative efforts between stakeholders.

According to Gray (1989) stakeholders are persons that have an active interest in a problem or issue, and can include anyone that is directly affected by the decisions and actions carried out by other parties while resolving issues. Stakeholders are individuals who have a direct or indirect share in the functioning of an organisation because they either affect or get affected by it. There are many stakeholders involved in the process and each should be recognised as an individual entity. A collaborative effort is one when a group of stakeholders in a destination area engage in an interactive process and co-operate with each other in the decision-making process using shared and pre-described rules and regulations, in order to solve issues related to the specific area (Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher, 2005).

Collaborative measures can be utilized to tackle common problems or issues, or it can be used to achieve a common vision or goal between stakeholders and can only be successful when the individual stakeholders see the benefits of a cooperative effort and share common goals. It is useful for development as it allows for active participation of all relevant stakeholders allows for a deeper understanding of the underlying problems Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher (2005). “Collaboration” is very interactive and is, “*a process of joint decision making among the key stakeholders of a problem domain about the future of that domain*” (Gray 1989). A “problem domain” refers to that aspect of the planning process where the problems encountered are highly complicated, complex and require multiple effort, to counter since they are out of the solving capacity of any single entity. The stakeholders within this domain are those affected by the issues and problems of the domain only, it is understood that only some stakeholders will be involved in the collaboration process (Wood and Gray, 1991)

Although the word collaboration is similar in meaning to cooperation; it is different in the sense that there are a wide range of complexities that go into the collaboration process that differentiate it from the act of cooperation (Denise, 1999). The need for a clear definition of the word collaboration becomes apparent and Gajda (2004) outlines five principles that aid in defining collaboration. They are; that it is imperative in nature; it has many names; it is the journey, not destination; it relates to the personal as much as procedural; it grows in stages.

Collaboration theory is composed of various frameworks that analyse and interpret data collected through research and observations of previous collaborative efforts of organisations used to arrive at common strategic relations. It is beneficial as it allows for most efficient usage of scarce resources to their best alternative use. The process has gained great momentum in recent years because it has been recognised that further heights can be scaled by collaboration, than by any individual effort. There are a wide range of social, economic, political, environmental concerns on a global level today and they require the collective efforts of multiple parties, working towards a common goal or vision (Jamal & Getz, 1995).

However, due to conceptual difficulties in defining collaboration, organisations find it cumbersome to implement collaboration strategies and measure their effectiveness with certainty and the process incurs costs on behalf of planning and development (Swarbrooke, 1999). Beckendorf and Pearce (2003) as cited in Leask, (2010) tell us that

management are motivated by various factors such as conservation, profit maximisation, education or avocation; the motivations of management depend on the type of ownership (whether private or public).

The identification of relevant stakeholders is a hindrance to the process and not all stakeholders are of the same background or capacity, which can result in all stakeholders not being able to be involved in the process. Reed (1997) has argued the major flaw in collaboration theory is that it assumes that upon active involvement of all interested or relevant stakeholders, there will be automatic and equal redistribution of power. He believes this is an unrealistic assumption because there are always disparities in power distribution and allocation of scarce resources.

According to Astley (1984, as cited in Jamal and Getz (1995), there are many constraints such as scarcity, competitors and problems of choice put on organisations, and there is growing pressure to overcome these constraints. Because of this, the focuses of organisations have shifted from devising new business strategies to selecting existing strategies that allow them to overcome these constraints. The inter-organisational domain refers to that domain where all organisations are so interconnected with each other, that tackling of any issue requires collaborative efforts.

Jamal and Getz (1995), outline states of inter-organisational domain as: calm and amiable *placid* environments with much unwarranted activity taking place; *disturbed-reactive* environments where there are a large number of organisations engaging in similar activities; *turbulent field* which is regulated by its own actions, and there is so much activity that it appears the ground is pushed into movement. This is the stage that requires maximum cooperation and collaboration as it is a highly unpredictable state.

Collaboration is a process and it is highlighted by the following features. Firstly, all stakeholders exist autonomous to others and results can be obtained only by resolving mutual disparities. The collaborative process delegates individual responsibility to stakeholders for their actions, decisions and outcomes of the problem domain. Gray (1989) and many other scholars refined three stages within the collaboration process. They are;

1. The Problem-Setting stage is the initial stage of the process the various stakeholders are identified and the degree of interconnection between them is established (Swarbrooke, 1999; Gadjia, 2004). The problem domain is defined in this state and

the issues to be tackled are highlighted (Wood & Gray, 1991). Only the legitimate stakeholders are identified and the aim of this stage is to reduce disparities in power distribution. This is also an opportunity for the stakeholders to voice their concerns and views and to ensure that they possess adequate resources to ensure a smooth collaboration (Gray, 1989; Gadja, 2004).

2. The stage where the stakeholders come together and formulate strategies to counter the issues is the Direction-Setting stage. This stage requires a great deal of cooperation because relevant information and data are collected and analyzed which allows the stakeholders to make informed decisions. Symmetry of information allows for all stakeholders to arrive at the same level of power. The stakeholders are responsible for developing the rules and regulations and deciding the direction the collaboration is going to take (Jamal & Getz, 1995). This stage involves a great deal of strategic management and environment analysis. The ultimate action in this stage is at the arrival of a common consensus on the visions, missions, goals and strategies that stakeholders expect to gain from the collaboration (Gray, 1989).
3. The Implementation stage is the final stage in the process and requires that there is increased communication, interaction and interconnectedness between stakeholders (Jamal & Getz, 1995). It is here that they arrive at means and methods of applying the strategies formulated into practical use and power, authority and responsibilities are assigned to the various stakeholders and each is responsible for his own (Aas et al, 2005). Following this, stakeholders must monitor and evaluate the efficiency and success of the implemented strategies (Gray, 1989).

Fyall and Garrod (2005) identifies the advantages of stakeholder collaboration as; reducing long term costs of problem resolution between stakeholders; increases positive relations between stakeholders due to the combined decision making process; leads to better knowledge accumulation; deeper insights into problems/issues/needs/wants; efficient use of resources resulting in sustainable tourism practices and increases in visitor numbers. Conversely, according to Bramwell and Sharman (1999) the disadvantages of stakeholder collaboration are; disparities in power distribution; negative feelings between stakeholders; disparities in power may result in decreased interaction and communication between stakeholders; intangibility of some sectors due to power and influential imbalances and increase in competition between stakeholders (generally at local level).

### **2.3.3 COLLABORATION AND HERITAGE SITES**

One of the greatest challenges to successful collaboration in tourism is the highly fragmented nature of the industry itself, because it is a highly diversified sector; this diversity also poses as a threat to the industry (Gunn, 1988). In tourism, collaboration does not always result in equal distribution of benefits, but allows each stakeholder to derive benefits over an extended period in time. The tourism industry is also very complex as it requires coordination and management between individual components such as travel agencies, accommodation providers, tour package providers and individual persons such as business operators, tourists and tour guides etc. These premises validate that the tourism industry is one that requires a great deal of collaboration and integration to function to its maximum potential.

Garrod & Fyall (2000) observed that tourism and heritage were highly dependent on each other. Other researchers have studied the links between cooperation and collaborative measures towards the success sustainable tourism practices (Hall & McArthur, 2000; Bramwell & Lane, 2000). Multiple studies have studied the impacts and issues of collaborations (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Gadjia, 2008). Several researchers have also linked the level of collaborative measures to the competitive advantage that a tourism industry acquires (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Hall, 2000). According to them, the momentum for change comes from the evolution of individuals during the collaboration process because individuals evolve faster than organisations as a whole, and they possess the values to initiate change. Hu & Wall (2005) as cited in Leask (2010) recognize that there is a lack of literature that compares international managerial issues, methods employed and optimum practices. The presence of such a knowledge base would improve the collaborative process, and would help to attain optimum solutions to collaborative mismatches.

The key step in the collaborative process is the identification of only relevant stakeholders which is critical and complicated, especially in the context of emerging economies and countries where there is lack of organization within and because of because of differences in culture, structure and operational capacity (Aas, Ladkin et al, 2005). According to Stolton & Dudley (1999) collaboration operates differently in various political and cultural environments, and there may be barriers that impede the collaborative process. The primary purpose of the process is to include and maintain the presence of all legitimate stakeholders that are or will be affected by the tourism development measures (Jamal & Getz, 1995).

Ladkin & Bertramini (2002) developed a measure that utilised existing measurements of network structuring and level of individual involvement, to determine the overall level of collaboration between stakeholders. Measuring the effectiveness of collaboration is important as the responsibility of evaluating the success of the process rests with stakeholders. Other researchers reiterate the importance of citizens and community in the collaboration process. Arnstein (1969) devised a model in which citizens were allowed participation in the process according to their relative level of power within society. All the studies reinforce the need to select and involve all legitimate stakeholders to guarantee efficient decision making standards, enforce joint control between stakeholders and to tackle managerial and planning concerns (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Information asymmetry and unawareness are hindrances to communication channels between tourism agencies and resource management authorities (Murphy, 1988).

Tourism can be viewed as a public service utility to a destination because there are many aspects of a society that are utilised by all individuals, such as infrastructural facilities, developmental facilities and leisure facilities etc (Jamal & Getz, 1995). These services may be used by citizens, tourists, government, private sector enterprises and so on. Tourism is a big reason why infrastructural facilities are developed in a country. Thus tourism can be viewed as a service that creates opportunities for all members of society (Long, Perdue et al., 1990 as cited in Aas et al., 2005). This increases the requirement for local authorities and governmental presence in developing the tourism sector and collaboration requires that the government work closely with the private sector in order to fund capital infrastructural development (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Baxter (2004) & Garrod et al. (2006) as cited in Leask (2010) talk about the existence of price differentials in the tourism industry. They attribute this phenomenon to the decline in public funding towards destinations, which has caused them to seek alternative sources of funding.

The tourism industry is one that is composed of a large number of independent stakeholders that are highly interconnected with each other and the actions of one stakeholder have a direct impact on others. Hall & McArthur (1996) and Shackley (2001) as cited in Leask (2010) say that effective tourism management lies in gaining detailed information about the market and its visitors, and then devising the optimum marketing and promotional approaches for the identified market segments.

A study by Pizam (1978) and Pizam and Millman (1988) concluded that persons who gained from tourism looked at it as an economic gift, and tended to disregard the environmental and social aspects of it more than those who didn't gain from tourism and residents encouraged development of the tourism sector only if the potential benefits exceeded the costs of development (Jamal & Getz, 1995). It becomes very important to encourage collaborative planning and processes in those destinations that show positive changes in socio-economic and cultural aspects due to tourism development.

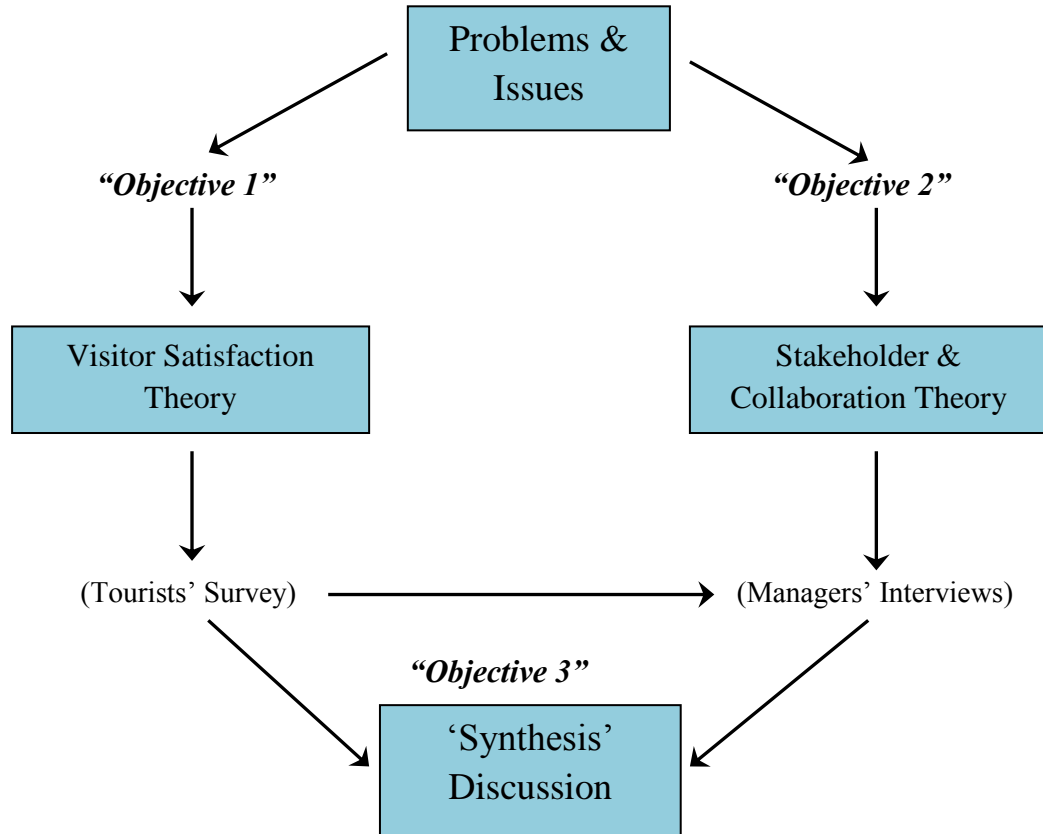
Leask (2010) identifies that the main challenge for site managers or operators face is in maintaining the optimum balance between visitor numbers and protection of the resource. She identified the following impediments to successful management; gaps in availability of market and managerial information; addressing visitors expectations in terms of services provided; the fragmented nature of the industry and markets; decline in availability of public funding; internal conflicts; limited staff and resources at the destination; involvement of many stakeholders which could lead to conflicts of interest and power and increases in competition.

In summary, collaboration is a process that is marked by a high level of interconnectedness between stakeholders and developments to the tourism sector of a country require active participation at all levels viz. local, state, national authorities, tourism agencies, the community and from any other relevant stakeholders. Collaboration as a practice requires that all stakeholders identify and express their needs and concerns and the process will try to include the needs of all stakeholders and align them with the best mutual solution.

With regard to tourism development, the most beneficial solution is the overall development of the sector because this raises the brand value of the destination thus giving it competitive advantage. The process can only be a success if all the decisions taken are enforced without any bias. Members of the community must be included as stakeholders to ensure fair representation of their interests in the process. Finally, for the collaboration to be a success there should be agreement and communication between stakeholders on the means to implement strategies devised during the process.

## 2.4 SUMMATION: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of understanding and measuring visitor satisfaction at the Taj Mahal is to gain an understanding of the situation in regard to managerial implications. My research studies the relationship between destination attributes and total visitor satisfaction.



**Figure 2.1: Theoretical Framework**

This research aims to clearly identify the problems and the issues that are present with regard to tourism at the Taj Mahal (Figure 2.1). Although it is one of the most advertised destinations in India it still experiences a good deal of dissatisfaction from tourists. This research tries to identify individual reasons where tourists have negative satisfaction and describes how they cumulatively add up to an overall negative experience for the visitor. The problems and the issues identified are then linked with the research objectives as outlined below:

Objective one aims to understand the nature of international tourist experience at the Taj Mahal site through face to face surveys that were administered outside the entrance gates to the Taj. This allows for clear identification of the areas of dissatisfaction as tourists are required to rank pre-selected attributes according to a Likert-like scale. Once the quantitative data is collected, trends will be observed and these trends are to be linked to the information that is collected during the in-depth analysis of visitor

satisfaction theory. Therefore, the final outcome will be to detail a clear link between how visitor satisfaction theory can be applied towards identification of factors causing positive or negative satisfaction levels. Specifically, the theories of Oliver's (1980) expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm will be used towards identifying the areas where tourists experience positive or negative disconfirmation. The attributes that were included in my survey design are deduced by personal observations and thought, but also based on attributes that have been used by previous academics (as described in section 2.2.3) and lastly the survey design utilises quantitative research designs as detailed by Neuman (2006).

Second objective relates to the managerial perspectives of the same issues and problems that are facing the tourism industry and causing declining visitor satisfaction levels. There is a high degree of collaboration in practice between the various regulatory authorities that have a stake in the Taj management process. The purpose of this objective is dual, such that it first briefly overviews stakeholder theory and its relevance, and describes in detail the applicability of collaboration theory towards my research. The research aims to identify and categorise the various stakeholders that I personally identified that had a stake in the management, maintenance and security aspects of the Taj according to the types of stakeholders that are defined by Donaldson & Preston (1995) which is instrumental stakeholder, and those defined by Savage et al (1991) as cited in Fontained et al. (2006) which are supportive, marginal, non-supportive or mixed-blessing stakeholders. The focus of this objective is to discuss collaboration theory and how the Taj tourism is a good example of ineffective collaboration.

Once the above two objectivess are achieved, they will form the foundation for completion of the third objective. The purpose of this objective is to closely compare the findings of the tourist surveys and their connection with visitor satisfaction theory, with that of the findings of the managerial interviews and their implications from the stakeholder/ collaboration theory point of view. Hence, the findings lead towards providing an overall discussion on the linkage and achieving the research aim.

### **3 CROSSING THE FIRST THRESHOLD/ BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This phase in the monomyth is where the hero leaves everything behind and fully ventures out behind the prized boon (Campbell, 2008). It was during this process that I gathered a vast amount of knowledge about Agra city, the Taj Mahal and their historical backgrounds.

This chapter evaluates the importance of Agra as a tourist destination in India; it presents the various offerings that Agra has to offer the tourists and presents a brief picture of the tourism scenario in Agra. It was found that Agra requires a great deal of environmental protection and the chapter also aims to provide reasoning as to why this level of environmental protection is required. The main focus of this chapter is on the Taj Mahal, and it has been noted that the Taj is facing losses in its natural quality because of the lack of environmental planning in Agra. One of the areas that this chapter will discuss is the need for environmental protection in Agra so that it doesn't harm cultural treasures like the Taj.

From here, the focus gradually shifts to the Taj Mahal, its historical background, the wonder of its construction, the symbolic purity of its romanticism and an account of all the facts and myths surrounding it. It goes on to give the reader a complete profile of tourism at the Taj Mahal, and describes all that the Taj has to offer its visitors. There are many cultural attractions and festivities that take place in Agra with specific regard to the Taj, and the chapter outlines these for the reader.

With the advent of the internet, there is easy availability to the thoughts and experiences of tourists from all over the globe, regarding the Taj. This chapter gives a general description of how these tourists perceived their experiences there. The ultimate purpose of this section is to relate visitors, their experiences and the overall experience with the Taj.

The Taj Mahal and its management display a high level of stakeholder participation and collaborative measures. In the latter portion of this chapter, the degree of interconnection between stakeholders and the collaboration between them is presented to the reader. It aims to understand and present the stakeholder situation at the Taj through means of secondary data collection. This pertains to the various managerial organizations that are assigned the roles of overlooking the Taj.

### 3.2 AGRA: A CITY WITH ITS OWN STORY

India is a country that has a rich culture and history; its historical backgrounds can be traced all the way back to 3500 B.C. It has been the abode of many great rulers, kings, empires and civilizations like the Indus Valley civilization, the Harappan Civilization, Ashoka, the Guptas, the Cholas, the Khiljis, the Mughals and the British Raj (The British Museum, 2005). India transformed incredibly under the rule of these dynasties. There are many cities in India that have a salient presence from a historical perspective; one of the most historically and culturally opulent cities in India is Agra. Agra's significance can be traced back to the times as early as those during which the epic tale the *Mahabharatha* was written; and it was known as *Agraban* then (TMS, 2009).

Agra has been ruled by many of the great emperors of the Indian subcontinent. Its first invasion was by the Afghan ruler Sikander Lodi. He was overthrown by Babur, the Asian emperor in 1526. The emperorship of Agra switched hands between other Afghani conquerors such as Sher Shah and before being restored to Mughal rule (Central Pollution Board, 2006).

Before the Mughals, Agra belonged to the mighty Rajputs of India, but Raja Badal Shah seized Agra in 1475 AD (Uttar Pradesh Tourism, 2011). Following this battle, the Mughal Empire settled in Agra keeping it as their capital. Many Mughal emperors like Humayun, Akbar, Jehangir, and Shah Jahan moulded Agra city into the cultural gold mine it is today (Agra India, 2008). The period when these emperors ruled has often been declared the '*Golden Age of Agra*' (Uttar Pradesh Tourism, 2011). During this period many Mughal monuments such as Agra Fort, Fatehpur Sikri, Buland Darwaza, Sikandara (Akbar's Tomb), Itmad-Ud-Daula's Tomb and the Taj Mahal were constructed in Agra city (Maps of Agra, 2010). Agra's significance as a city didn't stop with the Mughals, but it enjoyed almost the same status during the British Raj.

The British declared it as a district in 1805 A.D and to signify this, they posted a Collector there (Agra India, 2008). Eventually they formed a province known as the United Province, and Agra was designated as the capital (ADA, 2011). It was also one of the places where a significant mutiny took place that shaped the destiny of the British in India, viz. the *Mutiny of United Province Capital* of 1857 A.D (Agra India, 2008). It was during the British Raj that much of the development and change in Agra took place. The British Empire experience their Industrial Revolution in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, which caused the economic activity in Britain to shift from agrarian based to heavy industrial and machine-based industries. This caused a massive increase in the need for

raw materials over labour, because machinery replaced the need for labour. This sped up the process of modernization or urbanization in Britain (Ward, 1994).

Now, India served as a primary market for these goods and at the same time the British used the cheap resources and labour available there. This was the initial stage of the Industrial Revolution in India, because the British set up their industries in India to curb production and labour costs (Buchanan, 1934). During this stage there was a large amount of uncontrolled industrialisation and mechanisation which severely affected Indian cottage and local industries, and increased the reliance on machine based production.

It was during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that actual modernization and development began in India and British owned industries began their operations from India itself (Ward, 1994). This put pressure on the Indian owned industries to perform because the profits were being drained by the British owned ones. This led to Indian industries trying to compete with British technology; however, they had very limited support and capital to do so. This led to large number of industries coming up, but little regard was given to the environment at that stage (Buchanan, 1934).

The turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked the full-fledged swing of the Industrial Revolution in India. With the development of infrastructural facilities such as railways and roads and improved communication facilities, trade and growth began to boom. Agra found its place as an industrial hub of Northern India, and it was during this stage that much of the environmental degradation began to take place (*Lesson 2: Indian business heritage* 2010). Due to uncontrolled industrial growth of metallurgical, chemicals and other industries the environmental effects were soon to be obvious. In addition to this, there was an increasing pressure of growing population number all over India, which further increased the need for heavy production (Buchanan, 1934).

Once India gained its independence in 1947, regulatory functions and maintenance of the industrial sectors and activities were delegated to the Indian Government, which developed five-year plans to maintain growth levels. These five-year plans marked large increments in the number of chemical based and heavy industries in India (*Lesson 2: Indian business heritage* 2010). Agra city enjoyed industrial growth and development following independence as well.

Following independence, there was a large increase in the number of migrants that came from rural areas, and those persons who were displaced because of the political situation of the time (Bateman, 2004). Today, Agra is characterized by overpopulation, pollution, overcrowding, an excessive number of vehicles, poverty, noisiness, and it is a poor reflection of the former glory it had as a capital. Agra has developed into a commercial and rapidly growing centre of industrial activity. It functions as an important centre for electrical, plastic, leather and steel industries. These industries have contributed much to the poor environmental state of Agra. In addition to the economic gains it receives from its industrial activities, Agra is now one of the important tourist, transport and commerce centres of India (Urban Health Initiative, 2010).

### **3.2.1 THE NEED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN AGRA**

The Supreme Court of India passed a historical judgment on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, 1996. The city of Agra underwent rigorous industrial development during late 1800s and early 1900s India. However, it was not long before the effects of environmental pollution were noticed upon the Taj Mahal. It was noticed that the Taj began to assume a yellowish tinge, which was attributed to the chemical effluents being discharged into the atmosphere. It was feared that this would permanently damage the marble and sandstone structure of the Taj. Therefore, based on “*the (Taj Trapezium Case) India -- M.C. Mehta v. Union of India, WP 13381/1984 (1996.12.30) Writ Petition (C) No. 13381 of 1984 by advocate, M.C. Mehta*”, the Supreme Court, ordered the closure of two power generating units as well as more than a hundred manufacturing centres which were responsible for the degree of pollution. This step by the Court describes the importance of the Taj Mahal as a World Heritage Site (Das Gupta, 2008).

Today Agra is described as one of the filthiest Indian cities. It has poorly developed infrastructural facilities and is characterised by open manholes, filthy sanitation facilities, an unreliable and underdeveloped electricity system and poorly constructed and dilapidated roads. The tourists experience in Agra is constrained by this lack of infrastructural development in many ways. The river Yamuna is of great importance to the foundation of the Taj Mahal as it has a floating foundation, but is of no use as its river beds have been completely eroded into silt. The reality is that there are severe water scarcities throughout the year. Another scarce necessity is electricity, which increases reliance on noisy diesel powered generators that increase level of air pollution as well. Agra is on the decline in the socio-economic sense as there is widespread unemployment and a lack of employment opportunities. Corruption and a lack of regard

for rules and regulations are rampant within the law and order authorities in Agra (Das Gupta, 2008).

### **3.2.2 THE ‘TAJ-CITY’ AGRA: PANORAMA**

Agra is a part of the state of Uttar Pradesh in Northern India is neighboured by the state of Rajasthan on its south and west, and the districts of Etah and Mathura to the North and Firozabad at its east (ASI, 2011). It is situated in north-west India (Urban Health Initiative, 2010). Agra covers a total land area of four thousand and eighty two kilometre<sup>2</sup>, and has an estimated population of 1.6 million people (Uttar Pradesh Tourism, 2011). The weather is very extreme weather with hot summers and cold winters; Agra also has a very tropical monsoon season (Urban Health Initiative, 2010). The common languages spoken in Uttar Pradesh and Agra are Urdu, Hindi and English, although there are more than one hundred dialects (London Metropolitan University, 2006).

The City of Agra is composed of the Agra Municipal Corporation and the Cantonment Board. Due to the industrialization and development that took place in Agra, the government found it necessary to create a development authority to monitor and control the urbanization process. The Agra Development Authority's main function is to ensure that the basic amenities like clean food and water and affordable, good quality housing facilities are made available to the public. Yet, Agra has a high percentage of slum dwellers, and it has been difficult for the Development Board to meet their basic needs of food, shelter and clothing (NIC Agra Ministry of Communication & Information Technology, 2011).

Considering the level of development that Agra has gone through, its infrastructural facilities are poor. Agra is a highly polluted city as it has very poor standards of solid waste management, with daily collection levels totalling four hundred and fifty tones a day (Urban Health Initiative, 2010). Electricity is unreliable and this has resulted in the usage of diesel generators to counter the power cuts which sometimes last between four to six hours a day. It has been observed that electricity usage during tourist seasons is excessive because of heat and humidity which the tourists are not used to, therefore increasing usage of appliances such as fans and air conditioners; which leads to overloads on the electrical supply system, which increases reliance on the generators which in turn adds to air pollution (NIC Agra MCIT, 2011).

Since uncontrolled industrialization was allowed to take place during the Industrial era, Agra today faces many environmental concerns and hazards. There are severe slumps in water supply and it is approximated that there are shortages in excess of fifty million litres per day. These shortages are attributed to the poor quality of the water supply network; it is estimated that more than forty per cent of this slump takes while the water is being transported from the source to the supply network (Urban Health Initiative, 2010). This indicates the poor quality of the existing pipeline system that is used for transporting water.

Another by-product of poor infrastructural planning is the level of water pollution which takes place due to a poorly planned sewage system. It is reported that only thirty per cent of Agra system is catered to by an efficient sewage system, the remaining seventy per cent are responsible for the water pollution that takes place at the river Yamuna, with over 24 sewage drains emptying their contents directly into the river. This pollution threatens the foundations and beauty of many architectural structures based in Agra. It was because of this environmental degradation that mandates were passed that banned the usage of fuel operated vehicles within the vicinity of the Taj Mahal (NIC Agra MCIT, 2011). Today one can find only battery and man-powered modes of transport within the radius of 500 meters of the Taj.

Agra is well connected with the rest of India. It is a mere two hundred kilometres from the capital New Delhi. Agra is accessible by air, rails, roads and public transport. Agra contains an airport which caters to the domestic travel needs which is located only five kilometres from the heart of the city and there are flights incoming on a daily basis. Agra's railway network links it with all major cities; it has seven major railway stations within its borders (Agra Development Authority, 2011). It is linked to the National Highway network in India by National Highways 11, 3 and 2. This allows private cars, buses as well as government buses to reach Agra (Urban Health Initiative, 2010). Upon disembarking at Agra, there are many forms of local transportation available such as private taxis, mini-vans, auto-rickshaws and cycle-rickshaws for hire.

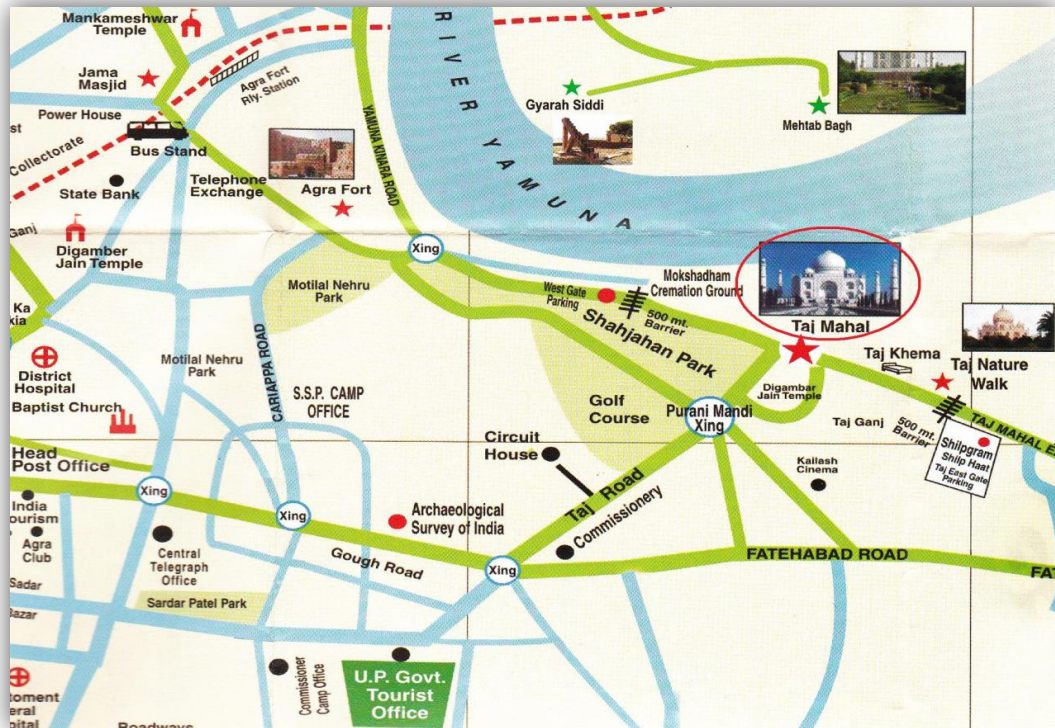
### **3.2.3 OVERVIEW OF TOURISM IN AGRA**

Agra is no longer the regal city it once was; but today, it is characterised by crowded, narrow streets and noisy bazaars. It has gained increasing popularity as a tourist destination as it is the only city in the world to contain three World Heritage Sites namely; the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort and Fatehpur Sikri. Besides these sites, it also

contains monuments such as the Akbar's tomb at Sikandara, Itmad-ud-Daula's Tomb and the Raghaswamy Temple. Other famous monuments in Agra include the Chini ka Roza, Jama Masjid, Marium Tomb and various other temples dedicated to the Hindu deity, Shiva (Agra India, 2008).

Tourism in Agra is managed and maintained by the Uttar Pradesh Government Tourism Office and the Government of India Tourism Office (Uttar Pradesh Tourism, 2011). These bodies provide information for tourists via tourist information centres and the internet; and an Information Centre is located at the Agra Cantonment Railway Station (Agra Development Authority, 2011). Agra is one of the handicraft centres of India and is famous for marble inlays, leathers, soft stone inlays, carpets, embroidery and jewellery (Uttar Pradesh Tourism, 2011). Bazaars and markets are also famous for miniature sculptures and replicas of the Taj Mahal (NIC Agra MCIT, 2011). The main shopping areas of Agra are Kinari Bazar, Fatehbadi Road, Sadar Bazar, Munro Road, Sanjay Place, the Taj Mahal Complex and the Raja-ki-Mandi. The Shilphaat is a handicrafts market which is located merely seven hundred and fifty metres from the Taj and is a unique display of artistic talents from around India (Uttar Pradesh Tourism, 2011). The Taj Ganj Markets also provide tourists with a unique cultural and ethnic shopping experience.

**Figure 3.2: Agra Tourist Map from pamphlet obtained from U.P Tourism Office**

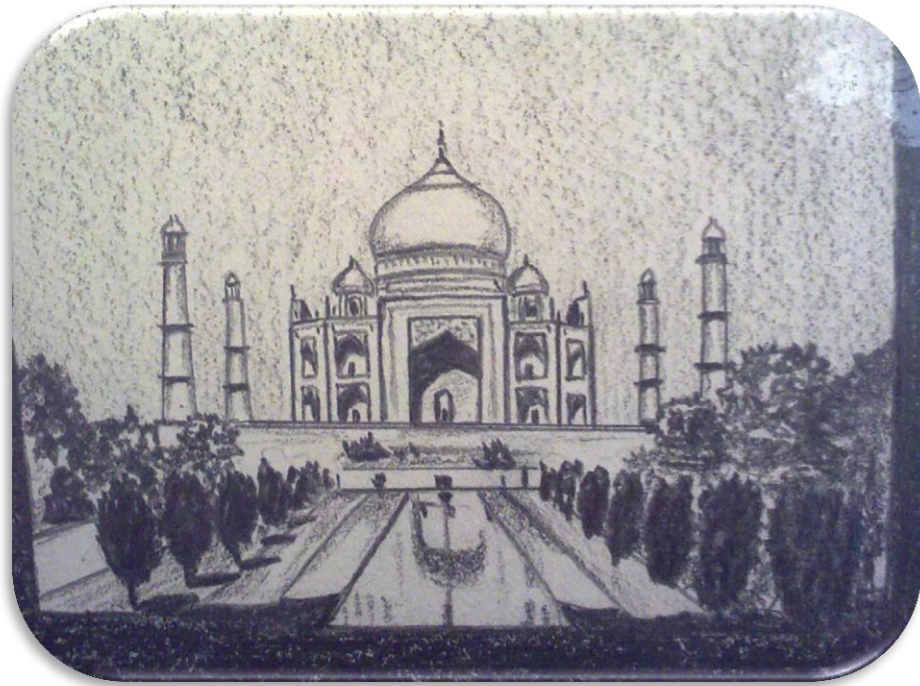


*Source: Pamphlet (U.P Tourism Office)*

### 3.3 WAH TAJ WAH!

Amidst all this negativity and pollution, there are some saving graces for Agra city. The Taj Mahal (Figure 3.3) has been described as “a teardrop on the cheek of time” by Shri Rabindranath Tagore (Archaeological Survey of India, 2011). It is a symbol of romanticism and love from the emperor Shah Jahan to his bride Mumtaz. Shah Jahan was the fifth Mughal emperor to come to power, and dedicated this monument to his third and most admired wife Mumtaz, who died after bearing their thirteenth child (UNESCO, 2011). The monument took seventeen years to complete, and was finally done in 1648; it is a marvellous piece of architectural design and has rightly deserved its place today as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World (ASI, 2011). Today it attracts between two to four million tourists per annum and about two hundred thousand of them are foreign visitors (Taj Mahal, 2011). The Taj Mahal literally translates as “Crown Palace” and it extends over an area of forty-two acres (UNESCO, 2011).

**Figure 3.3 Personal sketch of the Taj Mahal**



Shah Jahan's full name was emperor Shahab Uddin Muhammad Shah Jahan I (and his full title was: *Al-Sultan al-'Azam wal Khaqan al-Mukarram, Abu'l-Muzaffar Shahab ud-din Muhammad, Sahib-i-Qiran-i-Sani, Shah Jahan I Padshah Ghazi Zillu'llah [Firdaus-Ashiyani]*) and he was formerly known as Prince Khurram before his ascension to power. His third bride's name was Arjuman Bano Begum; however, he renamed her Mumtaz Mahal, which literally translates as "*Jewel of the Palace*" or "*Chosen one of the Palace*" (Department of Tourism, 2011)

The lore surrounding the Taj Mahal says; the late empress Mumtaz was given four promises by her emperor, and they were; that he would construct the Taj Mahal, he would marry again, he would dote on their children and he would pay homage to her on her death anniversary. There are myths of a second Taj Mahal, the "*Black Taj*" which was to be a duplicate model of the Taj Mahal, and was intended to be built opposite it. However, his own son Aurangzeb performed a coup d'état and took control of his empire, and then any plans for construction of the Black Taj were abandoned. Today the Taj Mahal houses the tombs of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal, but Mughal Islamic tradition states that a tomb is meant to have three sets of graves. So it is believed that there are three sets of graves within the Taj Mahal (Taj Mahal, 2011).

The construction was carried out to the highest standards; materials for construction were sourced from various regions of India as well as parts of Asia. The white marble originated from Jodhpur in India and more than twenty eight varieties of semi-precious

stones, gemstones and decorative stones from Iran, Egypt, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Persia and parts of India like Punjab and Golconda were inlaid into the white marble. Many of these ornaments and decorative elements were stripped off the Taj Mahal during the reign of the British in India in 1857 (ASI, 2011). A large quantity of precious stones and adornments like diamonds, gold and pearls which were in the original design have been stolen from its interiors as well (DOT, 2011)

It was constructed in phases, and the construction period of only the foundation and tomb lasted approximately fifteen years. Additions to the structure such as the mosque, gateways, minarets, took approximately five years to complete (UNESCO, 2011). Just four years after its construction was completed, faults in its structure were discovered and it was observed that the structure was declining towards the river banks. This shift in the centre of the Taj could lead to faults in the entire design (Taj Mahal, 2011).

The architectural style draws heavily from the Mughal period but also contains Islamic and Persian elements (UNESCO, 2011). Verses from the Holy Quran have been inscribed within the Taj and the tomb of Mumtaz itself is a declaration to Allah, with over ninety nine calligraphic inscriptions of various names of Allah (Taj Mahal, 2011). Upon completion Shah Jahan had the hands of all the architects and labourers chopped off so that they would never be able to replicate the marvel that they had created. He even blinded them so that they would never be able to view such a magnificent creation in their lives again (Edensor, 2004)

The location and texture of the white marble used in its construction offers an optical display during different times of the day, it reflects a variety of brilliance during different seasons of the year, and at night its pure white marble and the inlaid precious and semi-precious stones reflect the rays of the moon (UNESCO, 2011). The Taj appears pinkish during the day, snow white during the evening and it reflects a golden tinge during moonlight (DOT, 2011).

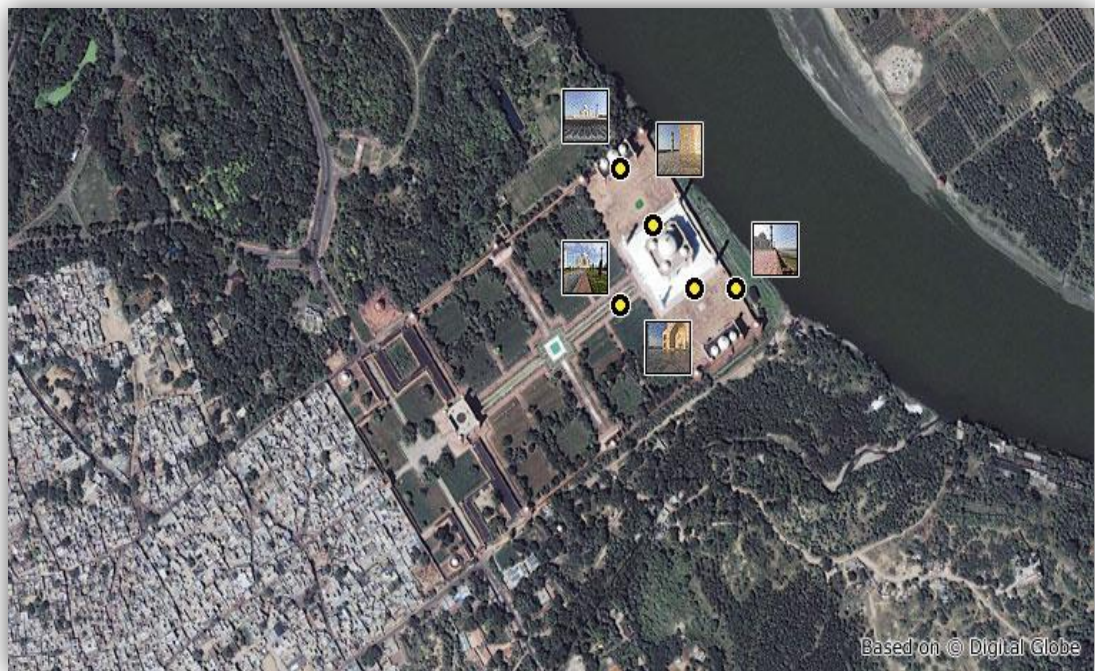
The Taj Mahal is known for its perfection and symmetry in architectural design. There are five spectacular elements/features of the Taj Mahal (Figure 3.4). The main gateway is a massive structure that is built entirely of sandstone. It is 93 feet high and was constructed in 1632 - 1638. It is also known as the *Darwaza-i-Rauza*, which translates as; “*the gate of the mausoleum*” (Taj Mahal, 2011). The architect of the gateway plays a clever illusion on the viewers, as the font size of the verses gradually increase as they

move further away from the viewer, this makes all the inscriptions appear a uniform size (DOT, 2011).

Inside the gateway is the mausoleum which is surrounded by two almost identical structures on both sides. There is a mosque on the left side and an assembly hall (Mihman Khana) on the right. The mosque was built for two purposes; Islamic law states that all mausoleums should have a religious institution in its vicinity and secondly, the mosque mirrors the assembly hall on its opposite side, thus enhancing the symmetrical perfection of the Taj. The Mihman Khana, was only constructed to balance the symmetry of the architectural design. Its initial purpose was to provide a rest area for visitors who came to pay homage to Mumtaz Mahal on her death anniversary (ASI, 2011; DOT, 2011; Taj Mahal, 2011).

The visitors enter the Taj Mahal through any of the three gates surrounding the main forecourt which is known as the Jilaukhana (DOT, 2011). It is from the Taj Ganj that visitors approach the South Gate (Sidhi/Sirhi Darwaza) and can enter the forecourt from here. The Western Gate (Fatehpur Darwaza) and the Eastern Gate (Fatehabadi Darwaza) can be accessed from here, which also lead into the forecourt (Edensor, 2004).

**Figure 3.4: Hybrid view of the Taj Mahal and the monuments inside**



*Source: <http://www.world-heritage-tour.org/asia/south-asia/india/agra/taj-mahal/map.htm>*

Inside the gates, there are gardens on either side of the walkways or *khiyabans*, and they divide the gardens into four squares of almost identical proportions (DOT, 2011). The purpose of these garden squares is to enhance the symmetrical design as well. At the intersection point of the walkways, there is a platform (*Chabtura*) which has a pool (*Hauz*) on it (UNESCO, 2011). The gardens are known as *Charbagh*, which means Gardens of Paradise and they cover an area of three hundred by three hundred metre<sup>2</sup> (Taj Mahal, 2011). The walkways lead to the Taj Mahal and its interiors.

The interior is designed with Persian motifs and is based on a square foundation, on top of which there is an arched doorway known as the *Iwan* (ASI, 2011). The peculiarity of the central chamber is that it is 24 feet long, and it resonates one of the world's longest echoes. The central chamber, which houses the tombs of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal, has a marble screen in it which is known as the *Jali* (DOT, 2011). Their graves are actually located directly below the central chamber.

### 3.3.1 TOURISM AT THE TAJ MAHAL

According to Press Trust of India (2010), a survey conducted by International Association of Amusement Parks and Attraction (IAAPA) in 2010 revealed that the Taj Mahal was the most popular tourist destination in Asia. It was reported that there was a rise in visitor numbers over the period of 2009-2010, with domestic visitors showing an increase of approximately 1,528,070 and international tourists with 129,597 (ASI, 2011). Table 3.1 presents the number of domestic and international visitors at the Taj Mahal in 2009-2010.

**Table 3.1: Number of visitors at the Taj Mahal (2009 – 2010)**

Visitors	Year	
	(2009)	(2010)
Domestic	2,582,929	4,110,999
International	491,585	621,182

*Source: ASI, Taj Mahal Office, Agra*

According to Daily Bhaskar News (28<sup>th</sup> July, 2011), the Ministry of Culture said that in 2008-2009, the monument generated INR 153,649,810 (NZ\$ 4,519,112), in 2009-2010 it raked in INR 172,449,110 (NZD 4,427,448) and is the top draw in terms of tourism revenue, logging a gate entry income of INR 198,949,560 (NZD 5,107,819) for the fiscal 2010-2011 (IANS, 2011).

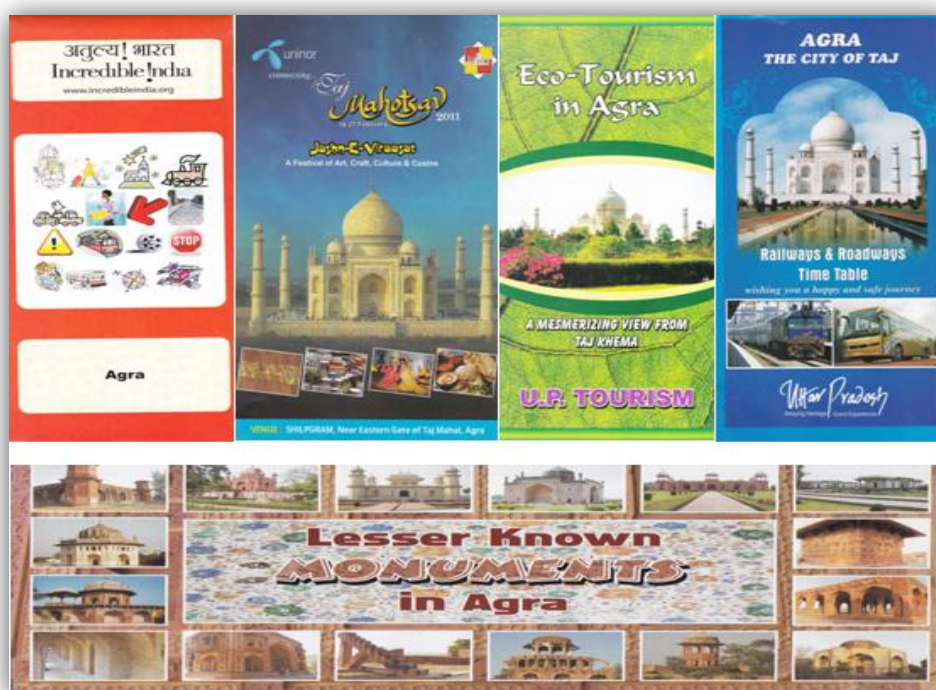
### **3.3.2 OTHER ATTRACTIONS**

Taj Mahal boasts a museum that was founded in 1982. It is located in the ground floor and is known as the Jal Mahal. The museum is made up of three galleries, and also has an exhibition of a hundred and twenty one pieces of cultural history, which pertain to the construction phase of the Taj (ASI, 2011). The opening hours of museum is from 10 am to 5 pm and remains closed on Friday (ASI, 2011).

One of the major attractions at the Taj Mahal is the night viewing sessions. Tourists have been permitted to enjoy night viewing since 28th November, 2004 (DOT, 2001). Night viewing happens between eight thirty p.m. until twelve a.m. on the five full moon nights every month and for two days prior to, and after the full moon. Eight batches of fifty tourists are allowed per night, and the entire viewing lasts half an hour. Visitors are not allowed night viewing on Fridays and during the Holy Month of Ramadan (ASI, 2011).

Bordering the Eastern Gate (Fatehbadi Darwaza) is a stretch of land known as the “Taj Nature Walk” (Uttar Pradesh Tourism, 2011). This trail has an uneven surface which allows tourists to view the Taj from different perspectives, heights, and scenic backgrounds. Due to the negative effects of environmental pollution, the Forestry Department of Uttar Pradesh undertook plantation and reforestation measures around it. The Taj Nature Walk provides allows tourists to learn about the flora, fauna, forests and natural heritage of the area. It is managed by the Taj Forestry Division of Agra (Social Forestry Divison Agra, 2011).

**Figure 3.5: Front pages of Taj Mahal promotional pamphlets**



**Source: Field research**

On the banks of the Yamuna River, there was a large garden named the Mehtaab Garden, which translates as “*Moonlight Garden*” (TMS, 2009). It is believed that this flourishing garden went barren. An apex court order in India launched a project to establish green land around the vicinity of the Taj Mahal, to combat the effects of environmental pollution on the white marble marvel (Agra India, 2008). The Mehtaab Garden is open to all, on all days of the week from dawn till dusk (Uttar Pradesh Tourism, 2011).

There are festivals pertaining to the Taj Mahal, such as the ten day festival named the *Taj Mahotsav*, which occurs annually between the eighteenth and the twenty-seventh of February. The festival commenced in 1992 and is hosted by the Tourism Board of Uttar Pradesh in order to boost tourism levels (Taj Mahotsav Samiti, 2011). It not only aims to boost local tourism and the economy, but it is meant to give the visitors an understanding of Indian cultural and artistic values.

**Table 3.2: Various fees for activities**

Event/ Activity	Entry Fees			
	International Tourist		Domestic/ SAARC & BIMSTEC Tourist	
	INR	NZD	INR	NZD
<b>Taj Mahal</b>	750 (Adult) Free (Below 15)	22.06	20 (Adult) Free (Below 15)	0.60
<b>Night Viewing of the Taj Mahal</b>	750 (Adult) 500 (3-15 age), Free < 3	22.06 14.07	510 (Adult) 500 (3-15 age), Free < 3	15 14.07
<b>Taj Museum</b>	5	0.15	5	0.15
<b>Mehtab Park</b>	100	2.94	5	0.15
<b>Taj Nature Walk</b>	50	1.47	10 5 (Children)	0.30 0.5
<b>Taj Mahotsav</b>	Free of Cost		20 (Adult) 10 (5-12 age) Free <5	0.60 0.30
<b>Urs Festival</b>	Free of Cost		Free of Cost	

*Source: Field research*

The festival of Urs takes place during the Holy Month of Ramadan and is meant to commemorate the life of Shah Jahan by portraying him as a Muslim saint; and visitors and followers are allowed to pay their respects to the graves of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz during this time (The Times of India, July 18, 2010). The first two days are open to public, free of charge post 2 p.m. and the third day is characterized by religious rites at the Taj Mahal.

The various entry fees for activities related to the Taj Mahal for International and domestic tourists are shown in Table 3.2. Other festivities that take place in the vicinity of the Taj are;

- *Kailash Fair* – A commemoration of Lord Shiva
- *Sheetla Fair* – Occurs in the month of July or August
- *Bateshwar Fair* – Happens sixty five kilometers from Agra in November.
- *Ram Barat* – It is a celebration of the return of Prince Rama to Ayodhya, who overcame the evil emperor of Lanka, Ravana, and returned with his wife Laxmi (DOT, 2011).

### **3.3.3 VISITOR EXPERIENCES**

This section gives an overview of the various services provided at the Taj Mahal for visitors, the areas that are of concern to visitors, and the facilities that are essential but unavailable. The Taj hosts visitors on a daily basis and it is expected that they are to be provided the basic amenities such as water, medical aid, public restroom and safe storage facilities. However, many of these services, although provided, are inadequate.

On visiting the Taj Mahal, I made several observations about the state services provided for visitors. My primary observations concurred with the thoughts of some literature on

the Taj Mahal. Firstly, inadequate measures are taken to preserve the aesthetic beauty of the Taj Mahal premises. The standard of cleanliness can be described as low (Edensor, 2007). There are drinking water facilities that provide filtered water close to the East and West Gates. There are public restrooms next to the main entrance, which are free of charge for international visitors; however, the state of the public washrooms is filthy. They are in poor repair and used by so many visitors that often are not fit for use unless in a dire emergency. There are locker facilities available for visitors to check in their electronic items like video recorders. The premises are open to photographers except in some areas which are restricted, and video recording incurs a fee of INR 25 (DOT, 2011).

One of concerns is that there are inadequate medical facilities available within the Taj. Agra is subjected to extreme climatic conditions, with brutally hot summers and very cold winters. During the summer months it is a common phenomenon to have international visitors faint inside the Taj. The President of the Agra Tourist Chamber, Rajiv Tiwari shared that this was a major concern for international visitors by saying that, “*Agra being one of the hottest spots cases of sunstroke and heat exhaustion are pretty common*”; while the President of the Agra Accredited Guides Association commented that it was unfair that even though foreigners paid INR 750, there were inadequate provisions for their medical needs by saying:

*Despite paying Rs 750 for a ticket, he has to stand in the general queue and the wait could stretch beyond an hour... apart from one complimentary mineral bottle, they will have no replenishment during 3.5 to 4 km trudge around the Taj* (“Why it’s Ah! Taj for foreign tourists”, 2010).

The quotation below describes the experience that a visiting couple had in the city of Agra during their visit to the Taj Mahal.

*The icing on the cake for how our last 5 days have been going. Relentless beggars, overly abundant touts with there every ready sales pitch, the shifts, late trains... making us miss trains, dealing with asshole after asshole at the train station ticket office, constant stares from pervy Indian men (not just me but Erik too) the hot air swarming with flies, the trash everywhere, the smell of burning cow shit mixed with piss, shit and exhaust fumes, everyone trying to rip us off, and then to top it off Erik's shoes getting stolen from the Taj Mahal! Crazy India!!!!*’ (Angie, 2006)

It can be seen that the author is highly disappointed and annoyed with their experience, and makes specific remarks about certain factors that reduced the satisfaction that they

expected from their trip. When tourists embark on a journey, they have certain destination images in their mind. However, the reality in Agra is far from what is advertised to the public. Foreign visitors often pay more than normal prices for everything because they are unaware of the true value of goods and services there. Foreigners pay an entry fee of INR 750, while a domestic visitor pays only INR 20 (Nicola & Darrly, 2009). Locals often scam foreigners for everything because they have little idea about anything, and often get cornered into deals that they have no interest in, by pushy locals and salesmen. After listening to and reading others negative experiences at the Taj Mahal, the thought of how to improve the experience for visitors always came to mind. This is where this research began in the sense that; in order to find a solution, one must fully know the problem. Therefore the desire to investigate this poor visitor experience began there.

### **3.4 THE TAJ MAHAL AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION**

#### **3.4.1 A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) was created on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 1946 in order to promote unity and peacefulness between countries. (Di Giovine, 2009). It was concluded during the United Nations Conference at Stockholm, 1972 that there were certain sites that were of cultural value to all members of the world, which led to the conception of the World Heritage Convention (Aplin, 2002). The purpose of the World Heritage Convention is to identify, protect, maintain and conserve sites that are of cultural and natural value to the world (UNESCO, 2011).

To facilitate the protection and conservation of these sites, UNESCO founded two subsidiary organisations; the World Heritage Bureau (WHB) and the World Heritage Committee (WHC) which also aimed to protect, conserve and practice sustainable measures with regard to these sites. These organisations are responsible for deciding the criteria that qualify a site as a heritage site as well (Aplin, 2002). According to the World Heritage Convention (2011), there are currently 936 such sites out of which, 725 are cultural heritage sites, 183 are natural sites and 28 are mixed heritage sites (UNESCO, 2011).

Di Giovine (2009) enumerates the clauses that the World Heritage Convention established for the recognition and acceptance of a site as a World Heritage Site. They are;

- One that aims “*to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius*”
- One which is a unique representation of human cultural traditions
- One which is directly linked with the historical, traditional and artistic values of a place or its people, which shares a significant place in time
- One that is considered to be an exceptional architectural structure in history
- One that has a significant role in the human civilization and represents the socio-cultural evolution of man.

The World Heritage Bureau is responsible for the cataloguing and recording of heritage sites that may be included in the “*World Heritage Sites in Danger*” List (Aplin, 2002). This list represents those sites which are of supreme cultural and historical value but face possible destruction; and humanity would face a huge loss if these sites are not protected and conserved immediately. These two bodies outline the grounds on which sites may be included in the list. They are (UNESCO 2011);

- If the site is subjected to inefficiencies in political, administrative and legislative functions in a country.
- If insufficient measures are taken to conserve the site.
- If the country lacks sufficient resources to undertake its conservation.
- If the site poses as a risk to the environment as well as humanity.
- If the site is threatened by external factors such as political instabilities or wars.

It must be noted that the process of preserving heritage sites goes beyond just preserving the physical structure of a monument, but involves an integration of the monument into the culture and faith of people. The concept of a “*cultural heritage zone*” has different implications for tourism; it extends to the total preservation, maintenance and development of the site and practicing sustainability (Di Giovine, 2009). The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) as cited in (15: cf. Menon 1989: 6) outline principles that relate to the effective preservation of such sites. They are (UNESCO, 2011);

- Effective socio-economic and urban/regional development policies must be implemented with regard to towns and villages of historic value
- Effective measures must be taken to include all aspects of the site and maintain the integrity of its historical value. This includes all forms of urban

development; existing structures and spaces; the site must maintain the originality of structures within the zone; the natural and cultural values of the zone and it must incorporate the historical journey of the site.

- Such a measure requires the coordination and cooperation of domestic residents, villages, towns, cities and state territories.
- The conservation process must be handled with care and sensitivity.

UNESCO mandates that it is essential for a nation to have a detailed, documented catalogue of all the sites that are of natural and cultural heritage value. This is known as the “*tentative list*”, and a country may only nominate sites which are already on this list towards the World Heritage Sites list (Singh, 2010).

### **3.4.2 MANAGEMENT OF THE TAJ MAHAL**

India became a ratified member country of the World Heritage Convention in 1977, just two years after it was fully functional. India has 28 properties in the World Heritage List (Singh, 2010). Out of these sites, 23 qualify as cultural heritage sites and five qualify as natural heritage sites (Singh, 2010). The Archaeological Survey of India is responsible for the maintenance and conservation of heritage sites in India, which are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1958 (UNESCO, 2011). 3593 sites come under the protection of the ASI and based on their criteria 150 sites qualify as “*national heritage sites*” (Singh, 2010). The Taj Mahal was included in the World Heritage Site list in 1983 (Edensor, 2004). The Indian government and the Supreme Court work with UNESCO with regard to management and protection issues. The Supreme Court is responsible for enforcement of legislation and constitutional mandates with regard to the conservation and protection process (ASI, 2011).

The Rhône-Poulenc Foundation, in a collaborative effort with the Archaeological Survey of India and UNESCO began restoration works on the Taj Mahal in 1998 (UNSSC, 1994). They observed that the exteriors of the Taj were badly eroded due to rainfall, and the presence of high levels of humidity within led to oxidation of iron elements in the design. They developed a two pronged approach which focuses on waterproofing cracks and preventing leakage of water into the structure, and the development of a conservation laboratory based in Agra Fort, fully funded by the Rhône-Poulenc Foundation (UNSSC, 1994).

However, measures have been taken at the governmental and private sector levels to maintain modern cultural aspects of the Taj, while protecting its past cultural legacy. The authorities to protect, conserve and preserve heritage sites have been delegated to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the Indian National Trust for Art, Culture and Heritage (INTACH) and the Indian Heritage Society (HIS). Recently, the Department of Tourism advertised programs for sustainable heritage at Central and State levels (Singh, 2010). The National Culture Fund (NCF), circa 1996, was established to stimulate private participation in cultural heritage preservation. The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the NCF, ASI and the Taj Group of Hotels was a breakthrough in cultural heritage preservation. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, 2002 an agreement was signed to ensure the “*conservation, restoration, upgrade and beautification of the Taj Mahal and the surrounding areas*” (LeBlanc, 2002). This move received negative responses from conservationists because they felt this would lead to commercialisation of a beacon of Indian culture.

Edensor (2004) proposes that there are plans in effect for the conversion of all vehicles in Agra, from petroleum based into compressed natural gas based. These are some of the measures the government took to counter the negative effects. The main conflict is the economic development of Agra versus the conservation of the Taj as a heritage site.

The Taj Mahal has come in spotlight numerous times in the past thirty years as it was noticed that the Taj was undergoing a negative metamorphosis owing to lack of planning and protection measures. Agra became a highly industrialized city and it was observed that the marble of the Taj began to take on a yellow tinge in recent years. The degradation of the marble surfaces resulted in the formation of an Air Pollution Monitoring Laboratory in the city of Agra (UNESCO, 2011). The findings of this laboratory were that, the yellowing occurred due to the pollution from nearby factories and dirt in the air and ultimately resulted in the softening of the sandstone structure of the Taj.

Some of these issues relating to ecological and environmental practices have been addressed by local and national parties and have received widespread support from stoic Indian conservationists who consider the Taj Mahal to be a beacon of Indian heritage. This caused UNESCO to work in conjunction with the Indian Supreme Court, to amend policies with regard to environmental issues, which resulted in the closure of many factories within the perimeter of the Taj and a ban on the functioning of any small scale

industry or oil refineries within a 50 km radius around Agra (UNESCO, 2011). The project was named the '*Taj Trapezium*'. A 10,400 km<sup>2</sup> area around the Taj Mahal, comprising Agra, Mathura, Hathras, and Ferozabad districts, and also parts of Mainpuri and Bharatapur districts of Uttar Pradesh, has been declared as the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ). The TTZ comprises over 40 protected monuments including three World Heritage Sites (Kapoor, Kohli, & Menon, 2009).

The Taj Trapezium resulted in a ban on motor vehicles being driven within a radius of the Taj, and a mandate stating that all fuel powered vehicles to be parked at a radius of one and a quarter miles away (UNESCO, 2011). In addition to this, a public bus stand for the transport needs of visitors has been relocated two hundred and fifty five metres away, and a number of food stalls that emit thick smoke have also been relocated. Indian law mandates that all petroleum-based vehicles are banned from running within a radius of five hundred metres of the Taj Mahal, and have been replaced by manpowered vehicles like the cycle rickshaw (Taj Mahal, 2011).

Recent plans to renovate the interior landscaping of the Taj premises have come under recent controversy. The main issue is that the government of Uttar Pradesh plans to join the Taj Mahal on its western boundaries with the Red Fort along a two kilometre riverside walkway surrounded by shopping malls, restaurants and a theme park via means of an ecological strip (Nelson, 2009, August 03). This project was halted by the Supreme Court of India due to flaws in the planning and design of work within the Taj Trapezium.

Another prospective plan to develop the river Yamuna was interrupted due to the actions of the federal tourism and culture minister in 2003 (Edensor, 2004). A complaint by the Archaeological Survey of India concluded that such a project would destroy the ambience and surface of the site. UNESCO expressed its concern that this would risk the foundation of the Taj as well of other heritage sites along the river; and caused UNESCO to re-evaluate the position of the Taj in its heritage site list. The issue became whether to include the Taj in the "*World Heritage Sites in Danger*" list (Kapoor et al., 2009)

The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister at the time, Mayawati Kumari was accused of corruption charges (Rs 175 crore Taj Heritage Corridor Scam Rediff news ("SC's new bench to hear Taj corridor case," 2004, April 28) but no verdict has been passed due to political pressures. Following which the Anjuman-e-Mohammedia and the Uttar

Pradesh Sunni Waqf Board claimed managerial as well as ownership rights to the Taj Mahal in 2005. The Anjuman-e-Mohammedia claim that they were founded in 1906 and that all management responsibilities of monuments in Agra were delegated to them during the British Raj. However, the Archaeological Survey of India managed to retain their authority. The Uttar Pradesh Sunni Waqf Board is the representative authority for the Sunni sect of Muslims and claim that they have authority over any site which is reserved as a Muslim graveyard. Since the Taj Mahal qualifies as a tomb, they claimed they have a share in the revenue earned through it ("Supreme Court stays Waqf board order on Taj," 2005, Dec 06).

However, efforts on behalf of the Indian State Parties have been dismal. Repeat follow ups by UNESCO has found a lack of responsiveness on their behalf. It is mandatory for periodical progress and maintenance reports to be supplied by the State Parties in order to smooth the monitoring process. However, in 2010 two consecutive years the relevant information relating to the Taj Mahal and several other heritage sites were not submitted to the Committee, by the State Parties.

It was further requested in the same period that the State Parties provide an assessment of any projects to be undertaken and their possible impacts on the site, which was ignored as well. Prospective plans to construct a rope bridge in the vicinity of the Taj required approval from the Committee; however no details were supplied as requested. It was observed that the Committee requested the exact same details the following year. These detail had been requested by the Committee following their conference in Christchurch in 2007, and implies that there was no response on behalf of the relevant Indian authorities from 2007-2010 The excerpt of UNESCO reports are shown in Appendices 3 (a), (b) and (c). This chapter shows that there are a variety of stakeholders involved in the management programs of the Taj Mahal, and that there is lack of cohesive action on their behalf. These issues will be covered in detail in the following chapters.

### **3.6 SUMMATION**

This chapter gave the reader an overview of Agra city and a historical summary. It described the poor state of the environment in Agra, how it reached that state and why authorities must take action towards environmental protection in Agra. From Agra the chapter flows into the main focus of the research, the Taj Mahal. It highlighted the various facts, myths and urban legends that surrounded the Taj for many decades. The main focus of this thesis is tourism and this chapter details the current tourism statistics

at the Taj to give the reader an idea about the depth of the tourism sector in Agra and allowed for the reader to understand about attractions and festivals at the Taj. My research aimed to study visitors' satisfaction as a tourist concept, so this chapter presented my examination of visitors' satisfaction at the Taj Mahal. The final component of this chapter aimed to give the reader an understanding of the background of Taj Mahal management.

## **4 THE ROAD OF TRIALS/ THE SUPREME ORDEAL/ METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

During the road of trials, the hero is challenged by many obstacles and tribulations, for which he/she should use the guidance of the mentor; his/her own knowledge and sense of judgement to overcome. The supreme ordeal is the greatest challenge that the hero must defeat in order to gain the enlightenment he/she is chasing (Campbell, 2008). This relates to the research process because I had to overcome the task of entering the field, collecting the information and analysing it in order to gain the supreme knowledge I was after.

There are many factors to consider when choosing approaches to research; this chapter explains the rationale behind the methods utilised to achieve the objectives of this research. I employed the mixed method approach i.e. quantitative and qualitative research methods for data collection. Firstly, a literature review of quantitative and qualitative research methods and an in-depth analysis of the pros and cons of each method are outlined. Subsequently, it focuses on my research study methodological experience in terms of three stages i.e. pre-field, in-field and after-field, respectively.

The first phase of my research involved interacting with international visitors at the Taj Mahal using face-to-face survey. This chapter also outlines the second part of my research process involved in-depth interviewing with managers, where they were presented with the findings of the survey research. Furthermore, it explains the relevance of reliability and validity of this study followed by the ethical codes of conduct. Any research is subjected to some limitations and the reader is made aware of the limitations to the research here.

### **4.2 RESEARCH METHODS**

In quantitative research, it is essential to employ scientific methods in an unbiased manner, thus maintaining the integrity of the analysis and conclusions. Quantitative methods are those in which the results are presented in empirical/numerical form, can easily be identified and accurately described. Quantitative research is deductive in nature and highly beneficial when it comes to social research and predicting social trends (Black, 1999). However, the negative aspect of quantitative findings is that it is assumed all situations are static, whereas in reality, situations in life are always changing. This makes quantitative analysis inadequate while dealing with contextual

data; however, quantitative methods are good measure of the validity of hypotheses deduced by qualitative means (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008).

Qualitative research on the other hand, is more of an interpretative form of research. It investigates aspects of human conduct and the rationale behind them. It is inductive in nature and results obtained by these means, are labelled hypotheses. These are informed statements that come to light following the research process and analysis. In qualitative research, importance is given to the “*trustworthiness*” of the research, over the number of respondents. This makes it a very subjective form of research. Qualitative methods are inadequate when dealing with large samples, and have been subject to criticism because it is perceived that the interviewer’s personal beliefs affect the research process (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008).

Furthermore, Bryman (2004) as cited in (Walliman, 2006) alerts against a too opinionated distinction between the two methods as research methods are neither set on deductive or inductive approaches nor a difference between natural and artificial backgrounds for qualitative and quantitative research which is often inflated. He states that both the methods can be mixed to carry out a research i.e. several researches have been conducted which employ quantitative approaches in qualitative research, and vice versa.

For any research to be accurate, it is essential to have sound background information on the topic. This begins with in-depth research into secondary data sources such as academic literature, governmental literature and documentation, public literature, via the internet and from relevant Tourism authorities. There can be discrepancies and biases in secondary data due to the fact that the researches are conducted by others and this might cloud the outcome. However, all the primary data relevant to this research were prepared, collected, analysed and interpreted by myself.

Walliman (2006) describes the process that surrounds primary data and its collection. He states that this method requires that the researcher go in the field and make first hand observations and recordings. Neuman (2006) outlines the methods for data collection under quantitative and qualitative categories, which deal with numerical data and the latter with cognitive data.

The construction of the study design is a beneficial aspect of the research process because the structure deals with how the aims and objectives of the research are

fulfilled. The study design is the framework that aligns the most effective data collection method with research approaches. Robson (2002) as cited in Walliman (2006) describes differences between flexible study design and fixed designs. Flexible designs allow the researcher to be flexible in his approach to the research and are usually used with regard to qualitative approaches, but can extend to quantitative approaches too. Alternatively, fixed study designs are very rigid in nature, and do not account for any changes in the design. Primarily fixed design focuses on quantitative research methods, and obtains the data using experimental along with non-experimental methods.

Another approach is the case study approach, which requires that the analytical frameworks utilised be of good quality, and that any theoretical constructs of hypotheses maybe tested and validate with accuracy. Neuman (2006) identifies that various individuals can be the subject matter of case studies such as citizens, factions, private and public organisations and various authorities in domestic or international contexts. The purpose of case study data is to provide a comprehensive overview on all aspects of the case subject which implies that the data is highly detailed, descriptive and extensive in nature. Vaughan (1992) as cited in Neuman (2006) says that case study designs provide a linkage between micro level and macro level factors concerning the case subject and it incorporates elements of deductive as well as inductive reasoning.

#### **4.2.1 QUANTITATIVE**

According to Black (1999), the quantitative research process may be divided into two distinct stages. The first stage is known as the “*planning stage*” and this where the researcher identifies the research issue, and related factors that instigated the research. Here the researcher pre-empts the research design and its structure. The second stage, which is known as the “*execution stage*” involves the execution of data collection methods (survey, interviews, questionnaires etc.) and the analysis of found data.

In the initial phases of the planning stage where the researcher identifies the question, variables and hypothesis, a good deal of external research takes place. Sapsford (1999) elucidates that the researcher should undertake a pre-research, where he/she may include the use of any source of information, such as the internet, books, journals or any additional literature in order to understand the holistic context of the research. These sources then compile the secondary data knowledge base and can be used to generate more ideas or theories. Once the research question has been formulated, more secondary

research could be undertaken to ensure that the research is on the right path, and if any change are to be made, they can be made before it is too late.

Literature review is an integral part of any research process because it allows the researcher to have a sound understanding of the research topic, which will help in building a strong background to the research problem and objectives. Neuman (2006) states that literature review allows the researcher to gain a comfort level with the subject matter which allows the research and researcher to derive a sense of plausibility. It links the research with past researches, and allows the researcher to understand the thought processes and approaches of other researchers. It is relevant as it provides a summary of all existing literature on the topic, and allows the researcher to develop and integrate these ideas into their own work.

The vital phase in the planning stage is the designing of the survey because the validity of the results obtained from the survey, depends on the quality and tightness of the questionnaire itself (Sapsford, 1999). Although every survey will generate results, it is essential to evaluate how useful these results are to the research question. Therefore the design has to be appropriate and well structured (Walliman, 2006). Bell (2005) argues that once the research problem has been fully enveloped, it should not be changed at any point during the research process. He suggests to thoroughly investigating the problem for its relevance to the key issue the researcher wishes to address.

Neuman (2006) defines three types of quantitative research methods which are commonly employed while approaching the research problem. Firstly, experimental research method is that in which the researcher has the flexibility to change aspects of the research for different respondents, and then compare results between the different groups of respondents. Secondly, when the researcher asks the same set of questions to a variety of respondents and then collects this data, it is known as the survey method. Thirdly, he defines the non-reactive research method as that where people are observed and are unaware that they are being studied.

According to Sapsford (1999, p.1), a survey is defined as “*a detailed and quantified description – a precise map and/or a precise measurement of potential*”. It aims to collect quantified data from the general population or subjects of the study, and allows for generalisation of the population.

Czaja and Blair (2005) describe the steps which can be utilised in the survey and questionnaire development process. Firstly, the researcher should have a clear understanding of the research and its objectives. They recommend that all the questions be segregated into separate headings, and the relevant questions could be listed under each heading. Secondly, all the background and supporting information should to be considered while conducting secondary research through literary and internet sources to cross check any similarities between existing researches. Appropriate data analysis methods needs to be allocated to the relevant variables. Once all these steps have been completed, the researcher may prepare the first draft of questions and a cover letter which describes the purpose of the survey.

Walliman (2006) mandates that the survey questionnaire language should be simple and easy to understand as all the respondents will not be of the same educational and literacy background. Sapsford (1999) says that there should be variety in the types of questions. The open-ended questions can be used, so that the spectrum of answers is wider. However, while profiling demographics and specific information only closed-ended questions could be used. Closed-ended questions are advantageous as they allow for specific responses in a limited time frame. This permits for a quick completion time and is also easy to group and analyse. The disadvantage is that it is restricted to only limited response, and the options in a survey may not provide a prospective answer.

It is essential to draft the questionnaire and structure the questions in an orderly and coherent manner. This process may be repeated until the researcher has found the optimum survey, and then may proceed to conduct pilot tests. Sapsford (1999) while discussing the importance of conducting pilot tests before in-field research stresses that it ensures whether the survey is clear, understandable and non-offensive to any potential respondents. Since pilot tests deal with very small samples, it is a good measure of the competence of the survey before in-field research. (Iraossi, 2006) notes that pilot tests are good to estimate the time required to conduct each interview.

Once the researcher is satisfied, he/she may venture into the field and begin research. It should be noted that questionnaires may be revised periodically to ensure sound results. Willis (2004) and Van der Zouwen & Smit (2004) as cited in Neuman (2006) describe the process of “*cognitive interviewing*” during the pilot testing phase, which is when the researcher attempts to understand the psychological premises that influence respondents

and their answers. This is often done by obtaining feedback as and when the respondent completes each question of the survey.

Sampling is when the researcher chooses a relatively smaller portion of potential respondents from a larger, comprehensive group. The researcher may choose probability sampling or non-probability sampling methods. The former is a method that is based on random selection and uses techniques such as cluster sampling, multistage cluster sampling, systematic sampling or simple random sampling. The latter method is based entirely on non-random samples and uses techniques such as systematic sampling, snowball sampling and theoretical sampling (Walliman, 2006). Another form of sampling is convenience sampling, and this is when the researcher samples any person who is convenient for the researcher to do so (Neuman, 2006).

The sample size determines the quality of the research and its outcomes too. Walliman (2006) considers a larger sample size to be more convincing than a smaller sample size. This is because a larger sample size would be more representative of the differences between respondents. Since population numbers are very large, it is not always correct to generalise findings to all members in a small sample case. Neuman (2006) describes two approaches to consider when determining sample sizes. Firstly, he recommends that hypotheses could be drawn about the population and statistical processes that needs to be applied to the sampling procedure. Secondly, the researcher may also choose a sample size which almost matches those determined by statistical methods.

Once these quantities have been decided, the researcher incorporates a variety of standardized tests into the survey design. The most commonly used standardized test is known as the Likert Scale. This scaling system was developed by Rensis Likert in the 1930's to allow researchers to measure people's perspectives from an ordinal point of view (Neuman, 2006). This method is a comprehensive rating system, where the respondent is asked to give his/her rating of a factor on a number scale of preference (Walliman, 2006). This method allows for easy analysis of results and helps the researcher develop a more comprehensive idea of the issues surrounding the research from the respondents' point of view.

There are various strategies that can be employed during the administration process of the survey. Face-to-face surveys are those where the researcher administers the survey to respondents personally (Fowler, 1993). The advantages of face-to-face survey method are that the level of co-operation with respondents is the highest and refusal

rates are low. It allows the researcher to undertake longer interviews and the quality and quantity of responses will be high as the researcher is there to provide any assistance or clarification to the respondent. It is also time-efficient and allows for specialization of the research topic.

The disadvantages of this method are that it is the costliest method of data collection as it requires the researcher to travel to the field and the time frame for data collection is longer than other methods (Neuman, 2006). Alreck and Settle (2004) identify the potential disadvantages of this method as; it may appear insensitive to the feelings and psychological constructs of some individuals and that it is not entirely cost effective. Other methods of survey administration include via telephone, postal services and via the internet. However, researchers may also choose to administer surveys using combinations of the above methods (Sapsford, 1999). The face-to-face survey method was employed in this research due to the advantages mentioned above, and its appropriateness towards achieving my research objectives.

It is critical to calculate the response rate of the survey since it is a measure of the quality of the survey. The response rate of the survey signifies the ratio of people that responded to the survey (Neuman, 2006).

In order for the survey and its results to be reliable, it is important to have the maximum number of valid responses returned to the researcher. Missing, incomplete or invalid responses seriously affect the reliability and validity of the research. Alreck & Settle (2004) say that it is expected that some of the responses collected will be incomplete, and that an incomplete questionnaire can be used only if one answer is missing occasionally; if the majority of the response is missing it must be rejected. Missing data can be countered by eliminating the responses which have missing information, inserting random values in place, by substituting the mean average score for those responses which are complete and by inserting data that is based on non-quantitative material (Neuman, 2006).

It is insufficient to just conduct analytical methods on the collected data. The researcher should ensure that the data is both reliable and valid. Reliability within research contexts implies whether the logic, facts and data recorded are used consistently and in a stable manner (Remenyi, Williams, Money, & Swartz, 1998). Adcock and Collier, (2001) tell us that the research is considered valid only if the approaches employed, and methods and techniques used are actually correct and relevant to the research problems

and objectives. The problem of validity is especially prevalent in the tourism industry because it requires measurement of psychological and behavioural phenomena, which clouds the validity of the responses gained from surveys.

#### **4.2.2 QUALITATIVE**

Qualitative research is that type of research that deals with the “why” of phenomena. It is different from quantitative research such that it primarily focuses on recording real life events, live recording of people’s words, actions and gestures. It includes study of existing literature, documentation and audio/visual recordings (Neuman, 2006). Qualitative research involves the analysis and interpretation of highly unstructured data and is generally made up of open ended questions which are useful when the researcher is trying to gain an insight into the factors such as values and morals, attitudes, cultural factors and but not limited to, behavioural patterns (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). They delve into relevant phenomena and issues and seek to gain an in-depth understanding of respondent’s opinions and the disadvantages of this type of questioning are that it requires a high level of communication between the researcher and respondents, and the data entry and analysis processes are complicated (Walliman, 2006).

The views of the qualitative researcher always reflect in his/ her research process. This is because the researcher presents his/ her findings behind the bias of his/her racial status, gender, social status, cultural background and ethnicity (Denzin, 2003). The role of the researcher is to collect empirical data and then analyse and interpret them (Walliman, 2006). These functions of the researcher can be categorised into five major headings or stages in the research process:

- 1 *The Researcher as a Multicultural Subject:* This phase concerns with the initial entry of the researcher into the field. It is the highly flexible stage, yet requires a great deal of organization on behalf of the researcher (Neuman, 2006). There are great deals of traditions that follow the researcher into the field; the researcher must follow all the ethics of research. The role of the researcher is to develop a set of ethics that apply to all forms of the research project (Denzin, 2003).
- 2 *Interpretative Paradigms:* According to Guba (1990), it is the set of beliefs that guide and influence the researcher and the approaches to research. Denzin, (2003) defines paradigm or an interpretive framework as “*the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises*” (p.

22). Furthermore, he states four major paradigms that structure qualitative research methods namely, “*positivist and post-positivist, constructivist-interpretive, critical, and feminist - post-structural*” (p. 22). This research follows the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, and this is because the knowledge and information was gathered through the process of interaction between the researcher and the respondents; and the information gathered from the respondents composes the qualitative data base; this addresses the constructivist paradigm. It is also interpretive in nature such that the information gathered is left entirely to the researcher to decipher and make meanings of (Coll and Chapman, 2000; Cousins, 2002 as cited in Krauss, 2005).

- 3 *Strategies of Inquiry and Interpretive Paradigms*: This stage concerns with the design of the research. This entails the research question, the purpose of the research and the strategies employed in answering the research question (Guba, 1990). The design could be flexible such that it can interconnect the researcher to the strategies he/ she is to employ in data collection and analysis (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008). Various strategies include case studies, application of grounded theory, historical and clinical methods (Denzin, 2003). This is the phase where strategies are set in motion.
- 4 *Methods of Collecting and Analysing Empirical Materials*: There are a range of methods by which a researcher can collect data such as interviewing and observation. The interpretation of existing documents, literature, cultural recordings, existing audio/visual content also add to the data collection process (Denzin, 2003). The personal experiences of the researcher play a major role in this phase, as he/ she is responsible for collecting the qualitative data, analysis of and interpreting it (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008).

For this research semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with various managerial individuals that had responsibilities with UNESCO, Archaeological Survey of India, Central Industrial Security Force, the Taj Suraksha, local police, the Tourism Office affiliated to the Government of India and the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Board. Secondary research conducted from the internet and library guided through selecting the right offices; and the chosen officials were included in the research process because it appears that mismanagement on their behalf results in negative effects on the Taj Mahal. It

also aims to find out the reasons as to why slackness on behalf of the authorities resulted in a poor experience for the tourists.

- 5 *The Art and Politics of Interpretation and Evaluation*: This is the phase where the researcher interprets the data that he/she has accumulated in the field. According to Sunjek (1990), this is known as “*indexing*”. This is the phase where the researcher formulates the findings into a literary document. It is here that the writer’s thoughts and ideas are expressed and finally made available to the public. Denzin (2003) says that this is the stage of the research where the literature and theory, methodology, rituals and policies are wholly applied.

Another aspect of qualitative research methodology is the grounded theory; which aims to develop theory that is already “*grounded*” in the data (Streubert Speziale & Carpenter, 2003). It is an inductive method and it allows for flexibility in the research design; it also allows a researcher to alter the focal point of the research at any time. The basis of the theory lies in making observations and questioning these observations (Neuman, 2006). The data accumulation and analysis take place concurrently, thus allowing the researcher room to edit the foundation of the research at any time (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

There are several aspects to observing and collecting quality data whilst in the field. This is the crucial part in the research process as the quality of the research is reflected by the data collection and its methods. The role of the researcher is to pay attention to detail, and record everything observed (Denzin, 2003). Neuman (2006) enumerates several methods of collecting data. They are by watching and making observations, listening to conversations and remembering them, and by “*argot*”; which is the language that evolves over a continuous period of interaction between people (Neuman, 2006).

There are three main categories of interviews that may be used by a researcher; firstly, structured interviews are those which follow the schedule designed by the interviewer, and do not allow for much flexibility because the questions are more closed in nature. Unstructured interviews are those which have some degree of flexibility, as they are not very rigid in structure, instead they allow the respondent to reply in detail sometimes, which allows the researcher to understand the perspectives of the respondent. Semi-structured interviews are those that are a combination of structured and unstructured

format (Walliman, 2006). These interviews may be administered by telephone or face-to-face.

Sajek (1990) and Neuman (2006) state that recording the data is important to the research as it allows thoughts, observations, key words and insights to be recorded and can be recollected and expanded on later. The researcher may either use digital recording devices to record conversations and interviews, and these can be played back at a later time. The researcher may also use hand written notes to record information, but the researcher must be organised and neat while writing, as these notes form the backbone of the qualitative data. Walliman (2006) adds that the personal notes and recordings of people on relevant topics can contribute to the research as long as their authenticity has been verified. Personal notes can be composed of personal letters, diaries, records and accounts of experiences and their own interpretation of these occurrences.

As with any research, the reliability of qualitative research depends on the consistency with which the researcher draws inferences and observations. The validity of qualitative research depends more on the authenticity of the data collected and the sources rather than the quantity of the data (Neuman, 2006). Every effort is taken to preserve the integrity of this research.

The focus of the qualitative aspect of this research is on the managerial individuals involved in the operations of the Taj Mahal. The functions of any managerial authority require a good deal of collaborative and cooperative efforts from concerned individuals. The individuals that have an active stake in the operations of any organisation can be defined as stakeholders (as mentioned in Chapter 2). This research requires the understanding of the various stakeholder groups involved in the process and this is achieved through stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder analysis is flexible in design, hence topics can be reviewed, developed and the questions can be changed. It is a tool utilised by organisations and management with regard to the proper identification and grouping of relevant stakeholders according to their goals, values, aims, objectives and visions. It allows the organisation to assess the possible responses to a proposed plan of action from various stakeholders during the initial stages and allows for maximum cooperation and achievement of goals in a project (Mintzberg, 1999; Brugha & Varvasovszky, 2000). This tool requires cooperation at sub-communal, communal, state and national

levels and has gained popularity due to its relevance in studying stakeholders and their decision process.

Stakeholder management relates to the process that is used in the identification of stakeholders and in gaining their confidence. The process revolves around; identifying the relevant stakeholders; categorizing them according to importance to the project and degree of power they contribute; plotting stakeholders as categorised in the previous step into an interest or power grid; and finally understanding the motivations of the stakeholders as it can be used to obtain their support (reference). After this, usually a stakeholder matrix can be constructed where the needs and concerns of individual stakeholders are analysed and prioritised; this research constructs a stakeholder network model which describes the flow of power, authority, interest and resources between the relevant managerial stakeholders; this qualifies as a partial stakeholder analysis (Mintzberg, 1999; Brugha & Varvasovszky, 2000; Howlett, Bond, Woodhouse & Rigby, July 2000; Llewellyn, 2009; Thompson, 2011).

#### **4.3 RESEARCH STUDY EXPERIENCE**

This research uses a flexible research design. There were many aspects in the design that were allowed some degree of flexibility to account for cultural and linguistic differences between New Zealand and India. It is composed of a mixed method approach that incorporates quantitative research for face-to-face surveys with the tourist population and qualitative research for face-to-face interviews with managerial individuals. The main part of interview questions for managerial individuals were based on the survey results with the tourists at the Taj Mahal. Table 4.1 describes the entire process of my research methodology in terms of three stages; pre-field, in-field and after-field experience.

**Table 4.1: Research study experience**

Research Methods		Secondary Data	Primary Data	
		Pre-field	In-field	After-field
Mixed Method Approach	Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Literature Review</li> <li>➤ Method of Survey Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field Observation and Questionnaire Design</li> <li>• Sample Size</li> <li>• Pilot Study</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Conduct Survey</li> <li>➤ Enter Data on Excel Sheet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Transfer and Code Data on SPSS</li> <li>➤ Data Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mean, Gap, <i>t</i>-text Analysis</li> <li>• Prepare Interview Questions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Literature Review</li> <li>➤ Identification of Stakeholder Managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Classification of Key Stakeholder Managers</li> <li>➤ Conduct Interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take Notes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Break-down Stakeholder Managers into Themes Emerged from Survey Results</li> <li>➤ Construct Stakeholder Network Model</li> <li>➤ Analyze the Result from Interviews</li> <li>➤ Correlated Interviews with Survey</li> </ul>

### **4.3.1 QUANTITATIVE**

The face-to-face survey method was employed for the primary quantitative data collection process. I chose this method because it was relevant to my research objective 1, and would help me obtain the appropriate results. There are no hypotheses in the research which means that there are no prerequisites such as confidence intervals or priori samples.

#### ***4.3.1.1 PRE-FIELD RESEARCH***

The literature review for this research was conducted from a variety of academic and governmental literature. Additionally, supporting literature regarding tourists experiences were sourced from the internet. This process was very helpful as it gave me a springboard to choose appropriate design methods that were relevant to the research. The sample size was determined to be 115 international tourists who had just experienced the pre-, during and post-visit stages at the Taj.

An integral aspect of my research process was designing the questionnaire. The research phase began with a short observation period when I visited the Taj Mahal between 26/11/2010 (Friday) and 01/12/2010 (Wednesday). The main reason for undertaking a field observation was to experience the Taj as a tourist myself again, and also to determine how appropriate the chosen attributes were in my survey design. The length of the observation period was ten hours per day, between 8am and 6pm. A variety of methods were used during this period such as first hand observation, interaction with locals and guides, noting differences between domestic and international visitors, general conversation with staff members around the Taj Mahal etc. Some of the other trends and patterns observed are presented in detail in the next chapter (Findings chapter 5).

Based on the six days of observation, numerous previous visits in the past, tourism literature and tourist experiences posted on the internet; I finalized 34 attributes for the evaluation. These were arranged under three main themes based on a chronological sequence – pre-, during and post visiting the Taj Mahal. The attributes were composed of environmental, aesthetic, hospitality, security and the availability of these services broadly using a 5-point Likert-like scale. It also constituted one open-ended question pertaining to ‘Any suggestions for improvement?’ at the Taj Mahal. The format of the survey questionnaire was designed as simple as possible as it was an on-site face-to-face survey. The purpose of employing face-to-face surveys with the tourists was to identify the problems that they encounter before, during and after the visit to the Taj Mahal, and

to evaluate the reasons that cause discrepancies in the level of expected satisfaction and the actual satisfaction derived from the visit. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the Taj Mahal survey; tourist's demographic characteristics.

Before administering the full scale survey, a pilot study was conducted from 26/02/2011 (Saturday) to 28/02/2011 (Monday) outside the exit gates of the Taj Mahal and close-by eating joints. It was carried out on five tourists to observe their reactions to the survey and to judge whether it would be acceptable by them. Some cognitive research was conducted on the five candidates, and their reactions were duly noted. Minor alterations were made to the survey design following the pilot study. The word 'hospitality' was changed to 'friendliness' and one more option was added to question nine of part-II i.e. 'Tourism Vehicle'. The edited survey was the one that was administered to the actual sample (Appendix 1).

#### ***4.3.1.2 IN-FIELD RESEARCH***

The survey was conducted over a period of two and a half weeks between 03/03/2011 and 09/03/2011, at the three different exit gates of the Taj Mahal i.e. the West Gate, the South Gate and the East Gate from 8am to closing hours of the monument (6pm). Administering the survey after the tourists completed their visit helped in getting clearer understanding of the pre-conceived notions and the reality of the experience, because the tourist is still refresh from the experience and would be able to give more up-to-date and valid responses. The tourists that were included in the survey were international tourists because in my opinion if the destination was satisfying for the international visitor experience, it would imply domestic visitor satisfaction to certain extend too. The structured survey was of the convenience sampling. The time duration to fill-in the survey was between 10-15 minutes. Thirty-five out of 115 respondents were approached during the evening between 6pm – 8pm in order to complete the survey question pertaining to the night-viewing show at the Taj Mahal. Non-English speaking tourists were excluded from the survey. One of the pitfalls noted was that the three page questionnaire was considered too lengthy by some of the potential respondents who were on tight time schedules due to pre-paid tour services.

Once the surveys were administered and received back, I entered the observed data into appropriate rows and columns in MsExcel software. Out of 115 questionnaires administered, exactly 100 were valid (response rate = 87%). Invalid questionnaires included those that were not fully completed, and those which were illegible.

#### **4.3.1.3 AFTER FIELD/ SURVEY ANALAYSIS**

During this phase, I transferred the data into Statistical Package for Social Science (PASW statistics 18) file format so that it conformed to the survey instrument. The data collected was coded, computed, and analysed using SPSS. The resulting analysis aims to (1) achieve research objective one, and (2) prepare interview questions for the managers that had a stake in maintaining the Taj Mahal.

In the survey, two questions regarding ‘night viewing satisfaction’ and ‘overall satisfaction’ were framed on a Likert-like scale which had a rating scale of 1 to 7, and two questions regarding ‘revisits’ and ‘recommendation to others’ were based on a Likert-like scale which had a rating scale of 1 to 4. For the uniformity of data analysis and presentation, the values obtained for these questions had to be converted into a 5 point Likert-like scale response value, so that they match the other findings of the research. The values obtained for these questions were converted accordingly.

Naidoo et al., (2010) and Hanim et al., (2010) in their studies performed mean, gap and *t*-text analysis to evaluate tourist satisfaction. I tackled my data analysis with similar approach; however, the interpretation of mean scores was done based on other studies. This helped me to obtain more precise and accurate data analysis and interpretation.

Mean analysis was aimed at describing the level of expectation and the level of satisfaction that tourist’s had/ derived from the experience at all the three stages of the visit. The mean values obtained were based on a 5-point Likert-like scale in which, 1 implied ‘very low expectation’/ ‘very dissatisfied’; 2 implied ‘low expectation’/ ‘dissatisfaction’; 3 implied ‘neutrality’/ ‘unsure’; 4 implied ‘high expectation’/ ‘satisfied’ and 5 implied ‘very high expectation’/ ‘very satisfied’. Jain and Kaur (2004, citing Scott (1999), divided the 5-point scale into three ranges to indicate positive, neutral and negative responses. Specifically; 3.21 to 5.0 is positive; 2.8 to 3.2 is neutral; 1.2.79 is negative.

The tourists’ expected mean before trips can also be stated as the importance mean and the satisfaction mean is the tourists’ perceived mean after trips (Akama & Keiti, 2003). The difference in value between estimated/expected mean and the perceived mean describes the gap analysis (Tonge & Moore, 2007). A positive gap analysis signifies the actual satisfaction derived during the three stages of the visit either matched, or exceeded their expectations. A negative gap analysis denotes that the actually satisfaction derived during the three stages is lower than their expectations, thus

indicating an unsatisfactory experience. The questions are structured to find out if the tourists' got the satisfaction as they had expected (Akama & Keiti, 2003; Tonga & Moore, 2007).

Walliman (2006) maintains that the significance value is an indication of how the result would be applicable to and whether the results are a valid description of the entire population set. The most common method of testing for significance is known as the chi-square test and it describes the links between any two variables by analysing the differences in observed and expected values. This method is also known as the *p*-value test. Elliott and Woodward (2007), state that the *t*-values are significant at  $p < 0.005$ . Once the data from the tourist survey was analysed, based on the results the second half of the interview questions were prepared which formed the basis of my qualitative in-field research.

#### **4.3.2 QUALITATIVE**

This research involved interviewing people that were in managerial roles, and had a unique responsibility towards the maintenance and protection of the Taj Mahal. This is congruent with the stakeholder and collaboration theory such that it mandates the first step in similar project needs to be the identification of all relevant stakeholders. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and administered to the relevant managerial individuals face-to-face. Each individual interview sums up to give an understanding of the comprehensive management situation viz. Taj Mahal. Additionally, using stakeholder theory, I performed a partial stakeholder analysis regarding the Taj Mahal and maintenance efforts made by them. The purpose of this was to achieve research objective 2, i.e. to gain insight into the holistic management process and reveal inefficiencies in managerial approaches that might result in loss of visitor satisfaction

##### **4.3.2.1 PRE-FIELD RESEARCH**

The literature review component of this part of the research was mainly conducted from academic literature, AUT library, newspaper readings, and print media such as advertisements and press releases, databases and via online sources. My main review focuses on literature on stakeholder analysis and various strategies employed by organisations. The literature helped me to conduct the initial phases of this approach, which involves clear identification of relevant stakeholder managers and persons of the Taj Mahal who are either internally or externally relevant to this research. This includes UNESCO officials based in India, officials from the Archaeological Survey of India, and various government officials.

During this phase, a set of indicative semi-structured interview questions was also prepared (Appendix 2). The interviews questions were arranged in five key categories namely; management, factors affecting property, monitoring, conservation, and tourist facilities/ managing tourists. The questions asked from this set formed the first-half of the interviews.

#### ***4.3.2.2 IN-FIELD RESEARCH/ IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS***

Once the initial preparation stages of the qualitative research were completed and the data analysis for the quantitative research with international tourists was concluded, I ventured back into the field to conduct interviews with the relevant stakeholders who had an active stake in the Taj Mahal management. According to Thompson (2006), it is imperative to differentiate between stakeholders according to the degrees of power or interest they exercise. Some stakeholders have degrees of power which may allow this research to proceed, or may block them.

Robertson and McGee (2003) outlines that; the stakeholder interview process should be conducted on an individual basis and they serve to define the information requirements of the researcher, the organisational profile and to bring to light the issues and problems that exist. This method is also known as mapping (as described before). Some stakeholders may have a high level of interest in this research, or they may have a low degree of interest. Therefore, stakeholders were plotted onto a stakeholder list, which describes the relations that all stakeholders have to the Taj Mahal.

In this research, key stakeholders were identified using snowball sampling (Neuman, 2006). This is also known as the “snowball effect”, which is a type of sampling whereby I received my candidates by recommendation from acquaintances and locals. The information uncovered by interviews may be applied towards strategic management and policy making. Interviews can always be reviewed and updated after each individual case.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted over two weeks between 25/03/2011 to 8/04/2011. They took place in the relevant managers’ offices during the office hours in Agra City and New Delhi, India. Nine managers were interviewed in Agra and one manager working for UNECSO in New Delhi, India. Additionally, two representatives of security departments were also interviewed. Managers of these departments were not approached due to ethical and safety issues.

The interviews were decided on request during unscheduled appointments. The interviews lasted between 30 – 45 minutes. The interview questions were set in two parts. In the first part of the interview, semi-structured questions with five different themes were asked to get an understanding of the organisation as a whole. Whereas the final and main part of the interviews with the managers was based on the data obtained from the surveys. The data gathered was presented to the managers and their perspectives and opinions on the reasons for low international tourist satisfaction were sought.

It was found most convenient to take written notes and direct observation notes while the interview was taking place (after express approval from the managers) for detailed analysis later. Additionally, two to three hour breaks were utilised immediately after the interview to expand jotted notes into detailed qualitative data. It was found easiest to do this instantly after the interview as thoughts and observations were fresh in the mind. Although it would have been easiest to use recording machinery during the interview, it was prohibited due to privacy laws. A souvenir in a form of pen with ‘New Zealand and haka’ print on it was given as a token to the interviewees.

During this phase, a great deal of argot was discovered. The interview was structured in the English language. However, on beginning the interview process, it was observed that not all individuals were on the same linguistic levels. So the interview would start very formally and eventually developed into a form of “Hin-glish” which is a combination of the English language combined with some Hindi words, just to facilitate communication between the respondents and myself.

#### ***4.3.2.3 AFTER FIELD/ INTERVIEW ANALYSIS***

Once the interviews were completed, the raw data required analysis. The large amount of raw qualitative data obtained was reduced into concise and clear data. This process involved in-depth reflections on the raw data and sorting them into appropriate categories. In order to do this, the data was grouped according to the area of operations that the manager belonged to. Thompson (2006) tells us that there should be maximum knowledge about the stakeholders that are identified as relevant. Their perspectives, views and likely reactions need to be taken into consideration and encouraged to play an active role in any decision making processes in the project. Two approaches were utilized in addressing this; firstly, the stakeholders that were identified during the research process were allocated to their respective themes (management, cleanliness, security) based on which aspect their managerial influence fell under; secondly, a

network model was developed which describes the degree of involvement and flow of power and authority between existing management stakeholders in the Taj Mahal context. This qualifies as a partial stakeholder analysis.

Following this, the data was analysed for any trends or patterns that allows in making inferences about the managers and the organisations involved in the active management of the Taj. The interesting point is that there are no concrete methods or formats of interpreting or presenting qualitative data; it is purely based on the researchers own beliefs and perspectives so this research follows aspects of general qualitative research as described by Miles & Huberman (1994). The data is presented in the form of quoted interviews, which highlight the important points or responses that the managers provided during the interviews. The final aspect of the research process was to link the qualitative interviews of the managers with the survey results that were obtained during the quantitative research process of the international visitors.

#### **4.4 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

This study has been researched and documented thoroughly to ensure the reliability and validity of procedures. Within the quantitative research, reliability is achieved by using standardized measuring instruments. Internal validity is guaranteed as systemized methods were used in the questionnaire, i.e. clear closed-ended questions with Likert-like scales to investigate the expectation and satisfaction level of the attributes pertain to the Taj Mahal experience and an open-ended question about ‘suggestions for improvement’. External validity is supported as the results of this research only apply to the Taj Mahal and its visitors. Theoretical models and frameworks discussed in the literature review were used as a foundation for this research further guaranteeing construct validity. This study aimed at avoiding data manipulation and at maximizing accurate data inferences, thereby addressing statistical conclusion validity.

With regard to quantitative research, the proof in the efficacy of trustworthiness, reliability and validity lies in the final work itself. Internal validity or credibility is maintained by confirming the matter of investigation was accurately identified and explained. The reliability or dependability is reflected by focussing the research on the credibility and the applicability of partial stakeholder analysis where management stakeholder network model was developed instead of stakeholder matrix. This was done as it was deemed best suited to achieve third and final research objective.

#### **4.5 ETHICS**

As this research involved human participations, ethics approval from AUT Ethics Committee was required. AUTECH gave permission for this research undertaking to occur under application number 11/07. Although this research was not related to the relationship between Māori and Pakeha, the Treaty of Waitangi offers some universal principles which were observed to ensure a high level of ethical integrity in carrying out this research. These included (AUT, 2010):

- Informed and voluntary consent;
- Respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality;
- Minimization of risk;
- Truthfulness, including limitation of deception;
- Social and cultural sensitivity;
- Research adequacy;
- Avoidance of conflict of interest;
- Respect for property (including University property and intellectual property rights).

#### **4.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Although the data collected provide a valuable foundation of knowledge about the visitor's experience at the Taj Mahal along with the current managerial situation, this study has some limitations too. The study is conducted only on the Taj Mahal and is not representative of the tourism scenario in Agra city, or India. The survey was subjected to a relatively small sample size of 115 respondents due to short timeframe, out of which there were only 100 valid respondents. Therefore, it may provide some limitation to making generalizations about the visiting international population at the Taj Mahal, because the actual number of international visitors at the Taj Mahal is much greater. Also, some countries might be underrepresented as Non-English speaking international tourists who could not fill out the survey were excluded.

The sample size was drawn specifically from the international visitors that were leaving the Taj Mahal from 8am to 6pm during the research period. This could result in a possible misrepresentation of the views of year round visitors, and their opinions and travelling profiles. The field research period extended only in the period of November 2010 until March 2011 and represents the views of visitors who were there in that period. This could not be a whole description of the views of tourists who visit during other seasonal periods. It could be suggested that visitors who travel to Agra during the

summer months would experience much more hot and humid climatic conditions and this survey doesn't account for seasonal differences in visitor profiles.

This research focuses on the views and opinions of international visitors. It is based on the assumption that if foreign visitors find satisfaction at a destination, the domestic residents will be satisfied too. This is a broad assumption and could lead to some bias in the research.

The short duration of the field research period posed as a limitation because all the stakeholders that had an active interest in the Taj Mahal were not interviewed, which may limit making a holistic picture of the management stakeholders and the collaboration process viz. Taj Mahal. Furthermore, the management stakeholder model developed is based on the relevant literature reviewed, results from the interviews conducted and my observation. It is deemed that it may be incomplete as the current management stakeholder situation at the Taj Mahal is too intricate and complex to understand by individual effort.

#### **4.7 SUMMATION**

The first segment of this chapter presents a detailed literature review of research methodologies that were used to address the research objectives. The next section explained the research study design that was employed. It described the quantitative and quantitative research methods which were used during all three stages of the research (pre-field, in-field and after-field), and justified the various reasons for why they were employed. Following this, the sections dealt with the reliability and validity of the research, and ethical conduct when undertaking the research. Lastly, the chapter stated some of the limitations of the study.

## **5 THE ULTIMATE BOON/ RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This phase in the hero's life cycle holds the knowledge that he/she has gathered during the adventure. It relates to the whole process that the hero undergoes to finally attain that knowledge which gives him/her superior insight over others (Campbell, 2008). This chapter is like a weft of the thesis which would act as an underlying structure in the form of the original survey and interview data, which serve as base for meaningful knowledge. The following two objectives are achieved in this chapter:

- Understanding tourist profiles and demographics during the three stages of the visit, namely, pre, during, and post visit. On achieving this, the survey aims to gain understanding of expectations and perceptions of tourists with regard to the satisfaction they hope to and actually derive from the experience (Section 5.3),
- Present the qualitative data that was obtained following the interviews with managers who had a stake in the day-to-day functions of the Taj Mahal (Section 5.4).

To achieve the first objective, the survey result will be discussed under subheadings: (i) demographic and travel behaviour characteristics of the respondents, (ii) pre-, during and post-visitation, and (iii) tourist's overall satisfaction with the Taj Mahal. This is done to familiarise the reader with the tourist experience when visiting the Taj Mahal. Satisfaction was measured relative to certain pre-determined attributes that were considered important towards a holistic tourist experience at a destination. In all, the survey data indicated that the satisfaction level of the tourists visiting the Taj Mahal does not meet their expectations

For the second objective, the interview results will be categorised into different themes which were identified after the interview process. These themes were based on the areas that: (i) the tourists were found to experience low satisfaction levels, and (ii) the managers considered to be of major concern in the management of the Taj Mahal. Overall, it was noted that there is a lack of coordination between the different departments managing the Taj Mahal, which resulted in unsatisfactory experiences for the tourists.

## **5.2 FIELD OBSERVATION**

The research phase began with a short observation period when I visited the Taj Mahal between 26/11/2010 (Friday) and 01/12/2010 (Wednesday). The main reason for undertaking a field observation was to experience the Taj as a tourist myself again, and also to determine how appropriate the chosen attributes were in my survey design. The length of the observation period was ten hours per day, between 8am and 6pm.

Quite a few trends were observed. It was found that there were variations in the timings and days that tourists visited the Taj. It was noted that visitation numbers were higher on public holidays, festive seasons and weekends and visitor numbers were lower on weekdays. This was deduced by general conversation with locals, guides, staff members around the Taj, as well as some of the tourists themselves. Peak visitation hours at the Taj Mahal were from 10 am to 12 am and 2pm to 4 pm. These observations were not meant to be conclusive in nature but only to get a brief understanding of visitor patterns. The majority of tourists who arrived at the Taj during the observation period were domestic visitors.

The tourists who arrived early were mostly international backpackers in order to avoid long queues in the hot sun and to view the changing colours of the Taj in sunlight. Other types of visitors included those on pre-paid package tours both, domestic and international. The visitation times for those who were on pre-paid tours were considerably shorter because their tours ran on fixed schedules, and their visits lasted a maximum of three hours within the premises. The time that free and independent tourists spent at the Taj Mahal was much longer than those packaged ones which ran on a predetermined schedule. During the weekends; families, group of teenagers, couples and school children also frequented the Taj Mahal.

During the observation period, the most popular activities at the Taj Mahal were taking photographs of carvings, inlay work and garden sculptures, and browsing through the Taj Museum. It was interesting to note that the inexpensive and small souvenirs at the Taj Mahal were only attractive to domestic tourists and international tourists rarely purchased them. However, good quality miniature models of the Taj Mahal and gemstones were often purchased by international tourists.

Many local children aged 15 and below frequently visit the Taj Mahal because they are allowed free entry. It was noted that these children often run behind foreigners and wish to interact with them. While speaking with a few of them, I came to know that their

main motivation towards interacting with foreigners was in getting photographs taken with them, or to improve their English skills. Overall, it was during this phase that the 34 attributes for the evaluation of visitor experience at the Taj Mahal were finalized. In addition to that, this pilot observation period gave me some brief insights into the tourist scenario at the Taj, and these aspects are studied in greater detail in the following chapters.

### **5.3 TOURIST SURVEYS**

The survey records the responses of international tourists who participated, and data gave insights into their pre-arrival image, the experience during the visit and the memories of the experience and satisfaction. The data was collected and allocated to appropriate numerical data sets and the statistics were generated with SPSS software. The resulting analysis aims to (i) to achieve research objective one, and (ii) to prepare interview questions for the managers that had a stake in maintaining the Taj Mahal.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the Taj Mahal survey; tourist's demographic characteristics. Out of 115 questionnaires administered, exactly 100 were valid (response rate = 87%). This conveniently implies a frequency distribution of one hundred for the closed-ended questions except those pertaining to 'occupation', 'income' and 'whether the tourist had been to a cultural heritage site in the past'; which recorded frequencies of 98, 97 and 99 respectively. Invalid questionnaires included those that were not fully completed, and questionnaires which were illegible.

#### **5.3.1 DEMOGRAPHIC AND TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR CHARACTERISTICS**

The respondents were international tourists, who visited the Taj Mahal in the month of March, 2011. The sample was comprised of 100 respondents out of which 52 were males and 48 were females; the gender distribution of the respondents was quite even.

**Figure 5.1: Age groups of Visitors (N=100)**

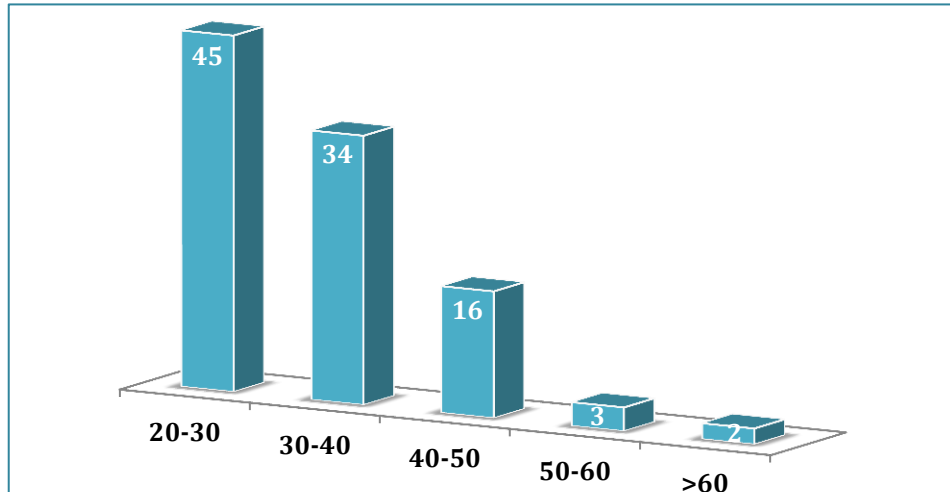
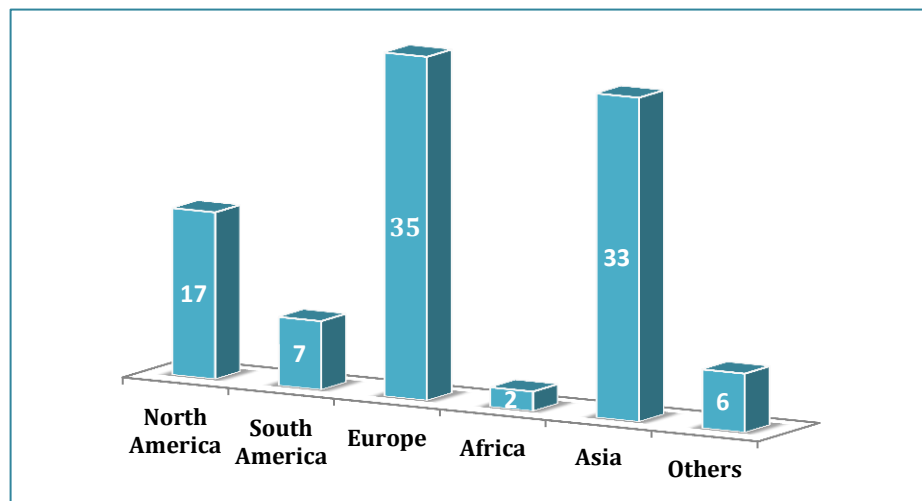


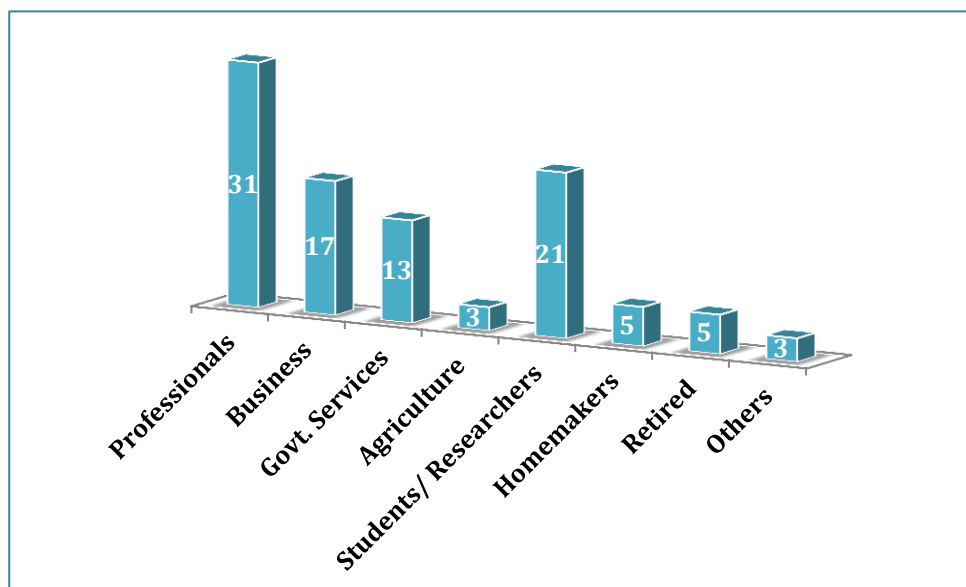
Figure 5.1 shows that the largest group of the respondents were aged 20 to 30 years (N=45), followed by 30 to 40 years (N=34). Next came the visitors in the age bracket of 40 to 50 years (N=16) and those of 50 years and above made up the smallest group (N=5).

**Figure 5.2: Place of Origin Graphic of Visitors (N=100)**



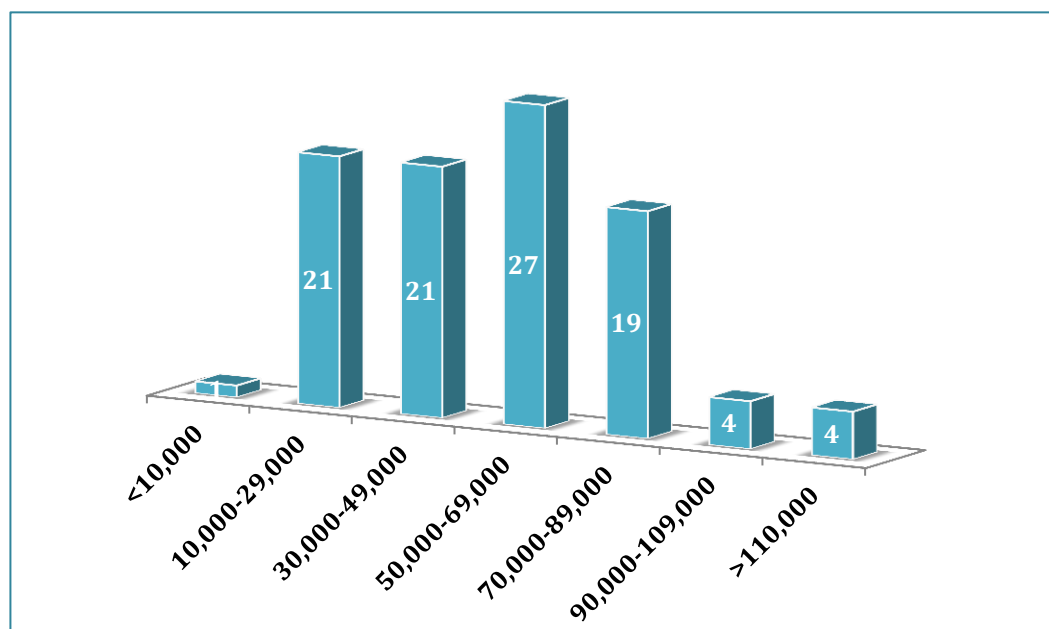
In this sample, most of the respondents were from Europe and Asia, with 35 and 33 respectively. Whereas 17 reported they live in North America, seven were from South America, two were from Africa, and six were from other parts of the world (Figure 5.2). It must be noted that the Asian ethnic group discussed in the survey results extends to all persons hailing from the Asian continent in exclusion to India. It is not surprising to see that persons of Asian countries contribute large visitor numbers because India is a destination that is proximal to other Asian countries.

**Figure 5.3: Occupation Breakdown of Tourists Visiting the Taj Mahal (N=98)**



With respect to occupation, 31 were professionals, 17 were in the business sector, 13 were in government services, three belonged to the agricultural sector, 21 were students and researchers, five were homemakers, five were retired, and there were three who did not specify an occupation and ticked mark at the ‘others’ category (Figure 5.3). Out of the hundred questionnaires, two respondents left this question blank.

**Figure 5.4: Income of Tourists Visiting the Taj Mahal in US\$ (N=97)**

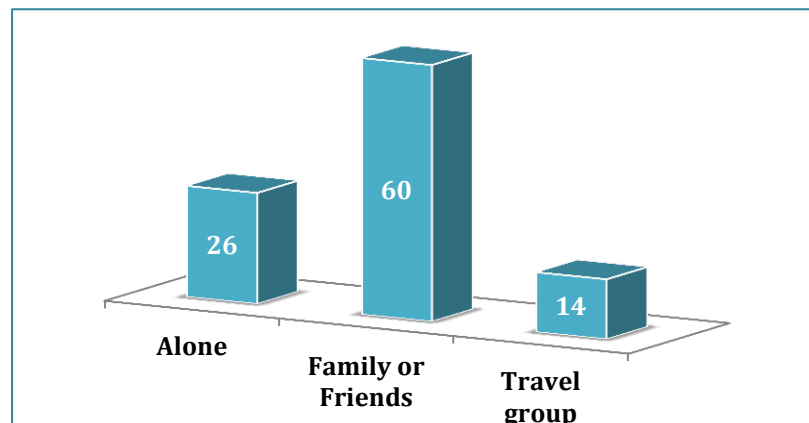


With regard to respondents’ annual household income, the smallest income group were those earning less than US \$10,000 per annum with only one respondent belonging to this category. The largest group included those with an annual household income of US

\$50,000 to \$69,000 (27), followed by US \$10,000 to \$29,000 (21) and US \$30,000 to 49,000 (21), US \$70,000 to \$89,000 (19), and US \$90,000 to 109,000 (4) and US \$110,000 and above (4) (Figure 5.4). Three respondents did not answer this question.

In terms of level of education, nearly 45 of the tourists had a high/ university education level; 28 of the respondents had a secondary school education, 18 of the respondents had a technical education, and only eight had a primary education. The research shows relatively high educational level of the respondents (Figure not shown).

**Figure 5.5: The Travel Accompany of Tourists Visiting the Taj Mahal (N=100)**

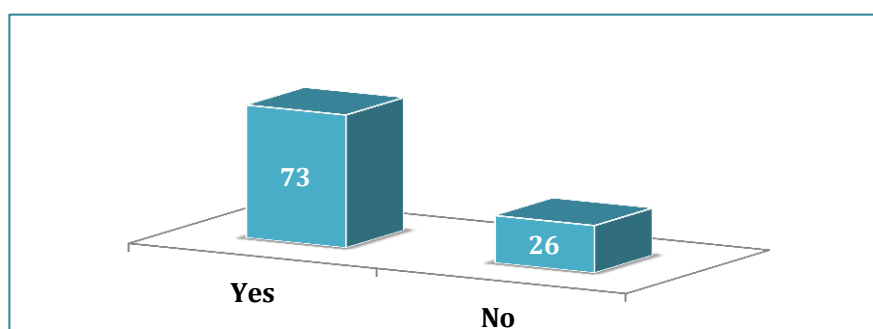


The package tour foreign tourists usually stayed for a maximum of three hours at the Taj Mahal and they spent most of their time listening to the tour guides and their stories or gazing at the delicate architecture. On the other hand, backpackers preferred to stroll around leisurely around the premises of the Taj Mahal. I could identify whether the respondents were on a package tour or not because question eight (Part II) in the questionnaire asks the respondent about their travel accompaniments. Secondly, the tourists who were on tight time schedules politely declined participation in the survey. Statistics in Figure 5.5 indicate that most of the tourists (60) visited the Taj Mahal with friends/family, 26 respondents travelled alone, while only 14 respondents came to the Taj Mahal on packaged tours. The low percentage of package tourists on the respondent list is because of the limited time they have to spend at the Taj Mahal.

**Table 5.1: Medium of Transport Used by Visitors to the Taj Mahal (N=100)**

Medium of Transport	Usage Amongst Respondents
Tourism Vehicle	10
Tourism Vehicle + Autorickshaw	1
Tourism Vehicle + Bus	2
Taxi	13
Taxi + Bus + Train	1
Taxi + Train	2
Autorickshaw	21
Autorickshaw + Bus	6
Autorickshaw + Train	5
Autorickshaw + By Walk	1
Bus	13
Train	21
By Walk	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5.1 pertains to the means of transport which tourists used to travel to the Taj Mahal. Respondents were asked to indicate their means of transport used, and to indicate if combinations of various transport options were used. The most popular methods of transport used to arrive at the Taj were the auto-rickshaw with 21 respondents using this mode and public trains also with 21. Secondly tourists preferred buses and taxis, with 13 respondents indicated each one as their preferred means of transport, respectively. Lastly, only 10 tourists preferred to take tourism vehicles; and 4 chose to come by foot. The interesting thing to note here is that, the questionnaire did not have ‘by foot’ option for this question originally and this was added by the respondents. The reason some tourists chose to come by foot is because they approach the Taj Mahal from the Taj Ganj markets side (which is the international backpackers’ hub in Agra), so it is convenient to walk towards the Taj rather than other mode.

**Figure 5.6: Past Visits to a Cultural Heritage Site before (N=99)**

The questionnaire also inquired whether the tourist had ever visited a cultural/heritage site in the last 3 years; and whether the tourist had any previous visits to the Taj Mahal.

With regard to the question if the respondent had ever been to a cultural/ heritage site excluding the Taj Mahal, in the past three years, 73 answered yes and 26 said no, and one respondent didn't answer the question (Figure 5.6).

**Figure 5.7: Number of Visits of Tourists to the Taj Mahal (N=100)**

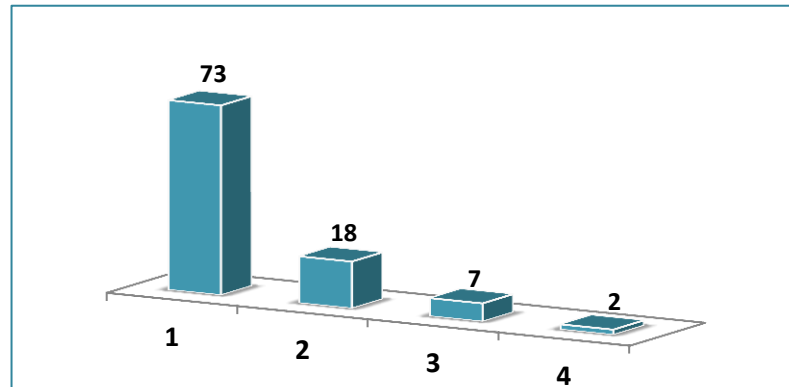
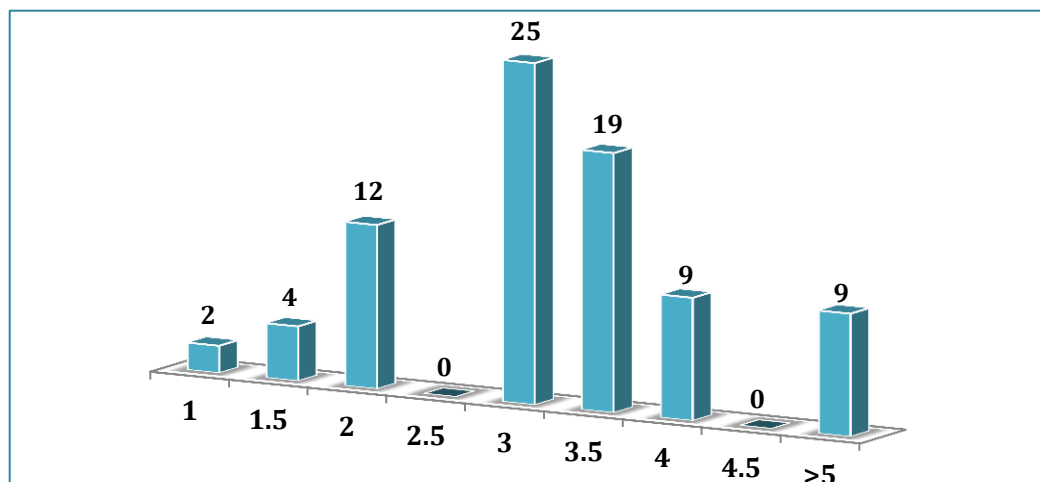


Figure 5.7 explains that in the category of the number of previous visits to the Taj Mahal 73 respondents were having their first experience at the Taj Mahal. Eighteen respondents had visited two times. Furthermore, seven respondents had visited three times, whereas only two had visited four times or more. These data questions aimed to understand the travel behaviour and the ratios of return visitation.

**Figure 5.8: Hours Spent at the Taj Mahal by Tourists (N=100)**



The data for amount of time spent at the Taj shows, twelve respondents spent two hours at the Taj, twenty-five respondents spent three hours, thus a total of 37 visitors spent between two-three hours at the Taj Mahal. Eighteen tourists spent four hours at the Taj and up to five hours, with nine in each time category. It is interesting to note that only six respondents spent between one-two hours there and also that no respondents spent either two and a half hours, or four and a half hours at the Taj, each (Figure 5.8).

In summary, there were one hundred questionnaires that were acceptable for this research. These were composed of international visitors, whose majority numbers were composed from the age groups of 20-30 and 30-40, were from the European and Asian groups. The majority shared that they were professionals and students/researchers, while the major income group of the visitors belonged to the US \$50,000-69,000 group. This statistical analysis aimed to get some basic visitor profile information that can be used in tourist interviews.

### **5.3.2 PRE-, DURING, AND POST-VISITATION**

The main part of my survey was designed to include 34 attributes to measure what tourists expected prior to their visit, and the degree of satisfaction they derived post their visit. These attributes were finalized after the initial pilot observation period at the Taj. These observations when coupled with the secondary data from the tourism literature and internet sources such as travel blogs, facebook etc., made me decide that these were appropriate to this study. Most often these areas or attributes were where tourists were found to have the majority opinions on. Thus these attributes were selected by my own observation and choice.

The first section of the survey was sub-divided into three sections, namely: the pre-visit, during visit and post-visit; and was developed to isolate and measure perceived and expected satisfaction in relation to the individual attributes, which determine the overall level of satisfaction at the end of the visit. It was administered to visitors at the three gates of the Taj Mahal after completion of their visit because the tourists were still fresh from the experience and would be able to give more up-to-date and valid responses.

Likert-like scale data allowed satisfaction to be measured at the ordinal level. Use of this scale further allowed me to derive means, rank data and conduct a gap analysis. A version of paired-difference analysis between pre-visit means and during-visit means was also conducted.

#### **5.3.2.1 PRE-VISIT**

In the survey, the pre-visit experience was sub-divided into two sections, viz. the surrounding environment of the Taj Mahal and the experience upon arrival at the Taj Mahal. Specific attributes were assigned to each of these categories to evaluate the level of pre-conceived expectation (part i), and the level of satisfaction derived on arrival (part ii).

### 5.3.2.1.1 PRE-VISIT (PART i): SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT OF THE TAJ MAHAL

This is the first stage of the tourist experience and this is when they land in Agra city and begin the process of evaluating the destination. The following five attributes related to the surrounding environment of the Taj Mahal were included in this stage;

1. Quality of local transport facilities to and from the Taj Mahal.
2. Traffic conditions leading to the Taj Mahal.
3. Quality of boarding and lodging facilities around the Taj Mahal.
4. Availability and accessibility of Tourist Information Centres relating to the Taj Mahal.
5. The visibility and readability of directional signage for tourists leading to the Taj Mahal.

**Table 5.2: Tourists' Assessments towards the "Pre-visit (part i)" attributes at the Taj Mahal**

Number	Attributes Pre Visit (Part i): Surrounding Environment	Expected Mean (E)	Satisfaction Mean (S)	Gap (M)	Std. Deviation	t-test	p-value	Disc.
1	Local Transportation	3.33	3.12	-0.21	1.27	1.659	.100	ND
2	Traffic	2.90	2.80	-0.10	1.34	.748	.456	ND
3	Boarding and Lodging	3.29	3.29	0.00	1.09	.000	1.000	C
4	Tourist Info. Centres	3.36	2.85	-0.51	1.20	3.918	.000	ND
5	Directional Signage	3.46	3.17	-0.29	1.18	2.381	.019	ND
<b>Overall Pre-Visit (part i)</b>		<b>3.41</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>-0.39</b>	<b>3.89</b>	<b>3.168</b>	<b>.002</b>	<b>ND</b>

Table 5.2 describes the statistical output for relationships between the level of expectation and the level of satisfaction for each of the individual attributes. Column three describes the mean score values obtained for the expectations that visitors had; column four explains the satisfaction means that visitors recorded with regard to attributes in the pre-visit stage and column five describes the 'gap analysis values' or the differences in mean scores between expectations and satisfaction that tourists experienced. With regards to the mean score ranges, it can be seen in column 3 that the tourists expectations for four attributes (E=1, 3, 4 & 5) indicated mean values exceeding 3.21, which indicate positivity from the tourists in terms of their expectations. Only one attribute (E=2) indicates neutrality because its expectation mean falls in the range of 2.8 to 3.2. This indicates that tourists had positive expectations in four out of five attributes in this phase of the visit.

In column four, there is only one attribute (S=3) which displays positivity, i.e., 'boarding and lodging' which falls in the range of 3.21 – 5.0. The remaining four attributes (S=1, 2, 4 and 5) display neutrality because their mean scores fall in the range of 2.8 – 3.2. This indicates that the tourists experienced positivity in only one attribute with regard to the satisfaction, and that they experienced neutral feelings towards four out of five attributes.

These results imply that there are three attributes in which the expectations indicate positivity but the satisfaction means indicate neutrality (1, 4 and 5), which shows that the expectations of the tourists were not met during this phase of the visit. Attribute 'boarding & lodging' is the only attribute where the expectations equal the satisfaction. The observations are that the expectations of the visitors exceed their satisfaction in all of the attributes, and that the satisfaction means recorded for all attributes fall in the range of 2.8 to 3.2, which indicate neutrality. This indicates that the tourist's expectations were not met with regard to four individual attributes during the pre-visit (i) phase. It is interesting that the satisfaction of the tourists do not exceed the satisfaction derived in any of the attributes, which indicates that at no point during this phase of the visit did the tourists get more satisfaction than they had expected in terms of the attributes.

Column five represents the differences in the expectations and the perceived satisfaction of the visitors, known as gap. It is seen that the tourists experience negative values for four out of five attributes, and equality in only one. This indicates that the tourists experience negative disconfirmation in the four attributes, implying a negative experience. The 'local transportation', 'traffic', 'tourist information centres' and 'directional signage' attributes displays a negative disconfirmation value of -0.21 -0.10 - .051 -0.29, respectively. The only attribute where there is confirmation is the 'boarding and lodging', where the expectations equal the satisfaction which implies that the tourists were satisfied with the state of boarding and lodging facilities. The interesting point is that the maximum negative disconfirmation was recorded for factors that are directly related to tourists only; in the sense that international tourists would require tourist information centres and would depend on directional signage more, therefore it makes sense that they experience maximum negative disconfirmation in these two attributes. It is also interesting that these two attributes can be directly influenced by governmental and authoritative actions. With regards to the paired samples test for the attributes mentioned above, it was observed that there were no significant differences in

pairs (E and S) 1, 2, 3 and 5 as their *p*-value exceeded 0.05, respectively. This makes these four attributes statistically insignificant. However, there was significant difference in the gap values obtained from pairing 4.

The overall expectation and satisfaction scores recorded for the pre-visit (i) phase indicate that the tourists experienced positivity in overall expectations for this phase ( $E=3.41$ ); however, they experience neutrality with regard to satisfaction ( $S=3.02$ ). This indicates that the overall expectations of the visitors were higher than their perceived satisfaction during the pre-visit (i) phase. Table 5.2 also indicates that tourists experience negative disconfirmation in the overall pre-visit (i) phase, with a gap value of -0.39 recorded, which shows that the overall experience was a negatively satisfying for the visitors. However, it can be said that the gap differences are not very extreme, which could be because this is the initial phase of the visit.

So what it implies is that there is existence of difference between the expected mean and the satisfaction mean towards the pre-visit (i) phase attributes leading up to the Taj Mahal. This shows that even though tourists are neutral towards four of five attributes, they experienced negative satisfaction levels due to their high expectations as compared to what they have experienced during their pre-visit (i).

#### **5.3.2.1.2 PRE-VISIT (PART ii): ARRIVAL AT THE TAJ MAHAL**

On arrival at the destination, the tourists actually get the chance to verify their expectations and impressions with the reality of the destination. This section of pre-visit constitutes attributes related to arriving at the Taj Mahal. The attributes which were included in pre-visit (i) phase were related to before reaching the Taj Mahal, whereas pre-visit (ii) phase contained the attributes when the tourist is at the Taj Mahal but not inside yet.

Upon arrival at the Taj, there are a variety of factors that affect the tourists, physically and psychologically, and these factors are what influence the overall level of satisfaction attained at the end of the visit. The following eleven attributes were assigned to this phase in the pre-visit stage because the tourist experience them first-hand only after arriving at the Taj Mahal, and not before. The attributes are;

6. Friendliness of the staff at ticket counters in the Taj Mahal.
7. Friendliness of the staff at entrance/exit gates of the Taj Mahal.
8. The value of the permit fees to enter the Taj Mahal.
9. The degree of training of the tour guides.
10. Interpretation skills of the tour guides.

11. Clarity and tone of the tour guides.
12. Level of interaction with tourists.
13. Priority lane for easier access to international tourists and disabled persons.
14. Waiting time in lines to enter the Taj Mahal.
15. Cleanliness of the entrance to the Taj Mahal.
16. Clear signage of the rules and regulations within the Taj Mahal.

**Table 5.3: Tourists' Assessments towards the "Pre-visit (part ii)" attributes at the Taj Mahal**

Number	Attributes Pre Visit (Part ii): Arriving at the Taj Mahal	Expected Mean (E)	Satisfaction Mean (S)	Gap (M)	Std. Deviation	t-test	p-value	Disc.
6	Friendliness of Ticket Counter Staff	3.48	3.08	-0.40	1.341	2.983	.004	ND
7	Friendliness of Gate Staff	3.56	3.02	-0.54	1.158	4.662	.000	ND
8	Entrance – permit fees	3.10	2.36	-0.74	1.555	4.760	.000	ND
9	Guides - Well Trained	3.78	3.27	-0.51	1.105	3.762	.000	ND
10	Guides - Interpretation	3.77	3.27	-0.50	1.091	3.697	.000	ND
11	Guides – Clarity	3.86	3.25	-0.61	1.211	4.059	.000	ND
12	Guides – Interaction	3.85	3.29	-0.56	1.146	3.896	.000	ND
13	Priority lanes at entrance	3.75	2.66	-1.09	4.776	2.068	.042	ND
14	Waiting time in entrance lines	3.03	3.19	0.16	1.808	-.885	.378	PD
15	Entrance cleanliness	3.81	3.42	-0.39	1.377	2.831	.006	ND
16	Signs about Do's and Don'ts inside.	3.63	3.11	-0.52	1.432	.804	.000	ND
<b>Overall Pre-Visit (part ii)</b>		<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>-0.64</b>	<b>10.1761</b>	<b>5.206</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>ND</b>

In the Table 5.3, with regards to the mean score ranges, it can be seen in column 3 that the tourists expectations for nine attributes (E=6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 16) indicated mean values exceeding 3.2, which indicate positivity from the tourists in terms of their expectations. Two attributes (E=8 and 14) indicates neutrality because its expectation mean falls in the range of 2.8 to 3.2. This indicates that tourists had positive expectations in nine out of eleven attributes in this phase of the visit. In the satisfaction mean column, only two attributes (S=8 and 9) had mean values which came below the 2.8 – 3.2 mean score range, which signify negativity. Four attributes (S=6, 7, 14 and 16) fell in the mean score range of 2.8-3.2 which signifies neutrality. And lastly, five attributes (S=9, 10, 11, 12 and 15) exceeded the range value of 3.2 which signifies positivity.

Column fifth describes the 'gap analysis values' or the differences between expectations and satisfaction that tourists experienced, which can simply be described as the differences in mean scores. the gap analysis shows that that tourists experience negative

disconfirmation with regard to all the attributes, except the “waiting time to enter” the Taj Mahal attribute ( $M=0.16$ ), which signifies positive disconfirmation. Further, the maximum gap values were recorded for the ‘priority lanes at entrance’ attribute ( $M= -1.09$ ), entrance-permit fees attribute ( $M= -0.74$ ) and the ‘guides-interaction’ attribute ( $M= -0.56$ ). This shows that tourists experience maximum gap in these attributes, between their expected and satisfaction means. All these are very important inferences which imply that there is a good deal of unhappiness on part of the tourists and that these attributes certainly help to measure the problems that are existing with tourism with regard to the Taj Mahal.

The pairing (E and S) of attributes 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 all show  $p$ -values which were below 0.05, which makes them highly significant. However, the pairing of 14 ‘waiting time in entrance lines’ shows a  $p$ -value of 0.378, this exceeds 0.05 thus making it highly insignificant. It is interesting to note that all the attributes with the negative ‘gap values’ were significant and the only positive ‘gap value’ attribute i.e. ‘waiting time in entrance lines’ was insignificant. This indicated that this attribute was not significantly positive.

The overall expected mean ( $E=3.7$ ) towards the pre-visit (part ii) in regards to the surrounding environment of the Taj Mahal is valued at more than 3.2. Whereas, the overall satisfaction means ( $S=3.06$ ) are less than 3.2 but more than 2.8 which signifies neutrality. This is important because it shows that the tourists had very positive feelings towards what they expected to receive in the pre-visit stage (Part ii), but their satisfaction mean values show that because their expectations were not met, they assume a neutral perspective. However, the tourists experience negative disconfirmation in the overall pre-visit (ii) phase, with a gap value of -0.64 recorded, which shows that the overall experience was a negatively satisfying for the visitors as compared to their expectations.

#### **5.3.2.2 DURING VISIT**

The ‘during visit’ phase of the visitor experience is that when the tourist actually visits the destination, and experiences the offerings of the site. It is then that the visitor can actually verify whether the destination image they have in mind, is equal to the actual destination. This is the critical part of the visitor experience because this is where the visitor is able to experience satisfaction/dissatisfaction first-hand. Here the twelve attributes that were assigned are as follows;

17. Cleanliness of the Taj Mahal.
18. Hospitality of the staff inside the Taj Mahal.
19. Overcrowding at various parts of the Taj Mahal.
20. Pre-recorded audio station stops.
21. Narrated visual presentations inside the Taj.
22. Video presentations.
23. Clean drinking water availability.
24. Availability of public restrooms.
25. General security in and around the Taj.
26. Provision of shoe covers for international tourists.
27. Maintenance of the Mughal Gardens.
28. Light and sound shows.

**Table 5.4: Tourists' Assessments towards the "During-visit" attributes at the Taj Mahal**

Number	Attributes During Visit	Expected Mean (E)	Satisfaction Mean (S)	Gap (M)	Std. Deviation	t-test	p-value	Disc.
17	Cleanliness	3.91	3.57	-0.34	1.33	2.561	.012	ND
18	Hospitality	3.65	3.17	-0.48	1.02	4.707	.000	ND
19	Over-Crowding	3.30	3.04	-0.26	1.44	1.806	.074	ND
20	Pre-Recorded audio station stops	3.09	1.97	-1.12	1.41	6.465	.000	ND
21	Narrated visual presentation	3.32	2.16	-1.16	1.44	6.391	.000	ND
22	Videotape presentation	3.10	1.97	-1.13	1.52	5.848	.000	ND
23	Drinking water facilities	3.67	3.31	-0.36	1.52	2.247	.027	ND
24	Public washrooms	3.47	2.44	-1.03	1.49	6.502	.000	ND
25	Security – In General	3.93	3.32	-0.61	1.25	4.863	.000	ND
26	Security – For shoes before entering the main dome.	3.87	3.63	-0.24	1.29	1.863	.065	ND
27	Maintenance of Mughal Gardens	4.01	3.60	-0.41	1.24	3.307	.001	ND
28	Light and Sound show.	3.36	1.58	-1.78	1.30	10.158	.000	ND
<b>Overall During Visit</b>		<b>3.63</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>-0.92</b>	<b>11.47</b>	<b>6.770</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>ND</b>

In Table 5.4 the third column describes the mean score values obtained for the expectations that visitors had in the 'during visit' stage. Here two attributes, namely; 'pre-recorded audio station stops' and 'videotape presentation' display neutrality as its expectation mean fall in the range of 2.8 to 3.2. The remaining ten out of twelve attributes recorded mean score values exceeding the range of 2.8-3.2, which implies that

tourists had high positive feelings in regard to these attributes. This has important implications for destination management because it identifies the areas that tourists expect a high quality of services.

The forth column shows that the highest level of satisfaction that tourists actually derived was with the 'security – for shoes before entering the main dome' attribute ( $S=3.63$ ), and the lowest was with the 'light and sound show' attribute ( $S=1.58$ ). It can be seen that tourists recorded mean values that fell below the range of 2.8 – 3.2 in five out of twelve attributes ( $S=20, 21, 22, 24$  and  $28$ ). This shows that they experienced negative feelings in these attributes. The tourists recorded values exceeding the mean range score of 3.2 in five out of twelve attributes as well ( $S=17, 23, 25, 26$  and  $27$ ). Now this is not to say that they experienced positive disconfirmation, but that the mean scores recorded only represent positive feelings. The tourists recorded values in the range of 2.8 – 3.2 in two ( $S= 18$  and  $19$ ) out of twelve attributes, which implies neutrality in feeling.

Column fifth describes maximum gap values were recorded for the 'light and sound show' attribute ( $M= -1.78$ ), narrated visual presentation' attribute ( $M= -1.16$ ), videotape presentation ( $M= -1.13$ ), 'pre-recorded audio station stops attribute ( $M= -1.12$ ) and the public washrooms attribute ( $M= -1.03$ ). This shows that tourists experience maximum gap in these attributes, between their expected and satisfaction means. Further, the gap analysis shows that there negative disconfirmation for all attributes in this stage of the visit.

With regard to the attributes outlined above, all of them were significant except pairing 19 'over-crowding' and pairing 26 'security – for shoes before entering the main dome'. This is because the  $p$ -value for pairing 19 and 26 exceeds 0.05 thus making it not significant. The rest of the attributes showed  $p$ -values below 0.05, making them highly significant. It can be seen from the above analysis that the gap between expectations and satisfaction is widening as the tourist progresses through the various stages of the visit. The values recorded here show larger differences than in the pre-visit (part i and ii) stages.

The overall during-visit expected mean (3.63) towards the during-visit in regards to arrival at the Taj Mahal is valued at more than 3.2 that these aspects are important to the tourists. Whereas, the overall during-visit satisfactions mean (2.71) is less than 2.8 which signifies negative satisfaction. Furthermore, the tourists experience negative

disconfirmation in the overall ‘during visit’ phase, with a gap value of -0.92 recorded, which shows that the overall experience was a negatively satisfying for the visitors.

### 5.3.2.3 POST-VISIT

This stage in the tourists experience is the most important because it is when and where the tourist formulates the final impression of the overall experience. The overall level of satisfaction is psychologically measured by the visitor in this stage (Pizam, Neuman and Reichel, 1978). It is based on the final impression of the visitors that they may provide appropriate feedback to management authorities, which can lead to improvement of overall visitor experience and facilities provided to them. The following six attributes were found important here;

29. Petty crimes/scamming of tourists.
30. Annoyance of beggars and street vendors.
31. Sense of security and safety.
32. Availability of souvenirs.
33. Special ethnic shopping.
34. Information about other tourist destinations to visit.

**Table 5.5: Tourists’ Assessments towards the “Post-visit” attributes at the Taj Mahal**

Number	Attributes Post-Visit	Expected Mean (E)	Satisfaction Mean (S)	Gap (M)	Std. Deviation	t-test	p-value	Disc.
29	Petty Crimes/Scams	3.18	2.78	-0.40	1.19	3.364	.001	ND
30	Nuisance by touts/beggars	3.21	2.61	-0.60	1.56	3.838	.000	ND
31	Safety/Security	3.85	3.51	-0.34	1.17	2.896	.005	ND
32	Souvenirs	3.70	3.44	-0.26	1.17	2.115	.037	ND
33	Specialty shopping	3.57	3.21	-0.36	1.17	2.830	.006	ND
34	Information about next tourist destinations	3.60	2.70	-0.90	1.51	5.890	.000	ND
<b>OVERALL POST-VISIT</b>		<b>3.52</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>-0.65</b>	<b>4.80</b>	<b>5.958</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>ND</b>

In Table 5.5, the third column describes the mean score values obtained for the expectations that visitors had. It can be seen that the highest mean score was recorded for the ‘safety/ security’ attribute (E=3.85) and the lowest was recorded for ‘petty crimes/ scams’ attribute (E=3.18). It is observed that tourists recorded values exceeding the mean score range of 2.8 – 3.2 in five out of six attributes in this stage (E=30, 31, 32, 33 and 34). Only one attribute recorded a neutral value in between 2.8 and 3.2, which was for ‘petty crimes and scams’.

The forth column shows that the highest level of satisfaction that tourists actually derived was with the ‘safety/ security’ attribute ( $S=3.51$ ), and the lowest was with the ‘nuisance by touts/ beggars’ attribute ( $S=2.61$ ). In this column there were negative feelings recorded for three attributes ( $S=29, 30$  and  $34$ ), which fell below the lower limit of the mean score range of  $2.8$ . The remaining three attributes ( $S= 31, 32$  and  $33$ ) recorded positive feelings because their mean scores exceeded  $3.2$ .

Column fifth in Table 5.5 describes the ‘gap analysis values’ scores. The maximum differences in mean score values were recorded for the ‘information about next tourist destination’ ( $M= -0.90$ ) and the ‘nuisance of beggars/touts’ attribute ( $M= -0.60$ ), these values indicate that the tourists had the highest expectations in lieu of these two attributes, but experienced the maximum dissatisfaction in them. All the other attributes show negative disconfirmation and the gap values range from  $-0.26$  to  $-0.40$ .

With regard to the attributes outlined above, all of them were significant because the  $p$ -values for all the six attributes were below  $0.05$ . This indicates that they are highly statistically significant. The overall post-visit  $p$ -value of  $0.000$  signifies that the attributes are highly significant as it is lower than  $0.05$ .

The overall expected mean ( $M=3.52$ ) towards the post-visit at the Taj Mahal is valued at more than  $3.2$ , which implies that these aspects are important to tourists during the visitor experience. Whereas, the overall satisfaction mean ( $S=2.87$ ) is less than  $3.2$  but more than  $2.8$  which signifies neutral satisfaction.

Figure 5.9: Gap Analysis of Overall Expectation and Satisfaction (all 34 attributes)

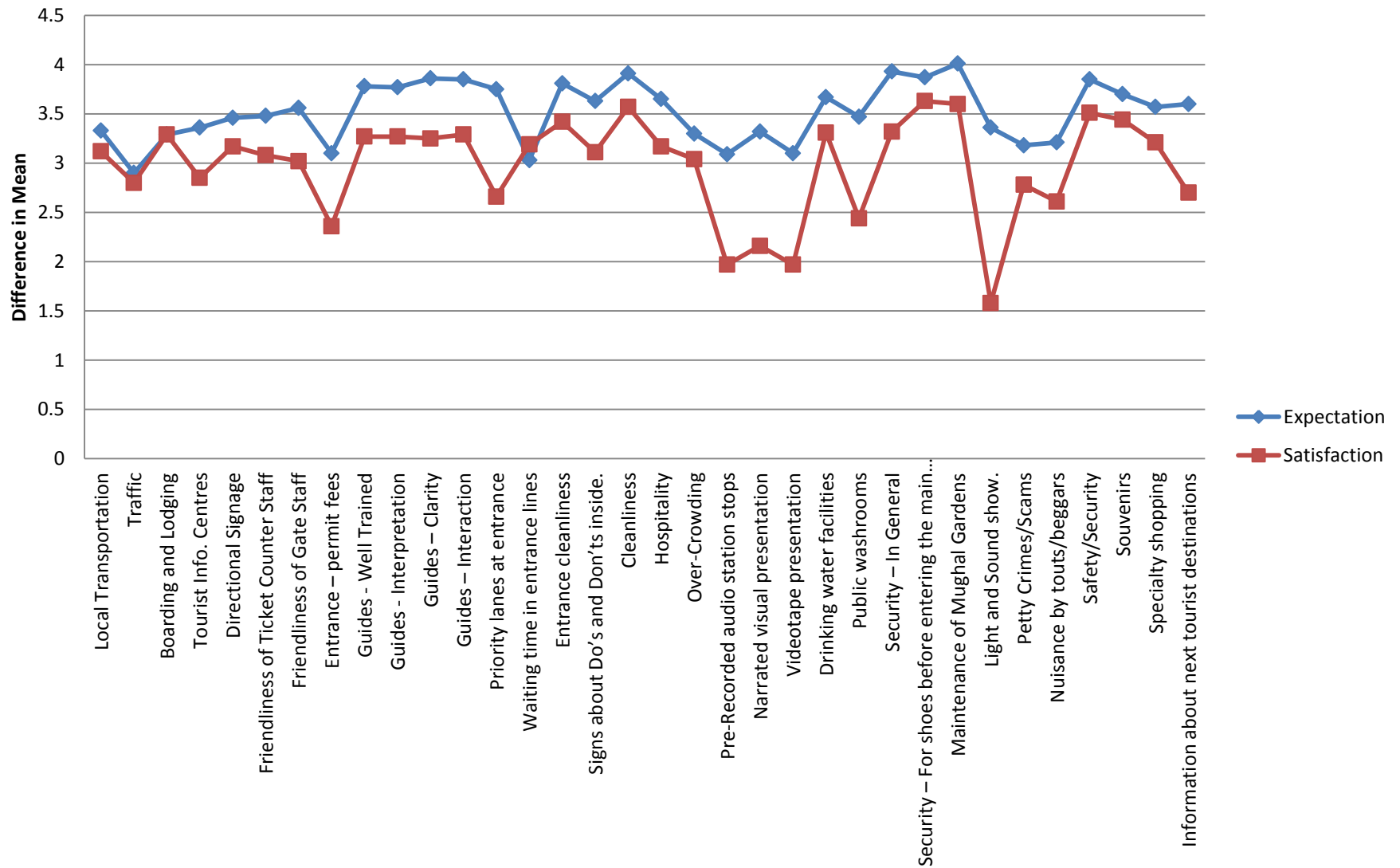


Figure 5.9 shows us the gap differences between the level of expectation and satisfaction for all the 34 attributes that were administered to the respondents in the survey. It can be seen that the gaps widen as the tourist progresses through the visit period. In the pre-visit stage there are minute gap differences between attributes in the pre-visit (i) phase, with the maximum difference in the tourist information centres attribute (M= -0.51).

Although it may appear that the attributes pertaining to guides and their services would belong to the ‘during’ phase of the visit, it actually belongs in the pre-visit (ii) because the tourists are exposed to the guides much before they actually enter the premises of the Taj Mahal. As the tourist moves into the pre-visit (ii) phase the gaps start to widen, and bigger differences in gap values are recorded, with the maximum value being recorded for the priority lane at entrance attribute (M= -1.09), and the entrance permit fee attribute (M= -0.74). These were some of the key concerns that were noted during the survey period and presented to the managers during their interviews.

The attributes pertaining to the ‘during’ stage of the visit display the widest differences in gaps. There are significant differences in all the attributes with the level of expected satisfaction far exceeding the satisfaction mean in all aspects. This shows that this is where the tourists had the highest expectation of their visit, but were disappointed and these counts as a crucial stage in the tourist visitation experience. They found dissatisfaction with many of the facilities that were not provided during their experience, and the lack of these facilities was presented to the managers during the interviews.

The final phase of the visit also shows wider gaps between the mean scores for expectation and satisfaction. And the maximum difference is observed in the information about next tourist destinations and nuisance of touts and beggars.

**Table 5.6: Overall Expectation and Satisfaction (By Stages in Visit)**

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Expectation</b>	<b>Satisfaction</b>	<b>Gap Difference</b>
<b>Pre-visit (part i)</b>	3.41	3.02	-0.39
<b>Pre-visit (part ii)</b>	3.70	3.06	-0.64
<b>During-visit</b>	3.63	2.71	-0.92
<b>Post-visit</b>	3.52	2.87	-0.65
<b>Overall</b>	3.59	2.79	-0.80

**Figure 5.10: Gap Analysis of Overall Expectation and Satisfaction (By Stages in Visit)**

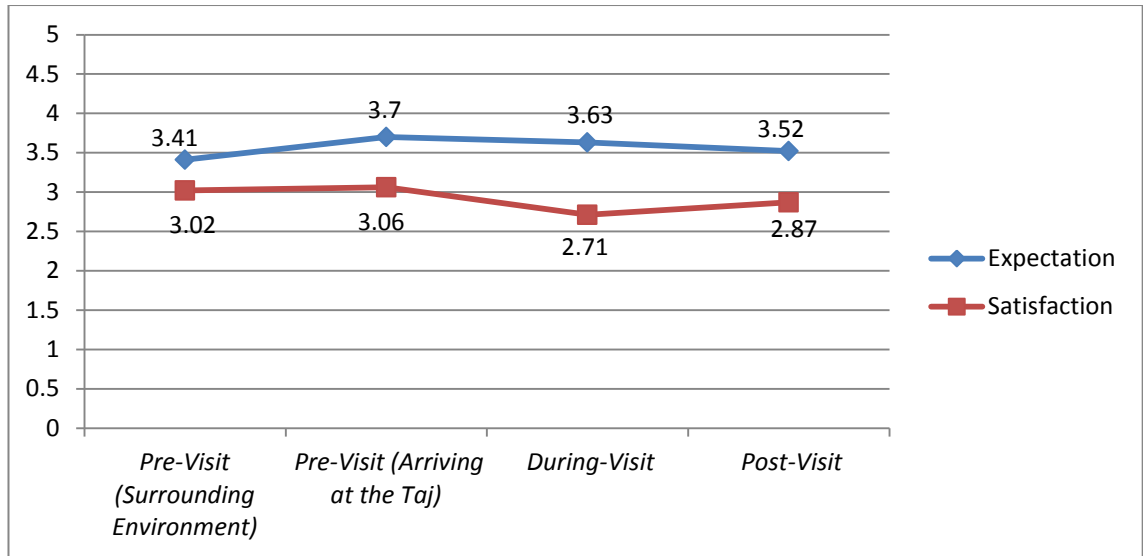


Table 5.6 presents a summary of the findings of this research and data analysis with respect to means of expectations that visitors had, and the means perceived level of satisfaction during the three phases of the visit (pre, during, post), and the means of the overall expectations and satisfaction of visitors. It can be seen that the visitors had high levels of expectation, as the means all exceed the lower limit of the range 2.8 to 3.2. Visitors had the highest expectation with regard to the pre-visit (part ii) phase with a mean value of 3.7 and the lowest expectation with regard to the pre-visit (part i) phase with a mean reading of 3.41. In SPSS, the overall expectation mean for all the 34 variables was calculated to be 122.0882 and the overall satisfaction for the 34 variables was calculated 95.1471 which signify a difference in means of 26.94118. This is a huge difference in means and it signifies that the tourists expected much more satisfaction than they actually got from the overall visit. The  $p$ -value of 0.000 signifies that the attributes is highly significant as it is lower than 0.05.

It can be seen that the visitors experienced overall negative disconfirmation during all the phases of the visit because the expectations mean values exceed the satisfaction mean values in all the stages of the visit, and overall too. Tourists had the maximum satisfaction mean value for the pre-visit (part ii) phase with a reading of 3.06 and the lowest satisfaction mean value was recorded in the during visit phase at 2.71. It can be seen from Table 5.6 and Figure 5.10 that the maximum gap exists for the during visit stage with a gap difference of 0.92.

### 5.3.3 TOURIST'S OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE TAJ MAHAL

Table 5.7 describes the mean values which were obtained for questions regarding night viewing satisfaction, overall satisfaction, revisits and recommendations. For the night viewing, revisit and recommendation question, it can be seen that the tourists displayed poor satisfaction because the mean values are below the lower limit of the range 2.8 to 3.2. However, the mean value for overall satisfaction is slightly higher than the upper limit of the range 2.8 to 3.2, therefore, indicates a high degree of positive feelings from the tourists in respect to this attribute.

**Table 5.7: Night viewing Satisfaction, Overall Satisfaction, Revisit, and Recommendations**

Questions	Number of Respondents	Mean Scores
Night Viewing Satisfaction	31	2.39
Overall Satisfaction	100	3.23
Revisit	100	2.68
Recommend	100	1.75

My survey included one open ended question which aimed to obtain tourist opinions on possible suggestions for improving the overall visitor experience at the Taj Mahal. Only some of the respondents replied to this question, and their answers are sorted into the following categories according to which aspect of the Taj Mahal they pertained to. The categories are: security; staff; cleanliness; facilities.

With regard to security, five tourists stated “more security” as their answer, while another three regarded “protection from touts/guides and photographers” as their main concern. One tourist felt they were subjected to “unnecessary security hassles” over personal items, and notebooks etc. With regard to the general attitude of the staff at the Taj Mahal, one tourist felt that the staff should be friendlier towards visitors and another said that the level of service within the Taj had to be raised.

Cleanliness was a major issue with visitors, six tourists replied that cleanliness was important and must be maintained at the Taj, while two commented on the state of the open sewer at the entrance gates and said that immediate action should be taken, especially because this sewer is at the foot of the VIP entrance. Two visitors felt that all aspects of the premises including the restrooms must be maintained to clean standards. One tourist specified that the overall premises and surrounding of the Taj must be kept

cleaner and safer for visitors, while another suggested that projects be undertaken to clean the Yamuna River, and connect it to the Mehtaab gardens through means of a footbridge perhaps.

Several visitors suggested that the quality of services for international visitors be improved. Sixteen of them specially mentioned that the entry fees were high and should be reduced. One of the tourists regarded this kind of differential pricing as a form of racism while another felt that it would be more appropriate to levy a single tourist fee, which allowed access to the five major tourist attractions in Agra. Another felt that it was unfair that only one entry was allowed per ticket, and that they should be multiple entry tickets. One point of discomfort for a visitor was the lack of the priority line for foreigners, and this attribute was noted to be one that the highest gap difference in the pre-visit phase, similarly, another visitor pointed out that the distance between the locker rooms and premises were too far off, and recommended that they be moved closer to the Taj. This concurred with the thoughts of another visitor who complained of the waiting time in lines and how it was too hot. One visitor suggested the improvement of facilities such as the drinking water facilities while another felt that improved medical facilities should be available in case of any emergency.

One of the aspects which was found to cause negative disconfirmation in the 'during visit' phase was the lack of audio station stops and the annoyance of guides. In lieu of these two, one visitor suggested that a portable audio guide system be introduced, so visitors can listen to audio tours on CD etc while walking around, and another was smart in saying that just like how they have pre-paid taxi services, they should have pre-paid guide systems so that there is no hassle later.

In order to make the Taj safer, and easily accessible to all, a visitor mentioned that they should incorporate handrails on staircases so that there is no possibility of a mishap. A few tourists felt that additional steps such as including magnifying glasses to improve the visibility of the intricate work in the marble and install lighting systems that improve the beauty of the Taj during the night time. Although the museum says it opens at 9 am, sometimes it opens later and one visitor pointed out that it was quite late that it opens at 9, and that it should open closer to 8 am.

In all the three phases of the visit, it was found that visitors experience negative disconfirmation with attributes such as lack of information centres, poor directional signage and information about other destinations to visit. Three tourists felt that there

should be additional signage included. One visitor noted that although there were signs inside banning photography at the tomb but he had seen many taking pictures inside, which shows that these rules were not implemented, and he felt that it was because the signs were hard to read and follow and staff were not bothered to check whether visitors followed the rules; which explains why another tourist felt that there should be adequate signage in English, which would make it easy to understand for all. Another visitor commented on the lack of signs indicating that food items were banned inside the premises.

The categories mentioned above relate only to the responses that were generated in the open ended question of the survey. This concluded the quantitative data analysis portion of the research and paved the way into the qualitative data research methods. The quantitative data collected in this section formed the foundation material that was to be presented to the managers in regard to the factors that were subtracting from the holistic tourist satisfaction experience. It was noticed that most of the attributes that tourists experienced negative satisfaction in, were well within the grasp of the managerial individuals involved, and the purpose of interviewing them, was to gain understanding into their viewpoint on the various issues highlighted above, and contemplate possible solutions.

#### **5.4 RESULT OF THE MANAGERS' INTERVIEWS**

The focus of this phase of my research phase was to present the managers with the results of my survey design. The findings of the quantitative data analysis phase formed the majority of the issues and concerns that were discussed with the managers. A qualitative research approach was considered as the best method for the research component for gathering in-depth, first-hand information of the current management situation at the Taj Mahal. It was conducted after the tourist survey to investigate issues and concerns of managers of different departments managing the Taj Mahal (Table 5.8).

The main themes of the semi-structured questions were related to management, factors affecting property, monitoring, and conservation and tourist facilities/ managing tourists (security) issues. I interviewed ten individuals who held relatively important positions in the managerial hierarchy concerning operation of the the Taj Mahal. All ten had important roles in the day-to-day affairs of the Taj. I also had brief conversations with one of the local police officers and an officer from the Taj Suraksha office; although these did not qualify as interviews, the officers gave me some useful insights that added to my analysis.

**Table 5.8: A list of personnel/interviewees who are involved in the managing the Taj Mahal**

<b>N</b>	<b>Name of Dept./ Organization</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Designation/ Position</b>	<b>Theme</b>
1.	UNESCO	New Delhi	Programme Management	All
2.	ASI (i)	Agra	Superintending Archaeologist (Agra circle)	All
3.	ASI (ii)	Agra	Conservation Assistant	All
4.	ASI (iii) Taj Museum	Agra	Assistant Superintending Archaeologist	All (for the museum)
5.	ASI (iv) Directorate of Horticulture	Agra	Dy. Superintending Horticulturist	Maintenance of Mughal Gardens and Mehtab Park
6.	ADA (i)	Agra	Executive engineer	Maintenance
7.	ADA (ii)	Agra	Executive engineer	Cleanliness
8.	CISF	Agra	Inspector	Security (inside)
9.	Government Of India Tourism Office	Agra	Manager	Tourists' facilities/ managing tourists
10.	Uttar Pradesh Tourism	Agra	Manager	Tourists' facilities/ managing tourists
-	Taj Suraksha	Agra	Check-post policeman (barrier)	Security (immediate outside)
-	Local Police (just a brief conversation)	Agra	Check-post policeman	Security (outside)

The location and the time that interviews were conducted were different. The interviews were held in the respective offices of the managers during office hours (details in Chapter 4 - Methodology). Short hand and abbreviated notes were marked down while the interview was being carried. After each interview I took a 2-3 hours break then noted the points and answers in detail.

Some observations were made when conducting the in-depth interviews with the managers. First, most of the interviews started with a very formal English conversation but ended in a friendly Hinglish (Hindi + English). Secondly, some appearance of uncertainty could be seen on the faces of some managers when answering some questions related to low level of satisfaction of the tourists' visit at the Taj Mahal. Thirdly, not all the interviewees were friendly and open when they talked about the Taj Mahal.

**Table 5.9: Themes allocated to the concerned departments which were interviewed**

Themes	Departments' Responsibility	
	Yellow zone - Outside (Pre- and post-visit)	Red zone - Inside the Taj (During visit)
<b>1 Management/ Maintenance/ Cleanliness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADA(within 500mtrs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monument – UNESCO and ASI</li> <li>• Taj Museum – ASI (Taj Museum Branch)</li> <li>• Mughal Gardens – ASI (Directorate of Horticulture)</li> </ul>
<b>2 Tourism Services/ Visitor Facilities/ Promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADA(within 500mtrs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASI</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government of India (Tourism)</li> <li>• Uttar Pradesh Tourism</li> </ul>	
<b>3 Security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uttar Pradesh Police</li> <li>• Taj Suraksha (within 500mtrs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CISF</li> </ul>

After the interviews were conducted, for facilitating the analysis process, their responses were placed into three themes i.e. Management/ maintenance/ cleanliness, Security, and Tourism services/ visitor facilities/ promotion (Table 5.9).

#### **5.4.1 THEME 1 - MANAGEMENT/MAINTENANCE/CLEANLINESS**

Excerpts of the below interviews are relevant to management/cleanliness and maintenance issues. However, details of the same interviews pertain to theme two (tourism services/visitor facilities) and theme three (security) and will be described under those sections.

Management of the Taj Mahal rests with UNESCO, and they are responsible for management decisions and concerns in the Taj. I interviewed the project manager and was given a summary of the process which revolves around the inclusion of a site into the World Heritage Convention. She informed me that; *“Property first gets into the tentative list and there are different criteria by which a site may be nominated. A state party decides which properties qualify under those categories or stakeholders who have an interest in it may also nominate sites”*. India is the state party with regard to the Taj Mahal and each country is allowed to nominate only two sites in a year, where one is of

cultural and the other of natural value. She remarked; *“All interested parties have to go through this internal system within the country to get a property first nominated into the tentative list. The tentative list is then forwarded to the World Heritage Centre”*.

The manager told me that a site cannot just be nominated; the relevant parties or stakeholders must also ensure that the country has adequate resources to follow through with any maintenance plans to protect its value. The manager outlined the process by which the Centre follows up on the progress the site is making. She indicated:

*Once a property is nominated over a period of time, there is something called ‘periodic reporting exercise’, by which they are trying to express the concerns they have, and monitoring can happen in a sense that the state party does not have liberty to do, as they want.*

This process takes place every four to five years and is meant to help the Centre understand issues that the site undergoes. This is the general route that any country must undertake in order to have a destination nominated into the World Heritage Convention.

When I presented the survey results, and showed that tourist satisfaction levels were low, the manager divulged that; *“they (state party) have to ensure that they not only have proper management in place which helps them to manage different aspects of site like tourist management, general conservation and preservation and recreational facilities.”* One point she mentioned that was reiterated by most of the other managers was; *“you know but the way government system works in India one has to, you know, adapt themselves, you know, as an organization. We cannot get into the working of the government you we can only request them to initiate measures”*. She expresses that the purpose of UNESCO is not to intervene in every management issue faced, but only with regard to those issues that affect the universal value of the monument. She also informed me that the World Heritage Centre only intervened if:

*They feel that we really need to go and check it out on-site. Just sitting here and writing reports won’t help, then they can recommend this reactive monitoring mission which includes one member from the World Heritage Centre and 3-4 experts from the team will come visit it and address the very issue that is affecting the site.*

The manager had a positive outlook towards my research and encouraged me by saying:

*Maybe the ASI, maybe the Superintendent of Archaeology, you know, I mean they show the interest that they can value this work you have done and want to adopt probably whatever recommendations you are giving, you know, address the issues, maybe they are not even aware this is happening.*

However, on interviewing other managers I discovered that they were all aware of issues ingrained into the system which sprung from the governmental level and most of the managers were aware of the lack of organization between various departments at the national, state and local levels. This manager shared her views on the unorganized state of affairs that; *“It kind of creates a lot of complication and cooperation is not there. This happens all over India you know the government system we have you know inter-government, inter-ministerial, inter-departmental collaboration is not very one of the strong aspects”*.

Her closing remarks gave me something to think about, when she addressed the relevance of my research towards the existing managerial situation at the Taj by commenting:

*I don't know how well they will take your research. They must address and incorporate this work, that kind of positive attitude is required which brings change in the site. I understand that, now they look like small things but if you place them into a larger picture, they are sure something to work on.*

#### **5.4.1.1 OUTSIDE THE TAJ MAHAL (YELLOW ZONE)**

Responsibility for maintenance and aesthetic cleanliness of the exterior of the Taj (within a five hundred meter radius) rests with the ADA (Agra Development Authority). The ADA expects to bring about an increase in visitation numbers by taking measures to improve the tourist experience by addressing issues such as external cleanliness of the site, which will result in higher satisfaction; as cleanliness was observed to be an important attribute that determines overall satisfaction levels. Maintenance responsibility beyond this radius belongs to the Agra Nagar Nigam. I interviewed two different authorities from the ADA; one is responsible for the maintenance aspects and the other is responsible for cleanliness, respectively. The ADA maintenance manager informed me that there was no governmental involvement in the maintenance of external perimeter of the Taj Mahal and that it was solely with the ADA; the ADA cleanliness manager also agreed with this statement.

When asked about how the organisation sourced funding for their day-to-day operations, the maintenance manager informed me that they get funding by means of toll taxes also known as *“patkar money”* and are meant to fund all maintenance projects and costs within the specified radius of the Taj. The toll tax is obtained from the entry fee that visitors pay to visit the Taj. Foreigners pay INR 750 (NZD 22.06) out of which

INR 500 (NZD 14.70) is allocated to ADA and INR 250 (NZD 7.35) goes to ASI. Domestic visitors pay INR 20 (NZD 0.60), out of which INR 10 (NZD 0.30) goes to the ADA and 10 to the ASI. This goes to show the percentage of the entry fees that are contributed towards the operations of the ADA and ASI. It can be clearly seen that it is the foreign tourists who are paying the majority share in the operation costs of maintenance and cleanliness around the Taj. It is surprising to see that even after massive turnovers in terms of entrance fees collected annually, the quality of maintenance and cleanliness is not up to par.

The ADA manager responsible for maintenance revealed that the ADA is responsible for maintenance of areas in proximity to the Taj:

*All the maintenance is done by patkar money. It's the government's money, we take that as an ADA fund, we do not transfer it to the government, and we use it for the improvement of the Taj Mahal. We are going to spend INR sixty lakhs (NZD 156,109.63) in the coverage of the nala (sewer).*

The ADA manager in charge of cleanliness aspects informed:

*Toll tax of the Taj Mahal is collected for the road and lighting. Fifteen departments involved i.e. tourist, Nagar Nigam, hydro- electric etc. In the board meeting, the commission gives money to those departments, which require for the maintenance. ADA is responsible for cleanliness around 500 meters outside the Taj Mahal. We have two cleaning machines – one for west gate and one for east gate. South gate is too small so we can't fit a cleaning there. Moreover, east gate we have a staff of 16 and west gate we have 18 and four south gate side. And we have six at red fort side. So, 20-25 people clean that area within 500 meters and beyond that area is the responsibility of Nagar Nigam. West gate – 26 bins, 20 east gate, eight south gates and six Red Fort. So we have around 60 bins.*

These responses show that there are measures taken to ensure the cleanliness and maintenance of the external premises.

Upon discovering that such a large percentage of every foreigner's entry fee was procured by the ADA, I questioned as to why complaints about cleanliness of the area were not all dealt with effectively. The manager in charge of maintenance disclosed that; *"No direct contact with the tourists. If there are complaints from the tourist they go to the concerned authority. ADA is more of a management authority. ASI looks after tourist management and all"*. I observed firsthand the poor condition of an open sewer system close to the East Gate and questioned the manager about it. He responded; *"That is storm water drain and we covering that so that it is not near Taj and it will pass*

*beyond 500 meters. It will start next month (April) and we are intending to complete it in six to nine months.*” The cleanliness manager added:

*See, we take Rs.500 from foreigners and so much of facilities we are giving them. Now, the ride from the counter till gate is free. This money we are taking is not much. If you compare this to other countries, it is not much. For us even Rs 500 is less. Maintain 30 vehicles, plus 2 VIP, expenditure of driver, conductor, street lighting, cleanliness, all... plus we have to fund money to other departments, police, traffic, Nagar Nigam, hydro as well for example, we bought ambulance for police, 2-3 vehicles to traffic police. So, all of this is invested by ADA.*

It was observed from survey results that tourists experience negative disconfirmation with regards to cleanliness aspects at the Taj. The manager in charge of cleanliness was strong in commenting:

*Whatever cleanliness you see now around the Taj is all because of ADA. We took the responsibility just two years ago, before that it was under Nagar Nigam (Municipal Corporation). We used to give them money for the cleanliness and they used to do that work in INR 40-41 lakhs (NZD 104,073 – 106,675) but now same work we do in INR 20-21 lakhs (NZD 52,036- 54,638). Because the whole area is full of small shops and Taj Ganj and there is a village nearby, so many animals, even if we work 24/7 we can't clean the whole area. Why? It is because as soon as my staff is cleaning, public is littering the place within one second.*

The cleanliness manager attributes much of the non-cleanliness and poor satisfaction to lack of awareness or concern amongst visitors, congestion and overdevelopment of areas close to the Taj Mahal and the presence of annoying persons trying to profit from tourists.

However, the cleanliness manager also shared that; *“Public doesn't co-operate with us. What they'll do, they open a pack of biscuit and throw the pack there only. Dust-bin is right there but no they can't walk extra two steps to throw it in the bin”*. He directly attributes this mentality amongst Indian locals to:

*See here everyone, every citizen knows their rights but they have no clue about their functions and responsibilities. See, here in our culture we lack education. In India, the number of people creating mess and litter here and there is way more than the number of people who maintain the cleanliness.*

When questioned about plans for improvement in the future, the maintenance manager shared; *“We are looking into the thing that the people who are staying near the Taj, they have a separate way to access the city and their houses. So, an alternative road is purposed for them.”* The cleanliness manager stated; *“My suggestion is that those small stores nearby should be replaced somewhere else. Then the cleanliness definitely will*

*be improved. Government can take that land and give them land somewhere else nearby". He also shared that:*

*The touts and beggars, who are there outside the gates, they create a lot of problem with foreigners. Now, that is not our job to take care of that. That is the job of other independent body. And there is not much collaboration within.*

This once again shows that managers of various regulatory and management bodies are aware of the presence of inefficiencies and lack of coherence between themselves.

The words of the cleanliness manager echoed the thoughts of several other managers I interviewed when he said:

*See, inside the Taj is ASI, within 500 meters is us and beyond 500 meters is Nagar Nigam. It's like family is one but heads of the family are different. See, police's duty is to make sure these touts and all don't misbehave with tourists but you have seen, they stand there and don't move a leg. No one gives a damn about others emotions. Our culture is such. See, now the trend is a person who speaks and stands up for the wrong things happening in a place, are either made to shut their mouth or goes behind bars.*

He also reiterated the presence of corruption as a major factor in the maintenance process and confirmed that he was aware of bribery cases where hawkers and peddlers paid the security officers money, to be allowed to sell in the Taj.

On the positive side, both managers agreed that they had sufficient and reliable staff. And the cleanliness manager was hopeful that change would come around, even if it took time.

#### **5.4.1.2 INSIDE THE TAJ MAHAL (RED ZONE)**

Responsibility for management, maintenance and cleanliness of the internal premises of the Taj rests with the ASI (Archaeological Survey of India). I interviewed two different authorities from the ASI; one is a senior archaeologist with the ASI and the other is the Taj site manager. The senior officer is responsible for management issues faced by the Agra Circle, and the site manager overlooks the overall maintenance and upkeep of the Taj.

My interviews were scheduled to take place six months after India had hosted the Commonwealth Games. The ASI officer I interviewed shared a historical lesson about the ASI rather than talk about current issues. The senior officer had a great deal of respect for the ASI and the work it did for the Taj Mahal. He exclaimed; *"The thing is; we got Taj Mahal in the form of 'khandar', in the form of jungle (forest). The story is so*

*pathetic before 1882. Taj Mahal was auctioned for its limestone. Do you know that? How pathetic it can be?"* The manager told me that a district magistrate had even proposed that the entire Taj Mahal be burnt down and sold as lime and its by products. He informed me that the practice of trying to earn revenue through the Taj Mahal has been a common practice since 1862. He was specific in saying that everyone is aware of the history of the Taj Mahal after the Mughal era and the British Raj, but no one relates to it. The senior manager implied that my research should be biased towards representing a positive image of India, as I am an Indian national. He said:

*Your academic school is different and the actual ground reality is different. Are you going to supplement anything? I don't think so. Why you enter that domain where there is interference? See! You should take good things from here and write good things.*

The manager shared a few more insights into the ASI and how it functions; *"The administration doesn't realize that they don't understand that changes are there, that goods need to be delivered. Gradually they become sluggish, lazy, they become lethargic."* He said this in direct reference to the special parallel Shatabdi train which was launched specially to cater to the needs of Commonwealth Games. He said that people are unaware of the level of co-ordination and motivation required to run anything in India. He declared that the ASI was severely understaffed and this was why there were inefficiencies. He specifically said; *"Can't you see these things? To manage this kind of monument at least there should be a staff of 10,000 but we are managing it with hardly 50-60 employees. One employee here is working to the capacity of 500 persons"*.

The senior officer claimed that the presence of tourism was not really aiding growth from the administrative perspective, and he stated; *"Administration throws the whole pressure on Taj Mahal. Whatever is generating is getting consumed there itself"*. Another reason he supplied for administrative clashes was that there was a lack of integration between tourism lobby boards. He told me that there were currently two tourism lobby boards that co-existed in the same area; namely, the Delhi Lobby and the Agra Lobby. This is the current situation for tourism in the region:

*Persons who are making money out of tourism, their concentration is how much they are able to spare. Their demands are unending. There is a Delhi lobby and Agra lobby, Delhi lobby takes care of business and there is a tug of war between Delhi and Agra.*

The manager was quite brash when he said:

*Unless you know the things I did, how that special train during Commonwealth sent from Delhi, what they did, what their experiences were, unless you are able to reflect this tug of war between Delhi and Agra, then only you can do justice to yourself, your subject, and the monument.*

The manager went on to show me a diary which contained the comments and gratitude of VIP who visited the Taj Mahal in the past. As expected there were only positive comments within, and he claimed that this was the kind of service that he was responsible for providing the visitors. However, I pointed out that the VIPs were not subjected to the same travelling conditions and treatment as the average visitor and that my research was representative of their satisfaction levels.

Upon questioning the manager with regard to the survey results, he seemed to get agitated with me, which made me decide not to continue the interview due to ethical reasons. However he did give me a few closing comments with regard to my research which left me feeling discouraged. He said:

*Why are you wasting your time? Whatever you have to say, I can very well feel it deeply. It has to be improved many fold. You should appreciate that 60-65,000 crowd we are managing everyday and with only 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the staff appointed.*

The officer went on to reiterate that he was fully aware of the current situation at the Taj, and that he knew that there were changes to be made, and that work was already in progress. He cut me short by saying; *“Whatever you are here for, whatever you have come prepared, all of those things I am aware of. Whatever you are going to tell me, I know it. And the work is in progress”*. The officer’s perspective was exemplified when he told me; *“Whatever you have to discuss in half an hour we can conclude in 5 minutes”*. He supplied me with a report and asked me to read through it quickly. Following this, I presented a small souvenir in the form of a pen with a New Zealand Haka theme inscribed on it, and concluded the interview politely. This interview left me feeling incomplete because I received no solid information that contributed towards my objectives.

However, other interviews conducted with the ASI staff proved to be fruitful. The interview with the site manager gave me more insight into issues that they faced with regard to internal maintenance of the Taj. The manager was friendly and cheerful and gave me detailed answers to all my questions. He managed to answer questions relating to all the themes of my survey results. He described the position of ASI in the

management hierarchy as; *“Under Union government, there is Ministry of Culture and under ministry of culture there is an institute called ASI i.e. Archaeological Survey of India and this is maintaining the Taj Mahal.”* He also detailed that there were four departments under the ASI, namely, horticulture, conservation, chemical and Taj Museum. He added that most of the decisions and rulings regarding the Taj Mahal came from the Supreme Court of India.

He agreed with some views of other managers when asked to discuss cleanliness and maintenance. Firstly, he said there was a shortage of staff and that his staff number has been reduced by 50% since 1998. The key responsibilities such as; *“maintenance, 6 AM gates open, stand there, booking, handling cash, complaint attending, are all my staff. But why is management not hiring more staff?”*. He maintained that such decisions came from authorities that were higher in the hierarchy. He also went to inform me; *“Now you see, my staff became old, now they are 55 years old and they can’t do capacity of work as they did ten years back, so I removed all the old staff”*. The manager stated that he took personal responsibility for the maintenance of the Taj and that; *“we are very strict, suppose I’m going on around and if anyone is unhappy I immediately get in writing and take care”*.

I asked him about their funding which was sourced from the entrance fees paid by the visitors, and he told me that the ASI survives on frugal funding, as the majority share of the entry fees is given to the ADA for the maintenance of external premises and Agra city. The manager said that the share that of the ASI was being used to help the ADA as well. He implied that the ADA was not up to par when he stated; *“ADA is taking so much money to maintain the surrounding area and the city. But how maintain, when they can’t build a road (smiling)?”* The site manager said that much of the littering happens because people are not allowed to carry food items inside, which results in them being thrown casually around the entrance gates, which is his area of jurisdiction. This coupled with shortages in staff results in large quantities of food litter collecting around. He said that it was because of this collection of food litter around the premises that attracted stray dogs and animals towards the site.

The Taj Mahal is a Muslim mosque and tomb, and the dog is an animal which is considered highly unclean (Haraam) in Islam, which made me wonder why they were allowed to be around the premises. The site manager retaliated:

*Actually dogs are coming from the gate and the security 'aur unhon ne haath khare kar diye ki' (refused to take responsibility), you write down to me and we take the action. So, we wrote a letter to ministry and every Friday vehicle is coming and they are catching dogs but, they are again coming.*

He also added that the security personnel outside are responsible for preventing this, but were not too keen to prevent these animals from entering, because often foreign visitors intervened and ask the security to stop harassing the animals. He displayed a bundle of papers which he explained were all letters written to the municipal board. He gave me something to think about when he exclaimed; *"you see guards are standing there, it's a shame that if they can't stop a dog to enter, how can they stop a person with explosives?"*

The Taj Museum Branch looks after all aspects relating to the Taj Museum only. The museum is inside the premises and it celebrates its annual day on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May, and hosts a festival where school children are invited to take part in cultural activities such as arts and crafts. The Taj Museum is governed by ASI and ICOM (International Council of Museums); which is a subordinate of UNESCO. The interviewee informed me the Taj Museum was understaffed and that there had been correspondence between them and the Director of Museums and the Directorate General's office. At present; *"Total nine staff, two for night duty and day time only seven; and out of those some are on leave, some sick. So we are managing like this"*. It was informed that the museum was a small scale museum and the purpose of it was not to profit, but to provide a convenient tour which kept visitors happy.

However, since the museum was included within the Taj premises, it also qualified as a heritage monument, which prevented management from making any renovations to it. She added that the museum was monitored by CCTV (closed-circuit TV) but the system was not being used (laughing, she had to call her subordinate into the office and ask him to turn it on, just to show me that it was in fact, in working condition). She felt that there were limited management issues and informed me that; *"Now monument and museum branch is separated, management and offices are separate. Earlier they were together but now they are different"*.

When I questioned her about any special efforts taken by the Taj Museum with regard to maintaining historical artefacts or works for tourists, she replied; *"Because of the humidity and temperature, the paintings were changing the colour and also lot of dark spots were starting to appear on around 20-23 painting. We sent to Dehradun chemical*

*office, now everything is fine, clean and good condition.”* This is a measure taken against the effects of humidity and moisture in the air and degradation of valuable cultural paintings. However, she stressed that timing is very important with regard to maintaining these artefacts; *“because as soon as this deterioration is observed the step is taken very quickly, otherwise it defects the paintings more”*.

The final organization responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the Mughal Gardens in and around the premises is the Department of Horticulture, which is a separate wing of ASI. Their responsibilities include looking after the Mughal gardens within the premises. The Char-Bagh gardens are very unique in their design and the horticulture department looks after all aspects of their upkeep. The official informed me that his department had adequate staff as one acre of land requires one person’s capacity. When asked about hurdles faced by the department, the official revealed; *“shortage of water and electricity is a huge problem. Actually earlier Yamuna water was used but it’s all dry now and now we use underground water”*. He shared that there was a horticultural assistant on premises whose responsibility it was to monitor the gardens and work. The official also conducts two to three visits to the Taj on a weekly basis.

The gardens of the Taj Mahal are off limits to visitors and there are signs posted which say “keep off grass” (in Hindi), however there are many domestic tourists who rest and relax on the grass, directly in front of these signs. When asked about that, the official replied; *“no permission to sit or enter the garden. Now that you noticed that part, we’ll take some action”*. Similarly, when questioned about the practice of some gardeners to ask foreigners for payment after volunteering to click their photographs, he replied; *“yeah I am aware of that. See all the fingers of a hand are not equal. So some staff member must be like that and when these kinds of things come in our notice, we take action”*. This again shows that managers are aware of the malpractices that take place in and around the Taj, but always require written notice to take any action.

## **5.4.2 THEME 2 TOURISM SERVICES/VISITOR FACILITIES/PROMOTION**

### **5.4.2.1 OUTSIDE THE TAJ MAHAL (YELLOW ZONE)**

The provision of tourism services and visitor facilities in the external premises has been allocated to ADA, and specifically they look after the provision of public toilets and clean drinking water for visitors. The individual I interviewed gave me the following insights; there are two portable toilets which are located at the East and West Gate

respectively. These toilets are the direct responsibility of ADA and any maintenance costs are covered by them. Additionally, there are public toilets that are included in the parking area. The Uttar Pradesh Tourism representative was irate about this and shared with me; *“ADA is not doing anything. Everyone is making money. They are responsible for cleanliness. You have seen it. Is it clean? They don’t maintain anything”*.

The ADA officer told me that currently there was no facility for drinking water in the external perimeter, but there were many options for visitors to purchase water bottles outside. I visited one of these shops which sold water bottles in the vicinity and discovered that a one litter bottle of water, which costs INR 10 (NZD 0.30) was sold at double the original price, INR 20 (NZD 0.60). This gives an indication that goods are overpriced in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal, because the local tradesmen know that tourists will pay extra amounts for goods and services there.

#### **5.4.2.2 INSIDE THE TAJ MAHAL (RED ZONE)**

The ASI is the body that is responsible for the provision of tourism services and facilities within the internal premises of the Taj Mahal. Concurrently, the Government of India, Tourism Office and the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Board also have stakes in providing these services to visitors.

I interviewed a site manager with ASI regarding facilities and visitor services, and began by asking him about the quality of guides and their services. He explained that there were three different types of guides who gave their services. They were: those that were issued guide licenses from the central government; those that received licenses from state governments; and stay guides. Stay guides he explained were those locals that made judicial claims that they were trained guides since their youth, and that ASI was obstructing them from doing what they are meant to do. Similarly, the official with the Government Tourism Board informed me that; *“There is proper training first and they are keeping into the check, their activities and monitored, you can say probation period. And then after that they are issued the license for 3 years or 5 years depending upon the situation”*.

The ASI officer mentioned that only stay guides *“has to purchase a ticket and they have to sign a guide register. (Showed the guide register). So no illegal person can claim to be a guide but again if somebody’s intention is wrong they manage to do so”*. He added that stay guides are highly commercialized guides, and their aim is to provide a type of show as if the tourists were themselves part of the story and that; *“They will give you*

*quantity not quality*". The individual I interviewed and other senior officers are responsible for training guides, and when a VIP is visiting, the senior officers themselves guide them.

The opinions of the ASI official matched those of the Government Tourism Office official because he also said that; *"The problem is basically with stay guides. Our guides are well trained and have proper jobs. Only because of stay guides the whole name and image of the guides is been destroyed"*. When asked as to why some guides were allowed to take foreigners on emporium tours where they were expected to purchase things, he responded; *"it is part of their job; you see government also has to make money right. But they go only if they are keen and not forced to buy anything"*. The representative for the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Board also added similar views on the current situation of guides; *"Guides – not satisfied – not well trained"*. I was asked to go and talk to them (the higher authorities) and inform them about my survey, but was unable to because the offices of these authorities were located in various cities and states in India, not in Agra.

Another important attribute is the friendliness of staff at entrances and ticketing counters; with regard to these staff the ASI officer pointed out that there were inefficiencies and that; *"Some of the staff is old and not very educated"*. When asked about concerns of a priority lane for foreigners and differently-abled persons, he gave me the breakdown of entry and exit points to and from the Taj. He shared that there were four lanes at the East Gate, out of which, two were for domestic residents and the other two were for foreigners, and each lane was divided for males and females. But when asked about the West Gate, he mentioned that there was no priority lane and that ninety percent of foreigners preferred to enter using the East gate as most of the luxury hotels were on that side; only and eight percent used the West Gate and two percent used the South Gate. However, I observed that there was no such trend, and there were foreigners entering from all the three entrances.

With regard to disabled persons and first-aid facilities, the ASI officer added that there were; *"Wheelchair facilities nine, stretchers, first-aid box, ISI standard ramps, outside ambulance in the morning."* There have been cases of foreigners fainting in the Taj Mahal due to the extremes in temperatures. To counter this, the foreigners are provided with water bottles and staff tries to create a sense of awareness in case of such situations. These are issues relating to the safety of tourists during their visit. When

asked about their security; the manager replied that it was not under his authority and that it rested with the Uttar Pradesh Police. The manager of the Taj Museum also informed me that there were adequate facilities for water, toilets, first aid, and a doctor was on the premises as well.

I showed that my results indicated the presence of directional signage and rules and regulations within the premises was an important attribute to satisfaction, and he replied; *“Actually the planning is there that there should be culture notice board, protection notice boards, and also directional notice boards, so we are increasing the boards but it is not possible to keep boards everywhere”*. I specifically asked him why foreigners were being charged for using the toilets, and he replied; *“Actually the rule is that Indian should pay Rs. 2 and it is free of cost for foreigners but still if they are asking for money and somebody gives me in writing, I will take action”*. This comment shows that the managers are aware of ongoing malpractice, but he said that the actual contract of maintaining the toilets is allocated to a private hygiene firm known as Sulabh International, so any action for this would have to be taken against them. The Uttar Pradesh Tourism representative also showed a sense of understanding of the reasons that caused negative satisfaction when he told me:

*Washroom cleaning inside the Taj, even I noticed and told them that it's not clean. This negative experience of the tourists is affecting us too because if our tourists are going back home unhappy that means they will not return or recommend it to others.*

One of the most anticipated features of the Taj Mahal is the light and sound show for which many tourists have great expectations. However, the reality is that there is no light and sound show. This causes a large gap in expected satisfaction and actual satisfaction because my survey shows that many tourists visited the Taj expecting this show. When I shared this with the ASI site manager, he explained the reasons why there was no light and sound show as; *“The Supreme Court directly governs the Taj Mahal...the problem is for light and sound show is that we should provide sound, we should provide lights and shade that is harmful for the Taj”*. What this means is that the actual permission to have a light and sound show stems from the Supreme Court and is out of the control of individual organisations, and the reason the light and sound show is banned is because of the possible detrimental effects towards the structure.

Additionally, the presence of strong lights would attract many kinds of insects, which would deface the Taj Mahal. He gave me the reasoning as; *“Because Yamuna is there,*

*dirty water is there, these insects are there, they directly shit there and dirty the Taj*". This explains why a light show would interfere with the cleanliness and maintenance of the Taj.

With regard to a sound show, the site manager explained; *"In 1998 a program was done by Yanni and at that time the sound was more than 100 micro decibels and the ideal sound permitted is 40. So, for technical reasons, we are here to protect the Taj"*. The artist Yanni is known for his classical style of piano music, and if he could reach decibel levels of 100, a cultural show would definitely exceed the ideal level of 40 decibels. The concern is that high decibel levels could shock the structure and create structural faults within the Taj.

The ASI official also mentioned that preparations to launch the pre-recorded audio station stops were already underway. He said:

*The paper work is in progress. International company will be doing the work. We have given the plan, a counter will be there. We will provide video and some numbers will be located (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) inside the Taj, within a week.*

The expected cost of a ticket is INR 50 (NZD 1.28). The Uttar Pradesh Tourism officer also concurred that the audio guide *"is about to start"*.

Another reason tourist's visit the Taj Mahal is for the purpose of night-viewing. The spectacle of the Taj under moonlight is completely different than when seen in the day. However, the ASI site manager adds that night viewing may result in satisfaction only during certain months of the year. He says; *"suppose they are coming in the month of January, February. and during those months it is not clearly visible, that's why they are disappointed"*. He revealed that the Supreme Court decided the night viewing fees and security measures would be taken care of by the same court. He said that a Supreme Court representative is present on premises during all five days when night viewing is permitted. This shows that certain aspects of management are clearly out of the authority of regulatory bodies such as ADA and ASI.

Some aspects of the Mughal gardens like the orchards had to be altered so that aesthetic value of the Taj was not obstructed. Many functions of the Department are constrained by limits in water and electricity supplies. The Department of Horticulture official added that they do not directly receive any complaints from tourists and that the maintenance of some facilities is completely out of their control. He stated; *"During summer season, the temperature is very high; more than 50 degrees. That time we can't*

*do much about it. We try to maintain as much as we can”.*

The manager of the Taj Museum shared with me that interaction with tourists and getting their feedback is an important part of her job. She said that she personally goes and talks with tourists and provides them with incentives to respond, such as free vouchers. She informed me that the major complaint was about electricity and that; *“we now make sure that electricity is there all the time. There are lots of complaints regarding no AC in the museum, we are working on that. It will be there soon”*. The manager added by saying that she makes sure:

*Staff performs all the duties in order, round the clock, at night time also there is a watchman for the safety of this, fire-fighting facilities and all, anything for emergency; lighting back-up plan also. There should be no gap for the tourists.*

My interview with the officer at the Government of India Tourism Office gave me a deeper understanding of certain practices and why they were allowed to happen. Firstly, I asked him as to why there were such wide gaps in entrance fees for domestics and foreigners. He replied that such practices were common in India, and that it was present at all levels of exchange between domestics and foreigners. He put it simply; *“It is not like that, even the cycle-richaw walas, autowalas are charging too much. But I know what you mean; they need to educate more on this. It is changing now, but it will take time”*. The Uttar Pradesh Tourism officer also commented on the practice of overcharging and its prevalence in India. Specifically he said; *“some people in Delhi sell Rs 10,000 package tour for Rs 100,000. You know how they sell their packages. (He was about to tell me that but then stopped)”*

I presented my survey results to the Central Government Tourism officer and explained that there was overall negative satisfaction with the destination, and asked for his perspectives on initiating change towards a positive experience. He suggested:

*According to my experience what I feel is the economy of the lower class has to be improved first, the items should be affordable so that they have proper living standard and they do their work with honesty without any intention of extracting extra money from the tourists.*

The official revealed that he too was aware of existing inefficiencies between departments and that; *“there are so many things, you see, so many departments are involved. They all are interlinked and they all need to get their act together. Unless that is not happening, it is very hard to enhance the experience you see”*.

The Uttar Pradesh Tourism representative revealed the presences of a highly networked and interconnected scam that was in practice with foreign tourists. He maintains that these problems spring up from the Centre (New Delhi), and that many of these practices are well underway when the tourist departs from Delhi itself. This scam is in practice from the taxi drivers that a foreigner interacts with on arrival at Agra, all the way until ranking police officers. He stated; *“We do not have authority over it but higher authorities and police are responsible for this”*.

The scam involves taxi drivers paying bribes to police officers, which allow them to illegally operate in tourist areas. The police cannot be controlled and the representative revealed that; *“These officers dare to do anything, they can misbehave and for this reason we have complained so many times. Every month we used to write to police administration and it goes to higher authority as well”*. The representative is responsible for customer service and he witnessed numerous cases where foreigners who had been scammed out of all their money are left with no choice but to go to his office, since even the police are involved in such rackets.

He concludes:

*But police dept. is the one who is running away from their responsibilities, because their main goal is to make money. This is the reason we have lot of corruption here. You must meet DIG – Deputy Inspector General (police) and tell him about what’s going on.*

I attempted to meet the DIG but was unable to duly obtain an appointment. The Uttar Pradesh Tourism representative was highly disappointed with the system and stated that; *“Superintendent of Police railway is the main culprit. He is the one who is responsible for additional activities”*.

### **5.4.3 THEME 3 - SECURITY**

#### **5.4.3.1 OUTSIDE THE TAJ MAHAL (YELLOW ZONE)**

My research revealed that external security concerns and measures within a 500 meter radius of the Taj Mahal were delegated to the Uttar Pradesh Police and the Taj Surakhsa. I was informed that the Taj Mahal and its security are divided into two zones, namely Yellow Zone and Red Zone. The yellow zone includes the three gates of the Taj and areas in their vicinity. This space is manned by the Uttar Pradesh Police. Initially, I was unable to procure an interview with the officer in charge of security measures, so I had to interview a subordinate officer who was stationed outside the Taj Mahal. Along with the general security of the structure, and of tourists and visitors in the vicinity, the

Taj Suraksha representative shared that; *“We are posted here for the security of the barrier and see that no explosives are taken inside. Our duty is to check for any suspicious person, criminal or terrorist type”*.

One of the major concerns is the presence of beggars, touts, pick pockets and petty criminals in the vicinity. I questioned the Taj Suraksha representative as to why these individuals were allowed to carry on with their malpractices, to which he replied:

*But to remove these touts from the here are responsibility of local police. They have also opened a police station here nearby. Our duty is to just keep a check that no one carries any dynamites or explosives here. Local police checks crime and pickpockets. FIR is reported and all that.. We are from outside zone and our duty is at this barrier (check-post) only. These people (local police) are the one who are encouraging these hawkers and touts because they are also making money off them. What happens is, if a hawker makes INR 300 in a day, he will pay INR 200 to the local police as a bribe to allow him to continue his practices. See, this is all corruption. Corruption is making them do everything. Corruption is happening openly here, without any hesitation. India is full of it.*

There is general disregard for rules and regulations or even authorities in India, and most offences can be countered by a bribe, which shows that corruption is a common occurrence in India. It was disclosed during one interview that:

*Once three people on a bike were passing, no number on the motorbike, no registration papers or anything. So because this is against law, the traffic inspector stopped that motorbike and then it was made an issue by a local MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly). So for that small thing, he had the traffic inspector transferred. The officers who are honest and sincere towards their job, they don't let them do their work properly. All they want to happen is what they want. This is our politics.*

It must be noted that the responsibility of removing destitute persons from the vicinity does not lay with the security enforcement agencies. The Taj Suraksha is there solely for the protection of the Taj Mahal against terror attacks, vandals or malevolent persons. The guard at the check post informed me:

*If we get a letter from higher authority or ASI that these (hawkers, touts) have to be removed, within one minute we can do that. DIG/ SSP if orders us once, that these touts and beggar irritating the tourists, and we have to remove them, we'll take a quick action. But no, it's not in written anywhere and no orders are there for us as such.*

With the persons responsible for security measures having such a dismal outlook on the current situation, it is quite evident that change seems unlikely. This view is shared by the guards themselves, with one of them asking me; *“Sudhar kaise hoga? (How can there be any improvement?”* For tourists to gain satisfaction from the visit, every effort

should be made to remove annoyances from their experience. But there is a good deal of laxity and avoidance of responsibility with these issues. Although the Uttar Pradesh Police force and the Taj Suraksha should work in conjunction for the holistic security of the Taj, they are divided and do not work harmoniously. The same guard of the Taj Suraksha declared this with regard to the local police force:

*If any nuisance happens, just for humanity sake we go and rescue them but the real people who are responsible for this job (the local police), we don't see anyone here. But in the evening dot (exact) they'll be here to collect bribe money from these people.*

#### **5.4.3.2 INSIDE THE TAJ MAHAL (RED ZONE)**

The internal security concerns and measures have been delegated to the CISF (Central Industrial Security Force). They control and secure the Red Zone, which includes all areas inside the three gates. The CISF was included in the Taj protection program due to the rise of terrorism on a global scale, and with specific interest in escalating tensions between India and Pakistan. They manage the influx of tourists coming into the Taj, ensure orderly conduct and prevent any sabotage attempts on the monument. My interview with a senior security officer with the CISF revealed that they were required to take prompt action on any written complaints that they received. They also employ plain-clothes and undercover policemen and detectives to patrol the premises in order to eliminate any such threats. However it was discovered that there was a lack of co-ordination between departments even with regard to internal security. The representative shared:

*Here, I'll give you one example. Somewhere outside someone died at the spot where no one took the responsibility of the body. Departments responsible on one side of the line said its other department's responsibility and vice-versa. No one touched it till the time the issue got highlighted in the newspaper.*

This kind of attitude from the relevant authorities result in disorganization and such factors subtract from a holistic visitor experience. Another common occurrence is domestic visitors and locals harass foreigners and women by taking photographs of them when they are not aware of it. Although authorities are aware of this practice, the officer declared that; “*we don't have legal authority over that, we have to close our eyes, the power is with state police, they (tourists) have to give it in writing, fill in FIR (First Information Report) and then proper and quick action is taken*”. This is very detrimental to satisfaction because it should be natural for any law and order person to ensure the safety or comfort of a visitor within the premises, even though the

responsibility has not been delegated to them. This observation is in accord with the survey data recorded because security was one of the key areas of concern for visitors and the data analysis recorded negative gap values for all the attributes relating to security.

There are many malpractices and petty crimes that occur quite commonly in the premises, including pick-pocketing, eve-teasing, petty thievery, scamming and jumping queues. When interviewed about these subjects, the officer share that; with regard to pick-pockets “*we hand over to police and what happens they go in the jail and are released in two-three days.. they come back again*”. I was taken by surprise when the security officer himself warned me not to carry my passport around as it was unsafe.

Similarly, with regard to black-market selling of entry tickets:

*Yes, it is there, ADA (Agra Development Authority) system is involved. No quota is there to collect number of tickets. That should be there. What is happening here is that in a hotel when tourist arrives they are told about the huge line-up at the ticket counter and offered Rs20 ticket for Rs40. Hotel people buy tickets in bulk and earn profit. Also, every ticket should have e-number that this ticket was issued to so and so fellow on so and so date.*

He suggests that; “*Quota should be there. Not more than five tickets and in case of big group, they should give that in written*”.

One of the main concerns was in differentiating between domestic and foreign visitors. He maintained that although some were non-resident Indians, they still paid their income taxes to the Indian Government. He informed me that:

*It is not clear to differentiate between domestic and foreign tourists at times. ASI has to give us in writing that who all are permitted with local fees and Rs 750. What I mean is what type of people can come with Rs 20 and Rs 750. Indian or non-indian, resident or non-resident.*

The officer adds that the CISF face problems because of staff shortages. He mentions; “*we have already written the letter to higher authority about that. Because what happens is our people are in uniform and public approaches uniformed staff and in case of any trouble and there are only two or three uniformed staff inside.*” The officer is aware of the current situation at the Taj Mahal and how it was affecting tourist satisfaction levels. The officer said; “*I am aware of all the things which are happening here*”. In addition to this he shared a quote from a movie which was quite apt towards the context of corruption in India; “*I know you are doing wrong. Why I am not taking action against is because I know without it I cannot survive*”.

However, despite all this the officer appeared optimistic and shared; “*But it is becoming more efficient, system is changing*”. And he shared that if ownership of the Taj were to be transferred to private means, “*it would be taken care of as a diamond*”.

## **5.5 SUMMATION**

This chapter has explained the first-hand observations that were made during the field research phase. It presented the findings of the tourists’ survey to the reader, and compiled the demographic and behavioural characteristics of visitor profiles. The findings on the level of satisfaction experienced by tourists based on the three stages of the visit were then. My sample was composed of international tourists that visited the Taj Mahal and this chapter presented the findings of the quantitative survey. Firstly, it was noted that there wasn’t much difference in gender profiles of visitors because the respondents were 48% male and 52% female, and the majority of visitors were in the 20 to 30 years group with 45%, 35% in the 30 to 40 years category, 16% in the 40 to 50 category, 3% in the 50 to 60 category and 2% from the 60 + category. Most number of visitors were from Europe with 35% and 33% were from Asian countries (excluding India), while 16% were American, 7% were South American, 2% were African and 6% from other parts of the world. In occupational profiles, 31% were professionals, 21% were students or researchers, 17% were in business, 13% were in the government, 5% were retirees, 5% were homemakers, 3% were agrarians and 3% did not specify an occupation at all. The largest income group of the sample was in the USD 50,000 – 69,000 group with 27% followed by, USD 10,000 to 29,000 and USD 30,000 to 49,000 with 21% each, USD 70,000 to 89,000 with 19% and USD 90,000 to 109,000 with 4%.

My research aims to understand how the satisfaction attributes can ultimately lead to a better overall tourist experience, which would result in larger number of re-visits and recommendations, which in turn would help India and its economy prosper through tourism. My research shows that out of the 34 attributes presented to visitors at the Taj, they experienced confirmation with one attribute and positive confirmation with one attribute. The remaining 32 attributes all displayed negative disconfirmation values exceeding 0.00. This portrays overall negative disconfirmation for all the three stages of the visit (pre, during and post). It was observed that tourists experienced overall negative disconfirmation in the Pre-visit - Part i (-0.39), pre-visit – Part ii (-0.64); overall negative disconfirmation in during-visit stage (-0.92) and overall negative disconfirmation in the post-visit stage (-0.65). This gives us an overall negative disconfirmation reading of -0.80 for all the attributes during all three stages of the visit.

The second part of the chapter presented the findings of the interviews that were conducted with the managerial individuals of the Taj Mahal with respect to three themes that relate to the overall managerial responsibilities concerning maintenance/management/cleanliness; tourist facilities/promotions and security. The findings were presented according to themes relating to aspects with which the Taj was facing problems it was found that there was an increasing need for improving the level of collaboration between the relevant stakeholders. The collaborative measures can be improved by increasing the level of communication between stakeholders, and ensuring that the active interests of all stakeholders are given equal and unbiased importance. The redistribution of power and resource allocation between stakeholders would help the collaborative effort because there seems to be disparities in power distribution between them in the Taj management hierarchy.

This chapter presents the quantitative and qualitative data that was obtained following the in-field data collection and after-research analysis, thus addressing objective one and two of the research project. This paves the way for addressing objective three, which is an integrated perspective on the problems that are causing low levels of tourist's satisfaction, in relation to existing inefficiencies in the collaborative efforts between the stakeholders in the Taj management hierarchy. Chapter 6 will discuss the synthesis of objective one and two.

## **6 THE RETURN THRESHOLD/ THE ROAD BACK AND RESURRECTION/ DISCUSSION**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this part of the Hero's journey, he/she undertakes the journey back to his/her abode having acquired the knowledge that he seeks. Having received the knowledge, now he/she must find appropriate means to put his/her special knowledge to use (Campbell, 2008). This is similar to my research journey such that this is where I discuss the knowledge that was gathered in the field during my whole research period.

The purpose of this chapter is to address objective three - synthesize objectives one and two, through an overall discussion). In Chapter two the theoretical concepts and constructs of visitor satisfaction theory were presented; these form the foundation for addressing objective one (to understand the nature of international tourist experience at the Taj Mahal). Chapter two also presented the theoretical concepts and constructs of stakeholder and collaboration theory; these serve as the foundation in addressing objective two (to comprehend the holistic management situation at the Taj). Chapter five presented the data and findings that were derived from the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the field research period; these data form the subject matter leading to the discussion. This chapter thus aims to create links between the theoretical concepts and constructs outlined in Chapter two, and to the current tourist and management situation at the Taj Mahal. The findings presented in Chapter five provide the data from which to make inferences and trends about the tourists and their perspectives on visitor satisfaction, and also about the managers and their perspectives towards management of the Taj Mahal. Thus, it creates the foundation for the synthesis of objective one and two, leading to overall discussion.

This chapter specifically covers the theoretical and practical linkage of this research, discussing expectancy-disconfirmation theory and its implications for the tourist sample that were involved in the research process. This discussion leads into the managerial implications resulting from the current visitor satisfaction levels at the Taj during all the three stages of the visit (pre, during and post-visit experience). Furthermore, it describes the applicability of the stakeholder and collaboration concepts towards the current Taj Mahal management situation.

## **6.2 SYNTHESIS OF SATISFACTION ISSUES**

### **6.2.1 EXPECTATION DISCONFIRMATION**

Amongst existing literature and studies conducted on Agra and India as tourist destinations, the works of Chaudhary (2000); D'Silva & D'Silva (2008), Dwivedi (2008), Kulshrestha & Gautam (2010), Gupta & Gupta (2008) and Gupta (2008) have special relevance to my research question and objectives. This research aims for an in-depth understanding of the various attributes and factors that appealed to international tourists while viewing the Taj Mahal as a destination. The literature review indicated that there are inadequate studies conducted, on foreigners and their perceptions of the Taj Mahal as a destination. In accordance with my research, Dwivedi (2009) confirms that the Taj Mahal is a prominent destination in Indian tourism, and that India was perceived as a hassling experience for visitors.

My research aims to understand how the satisfaction attributes ultimately lead to a better overall tourist experience, which results in larger number of re-visits and recommendations, which will help India and its economy prosper through tourism. However, my research shows that, of the 34 attributes presented to visitors at the Taj, visitors experienced confirmation with regard to only 1 attribute; which is the boarding and lodging attribute. This attribute is an off-site attribute and does not reflect on the quality of the experience at the Taj Mahal, but of Agra city. Survey results showed that they experienced positive confirmation in only the 'waiting time in the line' attribute. The remaining 32 attributes all displayed negative disconfirmation values for all the three stages of the visit (pre, during and post).

It can be deduced that such negative readings for one of the most popular destinations will have an overall negative disconfirmation impact on tourism in India as a whole. India belongs to the developing nation's category and it is important that positive relationships with visitors are fostered. Gupta & Gupta (2008) explain that in a country where domestic expenditure on any form of tourism is high it will result in a higher level of incoming tourists. In a developing country, expansion of the tourism sector can have good rewards for its economic system. With regard to India, this requires a good deal of understanding of visitors and their psychological perceptions towards destinations by the Government of India, Tourism Boards and Offices, State Governments, Local Governments, law and order personnel, and the domestic residents. My observations in the field show that there is an attitude of non-cooperation and shifting responsibilities between these authorities with regard to all the issues that

resulted in the negative disconfirmation results visitors specified. Leask (2010) reinforces the need for customer feedback in order to improve the quality of visitors experience and attractions. Unless the managers are aware of the perspectives of the tourists, there is limited room for change. It is important that the efforts of researches pertaining to improvement of the visitors experience be made public and available to existing knowledge bases.

The survey revealed that tourists experienced maximum negative disconfirmation with the friendliness of gate staff ( $M = -0.74$ ), the lack of priority lanes ( $M = -0.61$ ) and with the clarity of guides ( $M = -0.61$ ) during the pre-visit stage; with the lack of pre-recorded audio station stops ( $M = -1.12$ ), with the lack of narrated visual presentations ( $M = -1.16$ ), with the lack of videotape presentations ( $M = -1.13$ ), with the poor upkeep of the public toilet facilities ( $M = -1.03$ ) and with the lack of a light and sound show ( $M = -1.78$ ) in the during visit stage; maximum negative disconfirmation was associated with the poor quality of information about next tourist destinations attribute ( $M = -0.90$ ).

As presented in chapter 3, the above areas of dissatisfaction in my research were found to have similar results in Gupta's study of Agra (Gupta, 2008). He tells us that Agra displays high rates of unemployment, bad infrastructural planning, ineffective police personnel, a lack of knowledge about the value of monuments within Agra, and poor transport facilities such as railway stations, bus stops. It is interesting to note that Agra is a center for tourism in India, yet there is no international airport in the city. Current literature on tourist satisfaction from a foreigners' perspective of India as the tourist destination is limited and pertains to India as a destination, and few studies relate to Agra as a tourist destination.

Of 34 attributes, tourists experienced positive dissatisfaction with regard to only one attribute, that is attribute # 14 'waiting time in the lane to enter' in the pre-visit (part ii) stage. It was found that there was a positive disconfirmation of 0.16, which signifies that tourists expected less than they perceived at the end. This is explained by the fact that most foreign visitors viewed the Taj Mahal during sunrise timings, when the influx of local visitors was less, thereby reducing the lengths of lines. It was also found that they experience confirmation (or equality between expectations and satisfaction) with regard to only 'boarding and lodging' facilities. All the remaining attributes were found to be in negative disconfirmation, which would naturally result in an overall negative disconfirmation with regard to the whole experience. This explains why the perception

of Taj Mahal as a tourist destination is poor. The whole system of visitor satisfaction works as a vicious cycle, where quality of services, employee motivation, tourist satisfaction and tourist feedback are highly related. When one of the factors is lacking, it results in the overall experience lacking.

It was found that tourists experienced maximum dissatisfaction (negative disconfirmation) with the lack of light and sound show ( $M = -1.78$ ) followed by narrated visual presentation ( $M = -1.16$ ), videotape presentation ( $M = -1.13$ ) and pre-recorded audio station stop ( $M = -1.12$ ). The tourists experienced negative disconfirmation because these services were totally lacking at the Taj Mahal. As discussed in chapter two, Leask (2010) informs us that tourists don't mind spending additional amounts in order to improve the quality of their experience, in fact, heritage tourists are the main source of funding for these sites. It is strange that little effort is being made on behalf of the managerial individuals to improve the number of services available to them. An increase in the number of attractions and services would encourage tourists to support the destination.

One of the main practices rampant in Agra is that of corruption. There is a high degree of lawlessness and unfair practices, and the relevant authorities do nothing to prevent it. This is a source of major dissatisfaction for visitors and it is slowly becoming ingrained into the destination image of India. Tourists make their destination image based on secondary sources such as the internet, free and easily available information determine much of the initial stages of the visit. Adequate and symmetric information must be available detailing correct information. According to Dwivedi (2009), many negative associations were made with India during the preparation of the destination image, with words such as nightmare etc. being used to describe India. My study conforms to his findings because it was observed that due to the kind of experiences tourists had with touts, beggars and scammers there, it was a hassling experience for them.

My study confirms with the findings of Pizam, et al. (1978) where they concluded that if the quality of services at any point during the three stages of visit (pre, during, post) exceeded that of the tourists perceived notions, it would result in satisfaction on departure and vice-versa. In my study it was found that the quality of services were so far behind standard, that tourists left fully dissatisfied with the experience, and a large portion of them would result in poor recommendation and no re-visits.

## **6.2.2 TOURISTS' SATISFACTION**

Richards (2002) as cited in Zhou (2005) remark that the two main attractions in a destination exist physical tourist attractions and the attributes that relate to the destination. In the many studies conducted on visitor satisfaction and how tourists perceive the destination, attributes of the destination are of great importance. Attributes are the characteristics of the destination that add or subtract from the total visitor experience, and influence the level of satisfaction the tourist derives from the visit, and according to which the tourist rates the destination and the services available in it. Attributes allow tourists to create a platform on which they compare the expected level of satisfaction to the actual level of satisfaction derived during all three stages of the visit. According to Zhou (2005), a tourist selects the potential destination based on their current knowledge of its attributes.

When tourists embark on a journey, they have certain expectations of what is to come, which is the destination image. However, the reality in Agra is far from what is advertised. The annoyances of beggars, inefficient train systems and the filthiness of the public space actually describe the unhappiness that these tourists have. For this research, I compiled a list of 34 attributes that are relevant to determining the causes of and levels of satisfaction for tourists at the Taj Mahal. These attributes were categorized according to the stages during the visit (pre, during and post) and tourists were asked to rank them according to a Likert-scale with ratings of five (where one was the lowest and five was the highest).

### **6.2.2.1 PRE-VISIT EXPERIENCE**

#### **6.2.2.1.1 PRE-VISIT (I) EXPERIENCE**

Local transportation includes forms of transport such as public town buses, inter-city public buses, and inter-state public buses; the Indian Railways network, public taxis and auto rickshaws. The expansion and growth in local transportation facilities has had an increasing effect on tourism levels (Sorupia, 2005). Local transport is an integral component of any tourist destination as it determines the ease with which tourists have access to the site, in and around the destination and to other attractions or cities. It has been observed that the quality of local transport facilities, ease of usage and the availability of local transport options have a good degree of influence over satisfaction levels derived during the visit; over the overall experience and they also determine whether the visit will result in a recommendation or a re-visit. This is particularly important for foreign tourists, as they are more dependent on local transport systems.

The responsibility of public transport in Agra belongs to the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transportation Corporation, which operates the public buses network throughout Uttar Pradesh state, and it also has buses that run interstate routes. Additionally, the railways network in India is managed and operated by the Government of India through its Indian Railways Board. This organization is responsible for inter-state journeys, intercity trains and inter-town trains. Lastly, taxis and auto rickshaws are controlled and operated by government authorities as well as private owners.

The problems with these forms of transport are that they face intermittent delays regularly, and this throws off the schedules and plans of many of the foreign travellers. Additionally, it was observed that there were gaps in communication between foreigners and the relevant information centres at public transport stands. Thirdly, the unscrupulous attitudes of vehicle operators toward foreigners make them feel victimized and uncomfortable, which definitely affects satisfaction. As mentioned by several managers that I had interviewed, they are all aware of the practice of local transport agents cheating foreigners and the Government of India Tourism Officer conveyed that *“It is not like that, even the cycle-richaw walas, autowalas are charging too much”*.

Similarly, traffic conditions determine the amount of time required to reach the destination through any form of transport (whether public or private). The quality of traffic conditions is determined by the level of infrastructural expenditure and planning services in the destination. A key issue in destination management is in efficiently providing accessibility to and travel from tourist zones (Gupta, 2008). By itself, the traffic conditions at a destination have limited effect, however, but in conjunction with poor local transportation facilities, the level of overall satisfaction declines more.

Accommodation is a necessity during a visit to a destination. The attribute chosen for this survey refers to the quality of accommodation facilities available, the pricing structure and hygiene and sanitation within the facility. Due to the growth in tourism levels, the numbers of accommodation facilities have also grown. In Agra there are two associations that regulate accommodation and stay facilities for tourists. The Guild behaves as the representative for tourism in Agra, and represents the top hotels, wining and dining facilities and the various handicraft emporiums of Agra. The Hotel and Restaurant Association works alongside the Guild in maintenance and provision of accommodation for tourists. I observed that both organizations had encounters with domestic as well as international visitors.

Easily available and affordable luxury hotels, motels, backpacker facilities, rooms-for-hire and lodges are very important to the selection process of a tourist and also popularize the destination. A wide range of accommodation facilities increases the satisfaction among a wider range of tourists since all tourists do not share the same economic profile. Ispas et al. (2010) observes that a destination with satisfactory facilities will create a sense of comfort within the tourist and would mostly result in re-visit. The affordability is a key factor with regard to the Taj Mahal as most tourists there were observed to be backpacker style foreign tourists and they require low budget rooms. There is easy access of budget stay options, but the standard of maintenance of some of them is appalling. However, this research found that tourists recorded confirmation in the accommodation attribute, which was in the pre-visit (i) phase. The management of accommodation facilities is outside the realm of Taj Mahal management because it rests with the Uttar Pradesh Government, and has nothing to do with the experience tourists have at the Taj Mahal. The cleanliness and sanitation of these facilities is important as unclean environments deduct from overall satisfaction (Ispas et al., 2010). Many tourists complained of pest-infested rooms, poor condition of toilets and bed lice infested beds. Such conditions are not the conditions that people wish to live in after spending their money to travel and come there, and it negatively affects overall satisfaction.

My survey results for this attribute showed a gap analysis of zero, or confirmation amongst tourists. What this means is that the tourists received exactly the level of satisfaction that they initially expected in terms of boarding and lodging. This is likely because of the advertisement of cheap accommodation facilities at Agra. Although there were cases where tourists were dissatisfied with boarding facilities, according to the number of respondents, my survey showed confirmation amongst them as a whole.

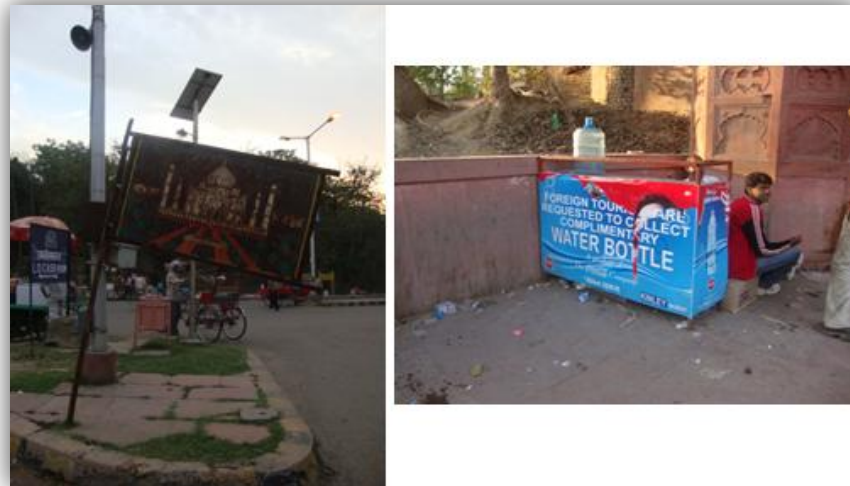
Often, when tourists embark to a foreign destination, they are not fully informed about factors such as existing local conditions, attractions, transport means, accommodation facilities and security factors. So they require tourist information centers; which act as the interactive body that links the tourist to the offerings of the destination. Tourist information centers can result in shaping the tourists experience, as they can give a full insight into what all is available in terms of activities and leisure and their recommendations may result in an extended and more enjoyable trip. There are three Tourism Offices in Agra, which are run by the State Government of Uttar Pradesh and its Tourism Board and the Government of India Tourism Office. They are the Office of

Uttar Pradesh Tourist Board on Taj Road, the Government of India Tourism Office at the Mall and the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Reception Counter at the Agra Cantonment Railway Station, which are located central to public transport facilities (Government of UP, 2011). This research showed that the respondents experienced maximum dissatisfaction with this attribute in the first pre-visit stage. The gap analysis showed a value of 0.51, which means that the tourists got lesser than they had initially expected. Because most of the foreign visitors come from countries where information is available easily for visitors and residents, but when they are in a foreign destination and are unable to entail such services, causes distress and dissatisfaction.

The availability of clear signage that may be used for direction purposes to and from the destination, and within the site is essential to direct visitors efficiently so that they do not waste time. With regard to the Taj Mahal, it is observed that there is no proper signage along the Yamuna front. Signs are few and only refer to major sites such as Fatehpur Sikri, Taj Mahal and Sikandara. On presenting the observation that adequate signage was not present in and around the Taj Mahal, to the ASI official, he was in agreement. He informed me that although planning was undertaken to ensure that signage was there, leading to, and around the premises clearly designating sites as a cultural or a protected site, but it was not practical to have signage everywhere.

This is understandable as departments work on limited budgets, and signage is not considered a priority to them. It was also observed during the field research that even existing signs were of poor quality and showed lack of maintenance (Figure 6.1). It is not necessary for numerous signs to be present leading to, and within the Taj Mahal, however, the signs that are there already should at least be maintained properly and provide clear information to foreign tourists.

**Figure 6.1: Signs at the Taj Mahal**



Drummond & Yeoman (2001) also maintain that appropriate directional signage to the site is an important component of visitor satisfaction, and the responsibility of providing them rests with the relevant managers. With this in mind, it is quite apparent that lack of signage is one of the reasons for reduced satisfaction amongst foreigners. Managers seem to avoid responsibility for the small details of the visit, but it is these little details that add up to a holistic visitor experience. Leask (2010) maintains that managers are the ones responsible for meeting performance targets and they play the pivotal role of holding the project together. This is clearly lacking in the case of the Taj Mahal.

One of the basic requirements at any site is accessibility to public toilets and drinking water before entering the premises. This is natural because visitors maybe dehydrated or need to visit the toilet before or after entering the site. The ADA official that I interviewed informed me that such facilities were in fact available at the entrance vicinity, portable toilets at the entrances and toilets at the parking lots. However, I first hand observed that these toilets were in the poorest of sanitary conditions and that the portable ones were kept under lock and key often (Figure 6.2).

**Figure 6.2: Public restrooms at the car park of the Taj Mahal**



#### **6.2.2.1.1 PRE-VISIT (ii) EXPERIENCE**

An important determinant of satisfaction levels amongst tourists is the reception they receive from the staff at the destination and how friendly they are. Tourists judge the quality of staff based on a variety of factors such as friendliness, knowledge, behavior and promptness of delivery. At the Taj Mahal, tourists are exposed to staff at the ticketing counters and at the entrance gates. It is observed that the staff at the Taj Mahal are irate and less than friendly towards tourists and seem to be in a great hurry to get done with the never ending queue of incoming ticket buyers.

My personal experience with the ticketing staff was quite a rude one. One day as I approached the ticket counter, one of the staff inside asked me to produce my identification document. However, at that time I was not carrying any form of photo id with me, because I thought as an Indian, I would not be required to carry any with me (I left it behind in my hotel room under lock for safety purposes). I found it very strange that he would ask me for id as I was conversing with him in Hindi, and fluently too. So I informed him that I was not carrying and id with me, and immediately he retorted “*does your passport weight two or three kilos or what, that you can’t carry it?*” Now, as an Indian who spoke the same language as him, he could be so rude to me, so imagine the state of a foreigner who would not even be able to converse with the ticket staff? Lovelock et al (1998) clearly identify that negative experiences with staff have a direct effect on satisfaction levels of visitors. Similarly, the tourists encounter customer service and security staff at the three entrance gates as well. Here guards body search and frisk the visitors and enforce that nothing other than one bottle of mineral water

may be carried through into the premise, which is inconvenient because they have to travel additional one-two kilometers to actually reach the mausoleum (“Why it’s Ah! Taj for foreign tourists”, 2010).

Another official explained that since their department was understaffed, often the current workers were highly overworked, which in the long run resulted in them becoming lazy, cutting corners and sluggish behavior. The system has become so adjusted to these patterns of life that often people do not wish to change it, or get out of their comfort zones. This along with a lack of strong hold from management results in staff members being able to get away with rude behavior. In India, there is a tourism advertisement campaign with the slogan “Atithi Devo Bhava” which translates as, the guest is God. However, this slogan does not reflect the actual perspective towards foreign tourists. As discussed in chapter two, Leask (2010) identified staffing and related problems as an impediment to effective management.

One of the main factors that influence foreign tourist satisfaction at the Taj Mahal is the difference in prices between local and foreign tourists. A domestic tourist from India pays an entry fee of INR 20 (NZD 0.59), while a foreigner pays a sum of INR 750 (NZD 22.06). Although both are being subjected to the same sights, monument and visitation conditions; why does this system of price differentials exist? This implies that international visitors would experience negative disconfirmation because, on knowing that the relative value of the visit is only INR 20, their psyche would feel overcharged. According to Leask (2010) this situation occurs because of declining public funding and increasing pressures of operations, however, she does also say that tourists would be willing to pay these differential prices as long as they receive improved attractions and services.

This difference has been the cause of reduced satisfaction with many of the foreign visitors. The governments’ perspective is clear that they intend to profit on revenue earned through foreigners, and it is understandable that they prefer subsidies in favour of their own citizens (Krishnan, 2008). It must be pointed out that it is not only foreign tourists who are overcharged, even Indian tourists who are based in foreign countries, or don’t blend in with the stereotype of a “typical Indian” are subject to the same. It is a differential pricing system, as often security personnel cannot always differentiate between domestic residents and foreigners. Sometimes, foreign nationals are mistaken for Indians and allowed at the domestic rate, and vice-versa. This differential system of

pricing definitely causes negative satisfaction with regards to some visitors. One irate visitor commented on my survey form *“We travel half way around the world to visit this, and then asked to pay 35 times more than an Indian. In England, you would be arrested for this racism”*.

When foreigners become aware that they are being overcharged it often induces higher levels of dissatisfaction among them, and my research showed that it was with this attribute that visitors experienced maximum dissatisfaction on arrival at the Taj because it is they are the ones who are promoting Indian tourism, because of foreign exchange and trade. Leask (2010) provides explanations for this by saying that destinations and sites are often victims of declining public funding, so they may need to source this extra revenue through means of pricing and fees. Now she says that the tourists would be willing to pay incremental fees, but only on the grounds that the quality of their experience and services are improving as well. Now this is where the problem lies at the Taj Mahal, the foreign visitors are being charged additional fees, but the quality of their experience is not improving in lieu of their expectations.

When this was presented to the managers during the interview, they responded that the costs were justified because the foreigners were provided with exceptional facilities and quality of services. However, the ADA manager told me that the entrance fees which were paid by foreigners constituted the majority of funding that was used for cleanliness and maintenance projects by ASI and ADA. Another ADA manager justified that although this seems like a large sum relative to the Indian Rupee, it was a small sum when compared to the relative costs of travel in developed foreign destinations. The bottom line is that the reason there is the disparity in entry fees is because it is the entrance fees collected that are funding the majority of maintenance costs at the Taj Mahal, and the practice of overcharging the foreigner is inbuilt into the system in India.

Attributes relating to the quality of guides available, level of training, degree of communication between visitors, clarity and the services they provide have a high degree of influence on overall satisfaction. In order to provide a holistic tour experience for visitors, the tour guides must be friendly, honest, well informed, coherent and clear. Prakash and Chowdhary (2008) state that the guides are responsible for representing the country and the destination, providing correct facts, and guaranteeing the safety and protection of tourists and ensuring their satisfaction. These characteristics ensure that the visitor gains something valuable from the visit and thus increases satisfaction. With

regard to heritage tourism, visitors come from niche backgrounds and are very interested in the historical and cultural backgrounds of the site.

Often foreigners are subjected to petty scams and small-scale extortion. They are charged exorbitant rates for less than average tours to gain a quick profit from a less informed foreigner. There are also linguistic differences which prevent some foreigners from gaining a holistic experience. Eight Oscar Award winner, *Slumdog Millionaire* in 2009 (David, 2011), shows us a story of two struggling boys from the slums of Mumbai, who reach the Taj Mahal and pose as tour guides mainly to fleece foreign tourists. The movie shows us how they provide substandard and uninformed tours to the foreigners, and often indulge in practices such as stealing shoes and valuables.

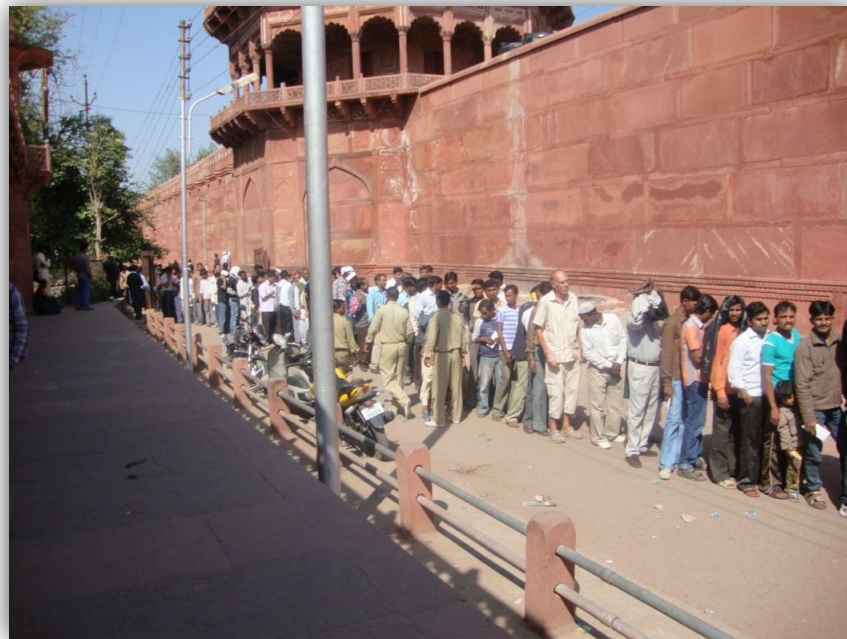
My research showed that visitors experienced dissatisfaction with the training of guides; degree of interpretation for visitors; the clarity of presentations and the level of interaction between them. I recorded gap scores of 0.51, 0.50, 0.61 and 0.56 respectively. This indicates that the visitors had expected a much better level of guide services in lieu of the mentioned attributes; however the services provided were not up to par. The managers I interviewed attributed this gap in expected and perceived satisfaction to the presence of “stay guides”. These are undocumented guides who claim permission to continue as guides only because they have been practicing this profession from their youths, and are not trained to be guides. One of the reasons for a high level of expected satisfaction is because of the level of advertisement of tours, guides and packages over the Internet, which is not fulfilled ultimately.

One aspect that must be taken into consideration at all destinations and sites is that they must be accessible to everyone. It must be taken into account that some people are born, or develop differently-abled than others. There must be adequate provision for entry and exit of these individuals by means of ramps or specially marked pathways. These people should be allowed priority access as with any other service provided to the public. Additionally, foreign tourists ought to be provided priority access too instead of having to wait in the long queues because of the entry fees that they pay.

However, my observations show that there is no such priority treatment given to anyone. Although there is a specially marked VIP entrance (East Gate) for foreigners, it is not followed by anyone, neither enforced by security. This results in foreigners having to wait in the same queues despite the additional entry fees they pay (Figure 6.3). My research shows that expectations for a priority lane for disabled and foreign

tourists were high, but lack of it reduces satisfaction. A tourist account shows us *“I went to the Taj Mahal Palace in Agra last year. While the Indian rate was close to zero, foreigners had to pay a staggering amount to enter”* (Canton, 2009). Survey results describe that visitors experienced dissatisfaction with this attribute as well. The gap analysis recorded a score of 0.61. This is understandable because the foreigners are aware of the fact that they are paying the excess in entrance fees, yet they still have to stand in long queues like other visitors. Upon questioning the ASI officer about this, he said that there was such provision of priority lane at the East Gate, but not at the West Gate, because foreigners preferred using the East entrance; this statement cannot be supported by any evidence.

**Figure 6.3: International and domestic tourists in the same queue**



The amount of time that tourists spend in queues before they are permitted to enter the Taj Mahal is another cause of dissatisfaction. The queue is never-ending, which starts from when opening hours until closing time. It contains every tourist (whether domestic or foreign) that wishes to enter the premises. There are queues at all the three entrance gates and it could take anything between one to four hours before access is granted.

Foreign tourists experience dissatisfaction because they are subjected to these long waits, in climatic conditions, which they are not acclimatized to. Accounts from various tourists describe this; one tourist tells us that *“If you go to the Taj Mahal, make sure you use the south or east entrance instead of the west. The west is the busiest, where most people are dropped off and therefore the lines are massive!; while another tells us *“The**

*heat and length of time we all had to wait (in my case three hours) led to many rows between foreigners in the queue, with various groups accusing the others of queue jumping” (Canton, 2009)*

Although visitors experienced negative satisfaction due to the lack of priority lanes at the entrance gates, it was surprising to note that they experience positive satisfaction or confirmation regarding the waiting time in lines. I recorded a gap value of -0.16 for this attribute, and it may seem contradictory to the results of the previous attribute gap analysis, but on further investigation, I discovered that this occurred because most of the foreign visitors I surveyed were in the practice of arriving at the Taj Mahal early in the morning to view the Taj during sunrise. At this time the influx of other visitors is limited and often they are able to breeze through lines quicker than at other times of the day. Another reason why sunrise viewing of the Taj is popular is because it is one of the most advertised features of tour packages.

The cleanliness and presentation of the entrance to tourists is an important part of the aesthetic perception of tourists. A clean entrance is a reflection of clean and well-maintained premises. However, there is total disregard for cleanliness on behalf of domestic tourists as well as staff (Figure 6.4). Since tourists are not allowed to carry food items inside, they end up just dumping them outside of the entrance gates and there are no effective measures taken to ensure this is cleaned up. Such garbage disposal attracts stray dogs and other vagrant animals, which again adds to an unsightly show.

**Figure 6.4: Litter at the main entrance gates and open sewerage close to VIP East Gate**



Survey results for this attribute revealed dissatisfaction. On presenting this fact to the ASI officer, he rebutted by saying that the responsibility of cleanliness belonged to ASI;

it was because of the security staff that confiscated food items at the entrance that it was dirty. He also added that, if the mess is cleaned up, it's only a short period of time before the garbage accumulates again. When I presented my results to the CISF officer who was responsible for frisking visitors as to why they practiced un-aesthetic disposal of the food wastes, he countered by saying that cleanliness was not his department's responsibility, but that of ASI. This shows that although both the bodies are working for the same site, they experience poor co-operation levels that results in the poor satisfaction levels.

Only if tourists are aware of the rules within the premises can they behave accordingly. There are signs around the premises which indicate the “do's and don'ts” within, but these signs are given no regard by domestic tourists. There are many signs showing that the grass is strictly off-limits, but many domestic visitors lounge on the grass beds, click photographs and chatter loudly (Figure 6.5).

**Figure 6.5: Tourists inside the Mughal gardens taking pictures in front of ‘do not enter the garden’ sign**



This attribute also showed that visitors experienced dissatisfaction and recorded a gap value of 0.52. One of the reasons I observed why visitors experienced this poor satisfaction was because often they come from countries, which have clear signage at every destination in clear print and language. However, many signs at the Taj are mostly in Hindi, and the grammatical constructs of their translations are poor (Figure 6.6).

**Figure 6.6: Misleading signs inside the Taj Mahal**



#### ***6.2.2.2 DURING VISIT EXPERIENCE***

Cleanliness and proper maintenance of any destination or site is necessary because if a site is not clean and maintained, it has a deep psychological impact on its visitors. My survey recorded a gap value of 0.34 for the cleanliness aspects of the Taj. This shows that the tourists had expected a much cleaner environment and experience (Figure 6.7). I observed that the reason for this kind of unclean environment was because of the lack of regard for the environment and surroundings in the Indian mentality.

The Mughal gardens are a main attraction at the Taj Mahal, and have an important part in the aesthetic value of the site. It was observed that tourists experienced negative satisfaction with regard to this attribute too. I observed that although there were signs all around the grass saying that it was off limits, but there were many groups of domestic visitors who were lounging and relaxing on the greens. The maintenance of the Mughal gardens belongs to the Department of Horticulture which functions under ASI. The survey observed a gap difference of 0.41 for this attribute. When I presented this to the official with the Department of Horticulture, he informed me that maintenance of the gardens (grass and plants) was highly dependent on water and power supplies, and that Agra faced shortages in both according to seasons, especially in summer months. He maintained that they maintained the gardens as well as resources permitted. This is understandable because Agra is a highly industrialized city, and the power requirements to sustain industries itself are very high. Agra city is subjected to government warranted and unwarranted power cuts, where the power supply is turned off for periods of time for conservation purposes.

**Figure 6.7: Litter inside the Taj Mahal**



The survey revealed that visitors experienced dissatisfaction with there being mass crowding at various parts of the Taj premises (Figure 6.8). The survey recorded a gap value of 0.26 for this attribute and I personally observed that there were specific zones where excessive crowds collected. One of the main reasons domestic visitors came to the Taj was to view the tombs of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal; there is only one entrance to the tomb, which everyone has to pass through. The entrance is very narrow and often gets overcrowded; which results in more waiting in queues. There is no separate lane for any visitor; another long wait within the premises to see the main attraction of the destination would definitely result in further dissatisfaction. Another reason that reduced satisfaction for visitors is that the entrance is a closed structure and offers no ventilation; this coupled with the hot and humid climate, and the permeating smell of body odors in the passage result in a higher level of dissatisfaction.

**Figure 6.8: Over-crowded and long queues to enter the dome**



Leask (2010) tells us that attractions in a site will definitely increase the quality of the experience, and that efforts must be made to include them into the visitor's experience. I observed that pre-recorded audio stations would be a tool which enhances the overall tourist experience thereby raising satisfaction, hence was included as an attribute in my survey design. These allow for well-informed short presentations on all aspects of the destination and sites. However, during my interviews with managerial persons, I was informed that the audio guide system was to be implemented the week following my interview. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) encouraged the system for installation. The ASI official interviewed with regard to this attribute also confirmed that plans to initiate this system at the Taj had already been started and *"The paper work is in progress. International company will be doing the work. We have given the plan"*. However, the president of the Agra Tourist Guide Association, Samsuddin Shah tells us that they fear for the loss of the essence of the Taj due to excess commercial activity is such systems were initiated (*"Audio system at Taj disappoints its lovers"*, 2011). I feel that tour guides fear that they would face displacement and losses in career options if such a system were to be implemented. However, measures taken to enhance the tourist experience will always result in higher satisfaction levels.

Narrated visual presentations and recorded videotape presentations were important attributes that influence the satisfaction levels that tourists may experience at a site. Visual presentations have a wider reach into the market and can be understood by anyone regardless of the literacy level. However, there are currently no provisions or plans to incorporate these virtual guides show at the Taj. They would be beneficial to

the tourist experience and help them gain a deeper understanding of the site. During the time of survey, it was noted that the sound and light/musical shows were not a part of the tourist experience at the Taj, which resulted in the lowest gap value of 1.78 between all the attributes. The ASI manager provided clear and logical reasoning as to why it was discontinued (as discussed in chapter 5 – Findings).

Another form of a light and sound show was introduced in order to promote the history of the Taj Mahal and showcase Indian culture and art. However, this show does not take place on the premises of the Taj. It was organized by the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Board, and was a show, which features around seventy Indian artists, and is a spectacle of lights and music. The show is meant to popularize Indian culture around the world, and it serves to attract both domestic and foreign visitors (“Light and Sound show revived to draw tourists to Agra”, 2010). This is a positive step taken by the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Board towards increasing visitor numbers and cultural extravaganzas such as light and sound shows increase the visitor’s experience thereby raising satisfaction levels.

Every site must provide basic amenities such as clean water for drinking and a number of public restrooms. The Taj Mahal has provisions for filtered drinking water that is available at the East and West gates. Similarly, the Taj Mahal has public toilets, which flank both sides of the main entrance. The good thing is that domestic residents are charged to use these facilities, but foreigners can use it for free. Indians are charged because some people are known to have poor toilet habits, and disregard keeping a restroom that doesn’t belong to them clean. Foreigners on the other hand, are considered cleaner. This is not a generalizing statement, but that is what one of the guards at the Taj Mahal informed me.

The Taj Mahal website claims that foreign tourists are allowed to use the facilities for free, but the reality is that even foreigners are charged. Although they are supposed to be charged only INR 2 (NZD 0.06), because that is what domestic tourists pay, the entire principle is wrong. I observed first hand, that outside the public toilets, there is an attendant posted there (Figure 6.9). He has a cash tray that includes American dollars of all denominations, when a foreigner is seeing leaving the restrooms, the attendant makes a slight gesture towards the box, as though hinting the visitor pay a price, and whatever they pay goes into the attendant’s pocket.

In one of my interviews, I questioned one of the managers as to why it was advertised as free toilet service for foreigners, but they were actually paying for it. He laughed and told me, there was a similar case where a foreigner had written a formal complaint to management and had given photographs depicting the poor condition of the toilets. This action from the foreigner resulted in the entire staff being sacked and replaced, and the contract for toilet maintenance was transferred to Sulabh International, which is a sanitation and hygiene organization in India. The ASI officer mentioned that he was obliged to take action only if formal written complaints were given.

**Figure 6.9: Drinking water and public restroom areas inside the Taj Mahal**



Security within the Taj Mahal is an important attribute to visitor satisfaction. Often petty criminal activities such as pick pocketing, scams and thievery take place. There is tight security within the Taj Mahal who enforce the rules and regulations within. Although all the rules are not given apt importance, regulations concerning electronic items, food and drink (with exception to water), smoking, weapons and vandalism are strictly enforced. It was observed that security within the Taj premises was adequate.

Since the Taj Mahal is a Muslim mausoleum, any kind of footwear is not allowed within. Tourists are given the choice of either removing footwear, or wearing a protective covering over them, which can be purchased from staff itself. However, the practice of stealing foreigners' shoes because of brand value is quite common at the Taj, which proves to be a disincentive to removing ones shoes at the Taj. One tourist accounts that:

*“India is tough, really tough, and we almost bailed out after getting my shoes stolen at the Taj Mahal in Agra the other day. I had to walk back barefoot until*

*the pavement got to hot and we picked up a bicycle rickshaw... The shoe stores pay someone to steal your shoes and then wait for you to pop in and buy a new pair” (Angie, 2006)*

The Taj Mahal is a declared a no-fly zone, which bans any aerial vehicle from passing over it. This came in light of the increases in terrorism on a global scale and due to escalating tensions between India and Pakistan; it was reviewed that the Taj Mahal was a potential site for terror attacks (“Security tightened around Taj Mahal”, 2006). This resulted in an increase in security personnel and measures. Currently there are one hundred and eighty one Central Industrial Security Force personnel that guard the Taj against any such attack. These forces are supported by additional dog squads as well as electronic equipment (“Taj Mahal’s security may be stepped up”, 2008).

In order to overcome linguistic differences, measures have been taken to post only English speaking policemen in the Taj vicinity so that any complaints or problems for foreign tourists maybe dealt with ease (“Taj Mahal to be safer, more tourist friendly in 2009”, 2009). This shows that security is present within the Taj; however a case of a missing domestic tourist caused some ripples in India. The man reported missing on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 2010 was unable to be tracked, even though accompanied by family members. However, it was reported, *“The CCTV cameras at the Taj gates were not functioning or we would have known if at all he left the gates”* (“Kolkata tourist goes missing from Taj”, 2011).

Despite the presence of security forces and personnel within the premises, there is still a high level of petty criminal activity taking place inside. Cases of pickpocket activity, minor sexual harassment and eave-teasing, hidden photography and scamming take place frequently. Strangely, the security personnel are aware of such practices too, but the CISF officer I interviewed shared that unless specific written complaints were received, they were not obligated to take action. He said *“we don’t have legal authority over that, we have to close our eyes, the power is with state police”*. This is the same attitude that is prevalent between managers with regard to inter-department responsibility. They all say that the responsibility belongs to the other department and that they cannot proceed unless stated in writing. This explains why visitors would experience negative satisfaction because safety is a key attribute in a visit. The survey results for this attribute obtained a gap value of 0.61, which implies that security managers provide inadequate services than expected.

### **6.2.2.3 POST-VISIT EXPERIENCE**

Sommez and Graefe (2007) as cited in Boakye (2011) tell us that safety is the most attractive factor to a tourist when deciding on a potential destination. Tourists expect that they and their belongings will be safe because loss of property in a foreign country is a big hassle. There are numerous reports of foreign tourists being subjected to criminal activities in India. According to the World Economic Forum (2007), India placed 39<sup>th</sup> in the world tourism leader board with regard to safety (Blanke & Chiesa, 2011). For a country that has a booming tourist sector, and houses so many sites of natural and cultural value, this is a poor ranking. With the availability of information via the Internet, potential tourists can access information like this at the click of a button. A ranking as low as this creates a negative destination image and would result in dropping numbers.

It is a common phenomenon for foreigners to get scammed in India; foreigners are at a disadvantage because they are unable to comprehend the native tongues and are unaware of how things work. From the minute they step out of the bus stop, or train station, numerous taxi-drivers, auto-drivers and other “transport” agents flock to the herds of foreign tourists and offer them the cheapest rates to a destination. Most transport systems in India are metered, and decide the fare by distance travelled. A common practice is to take the tourists on an all-Agra tour, to cover a distance, which would take about five minutes. This increases the meter reading, and it is like getting paid five times what would be the normal price.

Another common occurrence is for entire tourist belongings to be stolen from rigged hotel rooms. Although the rooms are kept under lock and key, these rooms can easily be opened by frauds. Unsuspecting tourists leave valuables such as passports, cash and electronic goods behind in their rooms for safekeeping, but come back to find they have been looted. There is a big black market in India for foreign passports. Once stolen, there is not much action taken on behalf of local authorities since there are much bigger crimes going on which they have to dedicate their time to.

The movie *Slumdog Millionaire* clearly shows how scam-artists and petty criminals operate around the Taj Mahal. The two boys shown in the movie travel all the way up to Agra from Mumbai, by illegally hitching rides on public trains. On arrival there, they soon devise a series of petty crimes, which aid them in their survival. Firstly, they scam foreign tourists by posing as tour guides. The ignorance of one of the boys is shown when he claims “*Mumtaz Mahal died in a horrible car accident on the way to deliver*

*her son*”. Another scam they indulge in is stealing branded foreign shoes from the outside of the Taj Mahal (since shoes are not permitted inside) and selling them as luxury goods in the local bazaar. A more complicated crime they pull off is when they lure two foreigners into the central laundry area, and while showing them around, accomplices strip down the Mercedes-Benz that brought them there, down to its bare structure. The parts acquired are then sold on the black market (David, 2011). This movie only shows a little of what actually occurs in India. Foreigners are often viewed as gold mines waiting to be exploited and are referred to as “firangis” (which means white skinned)

On a more serious level, there are accounts of malicious criminal activities such as rape, robbery, sexual harassment and cheating. The most famous case was when two Japanese tourists were allegedly gang-raped by three Indian men (“Two Japanese tourists gang-raped in Agra”, 2007). Following this case, a special branch was opened in Agra only to handle tourist complaints, known as the “Tourist Thana”, but they have done little to improve the scenario.

A larger scale scam has been brought to light recently with regard to the Taj Mahal and related officials. The then Chief Minister, Mayawati was accused of money laundering and embezzlement charges by the Central Bureau of Investigation in 2003. It is estimated that she was responsible for INR 1.1 crores (NZD 294,117.65) worth of embezzlement, however no solid charges have been pressed due to existing corruption within the Indian judicial and legislative system.

One of the reasons why the situation is so bad is due to the high level of corruption amongst Indian law and order authorities. Foreigners are seen as a source of extra “dollar” income and often authorities expect some form of cash bribe to be paid to entail their services. But foreigners who come from countries where bribery is a punishable offence, are not in the practice of doing so, and suffer because of that. The officials of all the security departments that I interviewed; all resonated the same perspectives on the issues mentioned above. They were all aware of the presence of corruption within the law and order system in India, and admitted that it was so deeply ingrained into the system that it was almost impossible to overcome it. The CISF officer was very disappointed when he said; “I am aware of all the things which are happening here”. This has deep implications for the managers of security offices because if they are aware of such malpractices, and are powerless to stop them, there is slim chance that

tourists will have any positive satisfaction in respect to this attribute in the near future. The CISF officer himself admitted that he was powerless to stop corruption at the root levels, and that anyone who tried to do an honest job would become a scapegoat and be falsely punished. If this is the attitude that exists between Indians, there is no guarantee for the safety or security concerns of a foreign national.

Another factor that is negative for overall satisfaction levels is the presence of beggars, touts, hawkers and peddlers in and around the Taj and Agra. These individuals deal in goods or services, or some are just the destitute that need a helping hand. Nevertheless, they are a great annoyance to foreign tourists, as they pester them constantly trying to offload their crafts, or earn a quick dollar (Figure 6.10). One of the reasons why foreign tourists are pestered like this is because of the value of their currencies. One tourists accounts that *“It quickly became apparent that, unfortunately, no one really wants to be our friend. We cannot seem to have a "normal" conversation with a local without them eventually wanting something from US\$!”* (Erik, 2006).

**Figure 6.10: Touts hassling tourists outside the Taj Mahal**



This behaviour occurs mostly because of the widespread poverty across India and often tourists are left at a loss of actions when faced with these individuals. This builds up a very negative image of India and its destinations, and provide disincentive for re-visits or recommendations. My survey recorded a gap value of 0.60 for this attribute. It was found that managers were aware of the presence of these individuals and that they were again not in power to stop it. The Taj Suraksha guard informed me that this practice occurred due to corruption within the local police force. It is a common practice for the local police to collect cash bribes from the hawkers and peddlers in the area. These people don't mind paying the police these cash bribes because it guarantees them a spot

in the external complex; although the policemen take a majority share of their income, it is still better for the hawkers to earn something over nothing. This clearly shows that despite the poverty amongst people, the law and order authorities are willing to take advantage of them. From this perspective, if they can fleece their own countrymen of their survival earnings, what would stop them from fleecing a person who is from a stronger economic background and pays out in dollars? Once again, this comes down to the presence of corrupt elements in the system, and unless they can be nipped at the root, there is no room for change.

Lau and Au (2000) as cited in Tosun et al. (2007) explain the importance of tourism and leisure shopping. They express that in modern society, tourists indulge in shopping for souvenirs, ethnic clothing, branded clothing and arts and crafts. Shopping is one of the motivations for undertaking travel as well.

India is a haven for ethnic shopping and has a rich variety of cultural goods and artworks that represent its long history. Agra city itself has many avenues for shopping. The Taj Mahal is flanked by the Taj Ganj markets, which served as the trading market in olden days, but now is the modern shopping bazaar (“*The forecourt and Taj Ganj*,” 2005). The shopping avenues are overly crowded and filled with peddlers and salesmen of all types. Bargaining is a very common phenomenon in Indian shopping; no sale, no matter how big or small is ever completed without some amount of bargaining. This is a tedious process for some tourists, while some of them enjoy it. One of the reasons that many visitors had grievances with was that some tour guides would force visits to emporiums and galleries, and the visitors would be expected to make some form of purchase. Now, this puts them in a situation that they don’t want to be in, and that is what takes away from their overall satisfaction.

Like ethnic arts and crafts and handlooms, souvenirs play an important part because they represent the memory of the visit. It is common to find miniature models of the Taj Mahal being sold as the most common souvenir. Additionally, people also get their photographs clicked at an angle that it appears that the person is holding the tip of the Taj with their fingers. Sometimes these souvenirs are overpriced and sold to unsuspecting tourists. Because of this practice of foreigners being overcharged for things, it is common to find that foreigners will never accept the first price they are offered, even if it is a genuine price. Some unscrupulous traders give even the honest ones a bad name.

Elaborate schemes are plotted against vulnerable foreigners and are lured in dubious traps where jewellery and stones are offered to show the foreigners that the deals seem legitimate. A tourist shares that “*Yesterday I was tricked into the gem scam. E.g. sending gems to Europe, to avoid duty etc., while they as insurance swiped my visa through the machine*” (Baldts, 2003).

Such schemes sound very plausible to any person hearing them, and the con artists involved are very convincing people. The bottom line is, these practices reduce overall satisfaction with a destination and definitely result in poor recommendations.

In such cases it is understandable that law and order faculties would not be able to help out much, since they happen with the permission of the tourist. Such situations require a keen sense of judgment from the tourists and they should be informed beforehand to watch out for such schemes. However, this is not to say that this is an acceptable occurrence.

The overall aim of the tourism board of a destination should be to promote tourism at all sites. At the Taj Mahal there is no shortage of eager taxi drivers or auto rickshaw drivers who pester foreigners to take a short ride to the next destination. Agra hosts many other architectural sites of cultural and heritage value besides the Taj, however these sites are not given as much spotlight.

It is interesting to note that the paired difference of this attribute is negative. This shows that foreigners expected more in terms of information than they were offered, despite being pestered by transport agents from the minute they disembark at Agra. My observation offers two possible reasons for this anomaly. One is that tourists might associate this factor with the poor quality of information centres and their services, and the other is that tourists do not take well to being harassed by these transport agents about other destinations to visit. I feel that if they were informed in a slow manner, rather than being pressured to take the services of taxi drivers and such it might have had a more positive effect on overall satisfaction levels.

The survey revealed that tourists experienced maximum negative disconfirmation with; the friendliness of gate staff (0.74), the lack of priority lanes (0.61) and with the clarity of guides (0.61) during the pre-visit stage; with the lack of pre-recorded audio station stops (1.12), with the lack of narrated visual presentations (1.16), with the lack of videotape presentations (1.13), with the poor upkeep of the public toilet facilities (1.03)

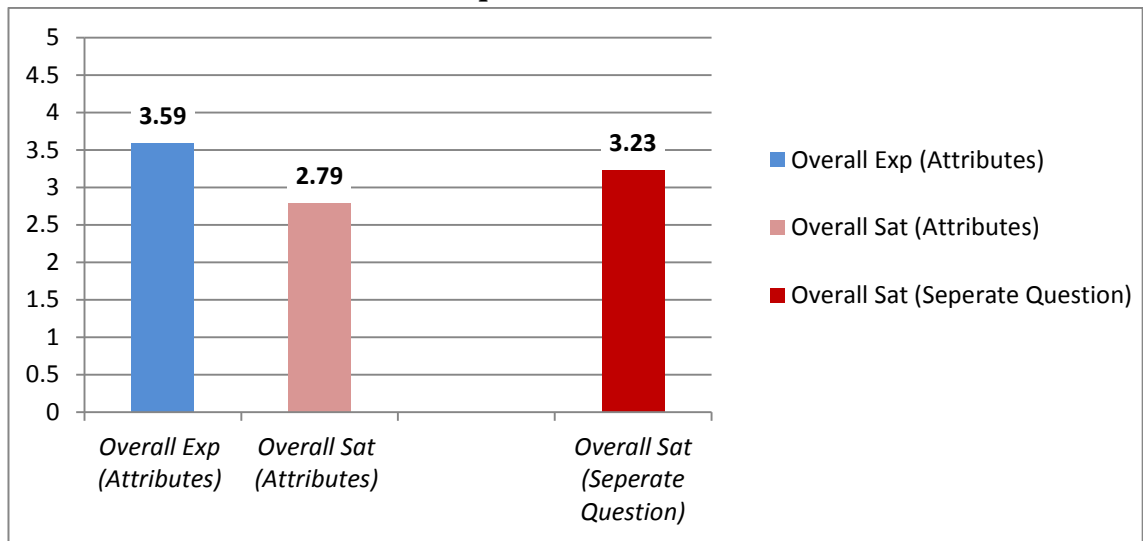
and with the lack of a light and sound show (1.78) in the during visit stage; maximum negative disconfirmation was associated with the poor quality of information about next tourist destinations attribute (0.90).

### **6.2.3 OBSERVED TREND IN VISITOR SATISFACTION THEORY**

According to Oliver (1981), the visitor experiences satisfaction as a total of his prior expectations and his disconfirmed or confirmed perspective towards the experience. When a visitor travels to a place, they have preconceived notions about the place, and what they are to experience there. Once they have actually experienced the place, and all its offerings, they develop a sense of positive or negative psychological perspectives towards the destination. If they have positive feelings, they experience satisfaction, and if they have negative feelings, they experience dissatisfaction. Visitor satisfaction is made up of many individual factors/attributes that contribute to a holistic visitor experience (Duffy & Ketchland, 1998; Yi, 1990; Lovelock et al, 1998). As described in the literature review, tourists give importance to many individual factors at a destination that add or deduct towards a satisfying visitor experience. It has also been observed that to get a true picture of the tourist's satisfaction or dissatisfaction level, it is necessary to measure their feelings in lieu of each individual attribute. Now, visitor satisfaction theory states that if a tourist has an overall dissatisfying experience, they would leave the destination with a poor image of it, and is likely not to re-visit or recommend the destination to others.

However, in this research, it was observed that the overall expectations exceeded the overall satisfaction levels of tourists. Means values of 3.59 and 2.79 were obtained for overall expectation and satisfaction, respectively (Figure 6.11). This shows that the satisfaction level was below the range values of 2.8 to 3.2, which indicates an overall negative perspective from the tourists. These values were calculated by analyzing the data that was collected pertaining to the survey questions. However, there was one question in the survey (part 1, question 4), in which the respondent was asked to give their ranking of the overall satisfaction that they experienced with the visit to the Taj Mahal.

**Figure 6.11: Comparison of overall mean derived from Attributes and a Separate question asked**



It is very interesting to note that, although all the answers that the tourists gave for the other questions resulted in mean scores that signified a negative experience, when the tourists were asked to gauge their own level of satisfaction, a mean score of 3.23 was recorded for that question. This mean scoring is above the upper limit of the range 2.8 – 3.2. Now, the question arises as to how this difference occurs, even though the tourist's responses to the survey recorded negative disconfirmation in 32 out of 34 attributes; positive confirmation in only one out of 34 attributes and confirmation in only one out of 34 attributes. This signifies that the tourists were dissatisfied with the destination and its attributes as a whole. But what made them consider that the overall experience was a satisfying one for them?

From this research, it is evident that tourists can perceive satisfaction at a destination, even though they experience overall dissatisfaction there. It can be suggested that the beauty and magnificence of the Taj Mahal itself managed to overcome the negative aspects that tourists encounter. The contribution of this research to visitor satisfaction theory is that the concept of visitor satisfaction goes beyond the destination image, the individual attributes and the negative aspects of a destination. The respondents in this research showed that they were disappointed with individual aspects of the Taj Mahal, but not with the destination as a whole. When they consider the Taj Mahal as a destination, they take only the monument into account, and all the other attributes that surround it, seem irrelevant at that moment. And that is how the difference between overall satisfactions recorded through individual attributes questions, and the tourists' perception of their overall satisfaction differs. The visitors often undertake long

journeys to reach the Taj Mahal, and even though there are many attributes at the destination that inspire negative feelings with them, upon actually reaching the monument, and enjoying all its beauty, it seems as though the purpose of the visit is complete for them, and they experience satisfaction at the holistic level, although not at the individual level.

Therefore, it is clear that the length of the travel that a visitor undertakes to reach a destination has a big influence on their satisfaction levels. Because the longer the travel, the more likely they are to just enjoy the offerings of the site instead of allowing the negative aspects to deduct from their satisfaction levels. However, it must be pointed out that this observation could work in both ways, sometimes the longer the travel, the more dissatisfying it may be for the visitor because they feel that after such a long travel, they experience such dissatisfying attributes.

Another point of interest was that although the visitors experienced overall satisfaction with the attributes, mean scores of 1.75 were recorded when the tourists were asked whether they would revisit the destination, and mean scores of 2.68 when visitors were asked whether they would recommend the destination to others. This concurs with the observation in this study that even though the visitors experience dissatisfaction at an individual level, overall they experience satisfaction purely because of the monument itself. This is supported by the fact that when tourists return to their home destinations, they often give feedback about the destination through various portals such as journals, magazines and online sources such as personal and travel blogs, twitter, Facebook and other social networking sites, and it can be seen that all negative feedback is directed at the individual attributes only, and not at the Taj as a monument.

So in conclusion, it is found that the beauty of the destination has a major impact on the tourists' perception and that it can influence them to experience overall satisfaction on a holistic scale, even though they are dissatisfied with the attributes at the individual level.

### **6.3 SYNTHESIS OF MANGERIAL ISSUES**

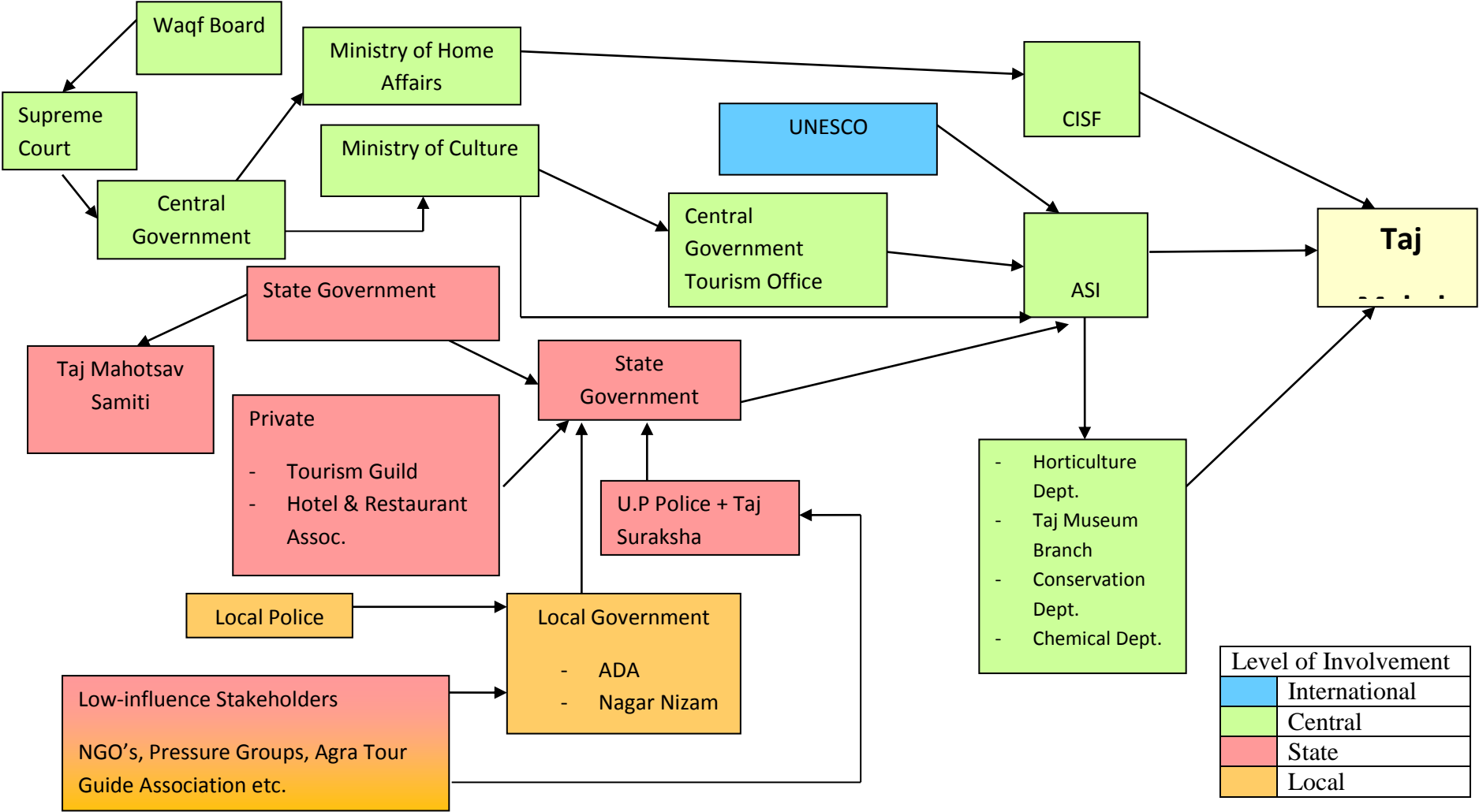
The raw data that was obtained from the tourist satisfaction surveys was analysed using SPSS software, and the statistical output obtained formed the basis of the managerial interviews. This section describes the qualitative data acquired through managerial

interviews, and presents a synthesis of the results of the interviews and literature reviewed.

### **6.3.1 STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT MODEL**

Based on personal observation, literature reviewed and the interviews conducted with managerial individuals, I developed a network model that describes the degrees of involvement, and flows of power and authority between existing management stakeholders at the Taj Mahal. Figure 6.12 below represents the various parties or organizations that I identified that have a stake in all aspects regarding management, maintenance, cleanliness, security and in provision of services and facilities to visitors. These stakeholders operate at the international, central, state and local levels.

Figure 6.12: Departments' Influence on the Taj Mahal (Direct & Indirect)



UNESCO is the regulatory body that looks after management and maintenance of the Taj Mahal from the international perspective. UNESCO works in close collaboration with the Archaeological Survey of India with its subsidiary branches ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) and ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) (Singh, 2010).

On the Central level, the Supreme Court of India is at the top and is responsible for any legislation that may be passed with regard to the Taj Mahal and any matter concerning the Taj Mahal must be approved and sanctified by the Supreme Court. The Waqf board claimed authority over the Taj Mahal, as it was a Muslim structure and housed a mosque. However, the Supreme Court denied permission for this, and they retained supreme control over the Taj. The Waqf board still communicates and contributes to any plans that the Supreme Court rules towards the Taj. The Supreme Courts power flows towards the Central Government of India, which is responsible for decision and policy making at the central level, and has a high degree of power and control, but even the Central Government is subject to the Supreme Court.

The Central Government is sub-divided into the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Home Affairs directly controls the Central Industrial Security Force, which looks after the internal security of the Taj Mahal and its visitors. The Ministry of Culture on the other hand is more involved in the tourism industry and has a good degree of influence over stakeholders that are below it in the hierarchy.

The Ministry of Tourism (Central Government Office) and the Archaeological Survey of India report to the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Tourism Office is the primary authority concerning tourism in India and it is responsible for the integration of various authorities and sub authorities towards holistic tourism. ASI is responsible for research projects and protection programs for cultural heritage sites in India and also maintenance programs relating to sites and monuments that are of historical value (ASI, 2011).

Several departments' function under ASI like: the horticulture department; Taj Museum branch; conservation department and chemical departments. The horticulture branch is responsible for the maintenance of Mughal and Mehtaab Bagh gardens, and the Taj museum branch looks after the Taj Museum on premises. The conservation department

looks after any conservation plans and measures viz. Taj Mahal and the chemical department plays an important role in lieu of the anti-pollution measures enforced in Agra.

At the State level, the Uttar Pradesh state government looks after matters and issues that do not require the immediate or urgent action of central authorities. These relate to minor planning schemes and such. The Uttar Pradesh Government has a state level Government Tourism office, which is responsible for local tourism and its promotion in the Uttar Pradesh state. The State Government office has a sub-branch below it, which is the Taj Mahotsav Samiti, or the committee responsible for looking after the organization of the Taj Mahotsav Festival.

Private accommodation and restaurant owners are represented at the State Government level by the Tourism Guild, and Hotel and Restaurant Association. Limited influence stakeholders are composed of small scale organizations such as NGO's, pressure groups and Tour Guide Associations and these organizations work in collaboration with the Local and State governments (shaded in mixed pink and yellow).

Additionally, the local government of Agra city reports to the Uttar Pradesh Government. Agra city local government has 2 subsidiary branches; ADA (Agra Development Authority and the Nagar Nizam which is responsible for cleanliness of Agra city in excess of the 500 meter radius controlled by ASI. All security measures in Agra are handled by the Uttar Pradesh Police force, which gets its authority from the Agra local government and they are responsible for security at the entrance and perimeter of the Taj Mahal. Security in the external premises is taken care of by the Uttar Pradesh police and the Taj Suraksha, which reports to the Uttar Pradesh Government. Finally, the tightest form of security comes from the CISF, which reports directly to the Ministry of Home Affairs, and is responsible for high-level security against possible terror attacks and criminal activity. It can be seen that Agra local government has little role or responsibility in any aspects regarding the Taj Mahal. This could be the possible explanation in the lack of cooperation and communication between departments as the local government could be the vital link that is missing in integrating all these bodies towards one goal.

### **6.3.2 FIELD EXPERIENCE WITH LINKAGES WITHIN THE MODEL**

A thorough study of the Taj Mahal and existing managerial scenario revealed a whole range of collaborative mismatches in practice. The first step in my study of the various stakeholders was to identify which relevant stakeholders had a role in the maintenance of the Taj. It was seen that the Taj had stakeholder groups at an international, central, state and local levels. Various responsibilities were allocated to representatives at each level, and the Taj management measures were a sum of the collective efforts of these stakeholders. The Supreme Court of India was at the top of the stakeholders list, and it delegated the extent of authority to stakeholders below it. At the international level, UNESCO exercises control over management issues and projects relating to the Taj, however, it also works in collaboration with ASI in India. It appears that ASI is the central authority that linked all the other stakeholders towards the common goal, the Taj Mahal. The state and local authorities were independent bodies in their functions, but still were subjected to the authorities from the central level. Although there were representatives from the private Tourism Guild, and Hotel and Restaurant Association (they represented their own interests of looking after the tourism related businesses in Agra), there were no identified stakeholders that represented the international tourists/visitors interests. Byrd (2007) remarks, that tourists and visitors must be clearly identified and represented in the collaborative process as well.

The current situation with regard to the Taj Mahal there are no sustainable practices in effect, and even if there are any, there is too much pollution occurring for environmental protection measures to have any effect. It is difficult to implement sustainable tourism practices with regard to the Taj Mahal context because the authority to make decisions is highly centralized to the Supreme Court of India. In order to implement any medium of change, it requires the pre-approval of the Supreme Court; because of this there are gaps in the proposed plans of action and those that are actually implemented. One of the reasons for this lack of coordination and communication is that centralized authority limits the involvement of community and low-power stakeholders, as they have little role in decision-making processes (Tosun, 2000 as cited in Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher, 2005).

Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher (2005) maintain that local communities and residents must be involved in tourism activities. In Agra, local communities appear to be involved but at a very minute level, and they have no strong voice in the decision making process or

planning processes. Because of this, the communities have no real stake towards development of tourism and its related sectors, which implies that the stakeholder collaboration in practice with regard to the Taj is indeed an ineffective one. Similarly, there is no representation for tourists and their interests with regard to Taj Mahal tourism, which is another lapse in accordance to effective collaboration.

In order to understand the managerial situation and the extent of collaboration between the stakeholders at all levels of influence, my research conducted at least one interview with a relevant representative of each stakeholder group that I had identified (excluding representatives of the Guild or the Hotels and Restaurants Association). The reason so many different managing stakeholders were involved in the maintenance of the Taj is that it is a source of economic benefit to the Agra, Uttar Pradesh and Indian economies. These authorities are meant to work in close collaboration with each other to realize the full potential of protecting the Taj. UNESCO plays the role of the international watchman towards maintenance projects, but as proven in their annual meetings, there is a clear lack of input from the Indian parties. On two separate UNESCO Conventions concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage, hosted by the World Heritage Convention, India and its relevant state parties were requested to submit a progress report regarding management issues and boundary concerns. The WHC expressed its regret in both meetings (circa. June 2010-Brazil and September 2010 - Brazil) that there was no compliance from the Indian State Parties (Refer to Appendix 3 a, b, c). This shows ineffectiveness in collaborative measures again because the needs and concerns of one of the key stakeholders are not importance, and this also shows that the managers responsible for ensuring unbiased attention to the needs and concerns of all stakeholders are not doing an efficient job in facilitating the collaboration process.

It is understandable that all stakeholders may not share an equal role in the collaborative process due to constraints on time, power, resources and communication channels; when one of these elements is unavailable, but, if all these elements were easily available then each stakeholder is to be rigorously involved in the decision making process (Byrd, 2007). This can only happen if all the stakeholders are equally informed and aware of the need for their participation and have the capability to represent the interest they cover.

Another observation was that departments lacked cohesion between themselves and various stakeholders; this lack of coherence was highlighted when one manager shared in regard to touts and beggars; *“Now, that is not our job to take care of that. That is the job of other independent body. And there is not much collaboration within”*. This is in conflict with the goals of effective collaborative measures at the Taj Mahal, and according to Gunn (1988b); the greatest challenge to successful collaboration with regard to tourism is the highly fragmented nature of the industry itself. The extent of authority between bodies often crossed the paths of each other, but each body took care to avoid any effort, which was beyond their realm of influence. As discussed in Chapter 5 (Findings), the managers often dodged taking responsibility for the success of the collaborative effort by shifting blame on other departments.

For example, although ASI and ADA were in charge of maintaining cleanliness at the Taj, in my interviews each one kept blaming the other for the unclean environments tourists were presented with. The ASI official shared; *“ADA is taking so much money to maintain the surrounding area and the city. But how maintain, when they can’t build a road (smiling)?”* while the ADA manager shared; *“ADA is more of a management authority. ASI looks after tourist management and all”*. However, this attitude was not limited only to these two bodies, but also amongst other managers; one of the state tourism representatives mentioned; *“ADA is not doing anything. Everyone is making money. They are responsible for cleanliness. You have seen it. Is it clean? They don’t maintain anything”*.

Among the ten representatives and managers interviewed, there was agreement about the overall dissatisfaction amongst international tourists, and the reasons for them. There was consensus amongst all of them that change was necessary if the situation had to alleviate, and five of them were confident that it would occur in the near future, but one representative was adamant that there was no scope for change. An alternate view of tourism is that it qualifies as a public good (Jamal & Getz, 1995). However, in a country laden with poverty and unscrupulous officials, there is little concern for public benefits or services. The mismanaged state of essential infrastructural services such as road networks, public sanitation, general upkeep and public awareness itself speaks volumes about the need for collaboration with regard to much bigger issues than tourism. When a country is in a state as such, a public good such as tourism appears to be very low on the priority list. Tourists experienced poor satisfaction levels at the Taj, and some of the attributes that they

were dissatisfied with resulted from inefficiencies that could be nipped in the bud by prompt managerial action.

There were clear indications those impediments towards many proposed steps leading to a holistic tourist experience stemmed from the existing corruption within the organizational hierarchy itself. With regard to the annoyance of touts and beggars the Taj Suraksha officer shared that *“Corruption is happening openly here, without any hesitation. India is full of it.”* The unethical practices of the law and order authorities in Agra itself were highlighted by several managers and personnel with one explaining *“The officers who are honest and sincere towards their job, they don’t let them do their work properly. All they want to happen is what they want. This is our politics”*. Some managers were distraught that they were powerless to stop such practices even though they were aware of it. One manager exclaimed, *“Our culture is such. See, now the trend is a person who speaks and stands up for the wrong things happening in a place, are either made to shut their mouth or goes behind bars”*. This describes a highly flawed collaborative measure because if all the stakeholders are not working in unison towards a common goal, the collaboration itself is a failure. It is as though the stakeholders were to be involved in a tug-of-war match, with none of them making any clear progress towards the goal. When interviewed about this, six of the ten interviewees commented that they were well aware of such practices amongst the police force.

One of the problems with the poor tourist experience arises from the lack of involvement of the local communities in the collaborative process. It is well known that Indian local communities see international visitors as a source of additional income, which results in the unethical practices against them. Such situations occur only because the local communities are not given adequate information and advice against such practices. Instead of viewing international tourists as a quick source of short run profit, if there were to be an attitudinal change amongst locals, tourists would be able to assume the role of sustained long run profits. But this change is unlikely because it is sort of ingrained into the Indian mindset to exploit the foreigner. This coupled with the lack of honest and ethical police personnel defeat the objectives of the collaboration itself.

An observed flaw in the current collaboration process is that they don’t account for the current visitors at the Taj Mahal, and neither for those who could be prospective visitors in

the future. According to Byrd (2007), collaboration plans must identify potential visitors and they must also be included in the process. When there is little concern for the satisfaction or views of present visitors, how could the future visitors be given importance?

There are many aspects to tourism at the Taj Mahal, which could be improved if additional facilities and activities were provided for visitors. The areas of maximum dissatisfaction in my study were the lack of audio station stops, video presentation, narrated video presentations and light and sound show. When questioned about such measures managers guaranteed that audio station stops plans were in effect already, and would be up and running within a week from my interview. However, such plans to be effected received mixed reviews from within the stakeholder groups itself. While one positively responded, *“The paper work is in progress. International company will be doing the work. We have given the plan”*, another stakeholder contradicted by expressing concerns that such measures would deduct from local employment opportunities. This shows the division within the stakeholders, and that there is lack of communication between them and that the interests of all stakeholders are not given equal importance. This defeats the entire purpose of the collaboration itself.

#### **6.4 GRAND SYNTHESIS/SUMMATION**

As pointed out by Gunn (1998b), the main problem with the tourism industry is the high degree of fragmentation it displays within. With regard to the Taj Mahal, Agra tourism, and Indian tourism it was observed that there was a large degree of fragmentation and lack of integration between the various regulatory authorities at the international, national, state and local levels. This lack of coordination between departments results in a lowered tourist experience because the bodies do not work in cohesion towards a better tourism sector or experience.

The maintenance of a heritage site requires a high level of communication and cooperation between authorities, which is lacking in Indian tourism. It can be seen that although there are many stakeholders involved in the protection, conservation and maintenance of heritage sites in India, the central link between all the relevant stakeholders is the Archaeological Survey of India. It is the glue that holds all the bodies together towards the common goal. However, there is a hierarchical distance between ASI and stakeholders at the state and local levels which results in them not working holistically. Another point of interest is that

UNESCO (the international overseer of affairs viz. Taj Mahal) requires a good deal of participation from Indian state parties and stakeholders, which is lacking (as has been described in their annual convention reports in 2007, 2010 and 2011; Appendices 3).

In lieu of poor visitor satisfaction levels at the Taj Mahal, it was realized that many of these problems could be tackled through effective infrastructural, managerial and cultural restructuring. The tourist must be given priority in the planning process, as they are the ones who undergo the process of travel to reach the destination. Specific measures are to be devised and implemented so that the areas that caused dissatisfaction to tourists were altered. If the destination is up to par, tourists have the desire and motivation to undertake the travel. It requires a good deal of consideration and study by managers to understand the sources of dissatisfaction for visitors, and how they may be countered. Specific areas that could undergo change, which would result in a better tourist experience, were;

The quality of local transport systems was adequate, but often overcrowded. This cannot be easily tackled because a large proportion of Agra local population depends on public transport to commute. However, public transport tending towards private ownership, such as taxis and autorickshaws, although plenty in number were well known for their art of overcharging the foreigner. Such practices must be halted immediately and requires action from law and order personnel. Another concern was the general traffic crowding in areas; although this cannot be wholly controlled because of the large population size and number of vehicles in Agra city, effective measures can be taken to curtail the negative effects of it. It requires a deal of governmental presence in implementing such measures and a possible suggestion would be to apply restrictions on the passage of vehicles through the inner limits of the city. It would require the addition of some additional infrastructure such as fly-over roads, or by-pass intersections that removes the influx of vehicles passing through the inner city. Another common practice is for heavy-load vehicles to pass through the inner city, which heavily slows down traffic, restrictions are to be implemented regarding timings during which these heavy vehicles may pass through the city. Although such measures are to be passed from the local, state and central levels, it requires the active participation of related stakeholders such as police personnel and traffic authorities.

With regard to boarding and lodging facilities, it was observed that the number of hygienic and clean low-budget accommodation facilities were fewer in number as compared to high-

budget ones. My study showed that a large proportion of visitors belonged to the backpacker travel community, and their options for clean lodging were fewer. This must be given consideration and tackled, because the lack of stay options resulted in many of them undertaking travel to Agra and the Taj Mahal for just the day. Consequently, this results in economic losses, because the longer the tourists stay, the more that they would spend and contribute to the Agra economy.

There is a good amount of expenditure to be spent on developing Agra as a positive destination for international visitors. Areas of dissatisfaction were found to be with regard to the lack of tourist information centres, directional signage, drinking water facilities, clean public restrooms and general cleanliness of the Taj and Agra city. This requires that the budgetary expenditure for tourism and related facilities be increased, and efficiently used to the maximum benefit. A common practice within Indian political system is to shave corners off budgeted amounts. If a certain amount is allocated towards a public restructuring program, only a percentage of the allocated amount is actually spent towards the project, the rest is pocketed by the various middle-men along the process. This is a highly inefficient system, and it is what results in a deducted overall experience.

With regard to cultural changes, the first change to be implemented is in the attitude of locals towards the international traveller. Much of the tourist experience could be converted to positive satisfaction if a variety of attitudinal changes were inspired amongst locals. Starting from when the tourist disembarks in Agra, if local taxi drivers, auto drivers and other transport agents treated them respectfully it would make a huge difference to their experience. One almost never sees a local transport agent harassing, hassling or trying to scam an Indian, because they know that it is a pointless mission. So why not adopt the same attitude towards a foreigner? However, this is easier said than done, it will require a good deal of presence from the central, state and local governments in conjunction with law and order forces. The main solution here is that corruption must be eradicated from the system itself, as long as corrupt officials are there, there can never be holistic change. But measures are in place to combat corruption already, it just will require some time. Cultural factors that also account for tourist satisfaction include the quality of the staff and their attitude towards visitors at the Taj. If staff were expected by managers and officials to be amiable and pleasant towards all visitors, whether domestic or international, would definitely increase satisfaction amongst visitors.

Although the tourism sector is vast and cannot be controlled as such by any authority or stakeholder, the destination can be controlled and maintained as per the stakeholders' desire. And this is the aspect that is being ignored viz. Taj Mahal. The overall destination management requires an active interest from the governing bodies and authorities, but most definitely requires the participation of the local communities and residents. Another contribution is that a body be integrated into the collaboration process to include communities into the tourism process, not only for decision making, but also to educate them about the benefits of tourism, and to eradicate the malpractices that foreign visitors are subjected to in India.

It must be realized that the international visitors are contributing significantly towards the benefit of Agra tourism, Indian tourism and the economic development of Agra city, Uttar Pradesh State and India as a whole. So every effort must be made to provide them with an experience that gives them value for their expenditure. The quality of present tourist experiences is very important because it is that which results in recommendations and re-visits. Since international visitors pay more than other visitors, every effort must be made to deliver an experience that is worth the amount they spend to undergo it. This requires that efforts must be made to include a wider range of services and activities for tourists, improving quality of guide services, increasing number of accommodation, dining and leisure facilities.. One of the points observed during my research was that other famous monuments in Agra city were not given much importance; this is definitely something to be considered by the authorities, and could be tackled by measures such as setting up more information centres, tourist hotspots and general awareness amongst them.

Although there are many existing stakeholders, the distance in hierarchy results in poor communication between them. The suggestion is that one more subsidiary authority from each level in the hierarchy, be involved into the planning process to represent the interests of the current international, national, state and local to a higher degree. And the sole purpose of these new authorities should be to provide an effective communication channel between the existing stakeholders so that the concerns and requirements of all of them are represented equally. Effective communication between various offices, public and private sector interests will lead to a more integrated tourism sector. It must be noted that the tourism sector of India is highly interconnected with the other sectors in India, and although some sectors are given the priority for development, it requires an attitudinal change within

the stakeholders to realize that tourism can be one of the biggest economic sources of power for India.

One of the major concerns of the tourist population had, were with security and safety concerns. There were many kinds of malpractices observed and recorded in context to the Taj, Agra and India, which result in overall poor satisfaction and are often transferred to prospective or future visitors and results in a very poor destination image for India. India is a cultural and historical hot pot and every effort must be made to retain the positive aspects of Indian tourism. It can be stated that in order to combat such malpractices, it requires governmental and police intervention. Strict action must be taken against offending locals so that it spreads the message that such practices will not be tolerated at all. Although this is a matter that requires a higher degree of action from high-level stakeholders, it is still a concern that needs to be addressed immediately and requires intervention from stakeholders that have a higher degree of power and control. During the time of writing this thesis, one of the major anti-corruption activists in India, Anna Hazare has launched attacks against the present state of corruption prevalent in India. He has been fighting against corruption for several years, and his most recent accolade was that he launched a hunger strike to protest the arrest of those who were protesting corruption within the Indian law force. He has been successful in getting the Prime Minister of India, Shri Manmohan Singh to reinstate an anti-corruption bill known as the Lokpal Bill this year. This is a positive sign for India and shows that change is in the wind. Jai Ho!!

## **7 THE ELIXIR/CONCLUSION**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This is the final stage in the monomyth, where the hero is back in his abode, and has gained the supreme knowledge or boon, and learns to integrate this knowledge with his day-to-day life (Campbell, 2008). This chapter aims to provide a final overview of the relevant subject matter that was covered in this thesis. As described in chapter 3, the tourist experience at the Taj Mahal is on the decline and there are many factors that cause this decline, additionally there are many factors that are affecting the aesthetic and structural value of the Taj. Many of these problems arise from the ineffective destination management. The main focus of this thesis lies in identifying the various factors that influence visitor satisfaction, and their implications towards the expectations and perceptions of visitors at the Taj Mahal. Additionally, the research also focuses on providing an overview of stakeholder theory and management, and also on collaboration theory and its managerial implications

The research was designed in order to address the aim of studying the quality of visitor experiences at the Taj Mahal, and in order to achieve this aim, there were three objectives that guided the process. The objectives of this research are;

- 1) To understand the nature of the current international tourist experience at the Taj Mahal site;
- 2) To comprehend the holistic management situation at the Taj Mahal;
- 3) To synthesize objectives 1 and 2 with the literature reviewed, which will lead to an overall discussion.

This chapter also presents: the various methodologies that were employed in the achieving objectives one and two, and their advantages; the benefits of this research; and the need for further research on this topic.

### **7.2 REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH**

The Taj Mahal is an iconic piece of Indian heritage, and deserves to stand as a testament of the love of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal for decades to come. It is a monument that was built by human effort over almost 17 years, and it must be preserved for future generations. The Taj Mahal was added to the World Heritage Convention in 1983, since it was

considered a piece of irreplaceable culture and heritage to the world, and was in the danger of degradation because of the lack aggressive industrial activities taking place in Agra city (Singh, 2010). It is also important to Agra and India because it is a viable source of income and foreign exchange and because of the importance it has for the tourism sectors. Adequate resources must be allocated to ensure that it grows as a popular destination in foreign countries.

There is much scope for the development of the tourism sector in Agra because it houses three different World Heritage Sites, and there were efforts taken to capitalise by commercialising the tourist zones, and provide a more unified tourist experience by connecting the Taj Mahal and Red Fort etc. However, these plans came under negative spotlight because they were unsustainable and flawed practices. Additionally, corrupt practices and poor performances on behalf of politicians such as the then existing Chief Minister also posed as impediments to the progress of any maintenance projects concerning the Taj Mahal.

The Indian tourism industry is highly fragmented in nature and is in need of cohesive and integrative action, starting from the community level all the way until the managerial level, and requires a good deal of planning. It was observed that much of the inefficiencies in management programs were impeded by lack of clear communication channels and ineffective allocation of power and time resources amongst concerned parties. The main goal of the tourism sector and destinations should be to promote satisfaction amongst its visitors, both domestic and international, and this requires understanding of the constructs of visitor satisfaction and the factors that affect it.

### **7.2.1 OBJECTIVE 1**

“To understand the nature of the current international tourist experience at the Taj Mahal site.”

This is the first area that this research covers, and it was addressed by conducting an in-depth review of existing literature available on the topics of visitor satisfaction theory. There is an evaluation of the visitor satisfaction concept and the various factors that influence visitor satisfaction which helps us to understand the premises that influence visitor satisfaction at the Taj Mahal site. It is essential to measure tourist satisfaction for

tourists as well as individual organizations in a tourism sector because this leads to improving the quality of services provided, which in turn improves the quality of the tourism sector, thereby improving quality of visitor satisfaction (Naidoo, Munhurn & Ladsawut, 2011). Therefore, in addressing objective one, it becomes important to study the visitor satisfaction process and measure the level of visitor satisfaction through appropriate feedback which will help in a holistic understanding of the tourist experience at the site.

Agra has a long and rich cultural and historical value towards Indian tourism, and this research focuses primarily on the Taj Mahal, however, it is important to review the state of the tourism industry in Agra overall before focusing on the Taj itself. Agra has special relevance to Indian tourism because it hosts three World Heritage Sites; the Agra tourism industry is driven by the Taj Mahal because it the most famous and most advertised site in Agra. It was found that there were gaps in existing literature base on the subject matter of visitor satisfaction with the Taj Mahal as the destination concerned. This furthered the need for study on the area.

The research process studies visitor satisfaction from the international visitor's perspective because I believe that if they experience satisfaction at a destination, the domestic residents will too. The theoretical concept of expectancy disconfirmation paradigm as outlined by Oliver (1980) formed the foundation for the study of visitor satisfaction; the justification for the selection of this paradigm is that while evaluating visitor satisfaction it is important to measure the tourists' expectations and actual perception in terms of satisfaction. This paradigm is a reliable measure of the differences in expectations and perceptions that tourists bear when they visit a destination.

The literature review states that visitors experience positive disconfirmation when perceived satisfaction exceeds their expectations and they experience negative disconfirmation when their expectations exceed perceived satisfaction (Weber, 1997). The expectancy- disconfirmation paradigm has had great applicability towards researches conducted by academics such as Weber (1997) and Yu & Goulden (2004) and was applied in my research process because it was easy to analyse and interpret the results in terms of the gaps in expectations and perceived satisfaction, which allowed to make strong inferences about the tourist views in the research sample.

To address this objective, quantitative data collection methods were used, and the survey instrument was used to collect primary data from the tourists, and surveys are "a detailed and quantified description – a precise map and/or measurement of potential" (Sapsford, 1999, p.1). Face-to-Face surveys were utilised to collect data which helped to make inferences about the tourists and their demographic profiles, and Neuman (2006) says that this form of data collection allows the researcher to take longer interviews and the quality and quantity will be high. While measuring tourist satisfaction it is necessary to measure it in terms of various attributes or factors that are found to influence satisfaction. There are several attributes that are outlined in the literature review and have been used in the research of others such as Pizam, Neuman & Reichel (1978), Tribe & Snaith (1998), Yu & Goulden (2006), Poria, Reichel & Biran (2006), Hui et al. (2007), Hanim et al (2010) and Naidoo et al (2010); and this study utilizes thirty four attributes that I felt were relevant towards gaining an understanding of tourist satisfaction at the Taj Mahal.

The survey was composed of sixteen closed ended questions and one open ended question, and the survey was designed in a manner that it investigated the tourist expectations and perceptions on the chosen attributes during the three stages of the visit (pre, during and post) stages. It is important to measure tourist expectations and perceptions before, during and after the experience if the site is to maintain visitor satisfaction levels (Dowling, 1997). The data collected during this period was analysed using SPSS software and this allowed for an in-depth quantitative analysis of visitors satisfaction through using numerical data.

The respondents were asked to give an indication of their expectations and perceptions regarding these thirty four attributes on Likert-scale format questions. The differences were determined using the gap analysis which allows for easy inferences on the gaps between tourist expectations and perceived satisfactions. The gap analysis was conducted during the three various stages, and overall at the end of the experience in order to gain a better understanding of their views. It was found that the tourists experienced negative disconfirmation in thirty-two out of thirty-four attributes, which shows that the services they experienced were well below their expectations. It can be seen that the tourists experienced confirmation in only one attribute during the pre-visit (i) stage and positive confirmation in one attribute in the during-visit stage. This shows that the tourists had high expectations with regard to the experience, but experienced poor perceived satisfaction.

Overall, all the stages of the visit recorded negative gap values and the maximum gap difference was recorded for the overall during-visit phase with a negative gap value of 0.92 recorded. The 'during' visit is the crucial stage in the visitors experience because it is when they actually experience the Taj Mahal; this negative gap value indicates that the visitor experience is poor during-visit. In addition, it can be seen that the lowest negative gap value was derived for the overall pre-visit phase with -0.39 which indicates that this stage of the visit has lesser impact on tourist perceptions of satisfaction.

Another statistical tool used was the p-value test, and the p-value tests for all the stages of the visit highlight statistical significance because they all recorded value lower than 0.05. Recommendations form an integral part of a visitors experience because it serves as a form of word-of-mouth advertisement and also increase the image of a destination. The prospective traveller makes much of his pre-travel images based on secondary sources and recommendations are one of them (Reynolds, 1965). And it was noted that there were positive feelings from visitors when it came to recommendations because a gap value of 1.75 was recorded.

The quantitative data and analysis conducted formed the subject matter of that was utilized during the managerial interviews, because the findings were presented to the managers during semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data served as a platform for addressing objective two.

### **7.2.2 OBJECTIVE 2**

“To comprehend the holistic management situation at the Taj Mahal.”

In order to achieve this objective it was necessary to understand the premises of stakeholder theory and analyze it as a concept. Stakeholder theory is important to this research because stakeholders are an integral part of the management process in any organization. They are those individuals that have a direct stake or concern about the activities that an organization undertakes and the outcomes that they derive from those activities (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Identifying important stakeholders is the key step in applying stakeholder theory because the relationship that an organization has with its stakeholders is a reflection of the degree of success that the firm may enjoy (Freeman et al, 2004). The stakeholders are the most important concern of an organization and Evan and Freeman (1990) (as cited in

Fontaine et al, 2006) state that the purpose of the organization is to coordinate the various stakeholders and their interests. With regard to the Taj Mahal there are a number of interconnected and relevant stakeholders and due to the highly fragmented nature of the tourism industry, makes stakeholder management hard (Gunn, 1988).

The main purpose of objective two is to understand collaboration theory and its constructs, and juxtapose it with the current managerial situation at the Taj Mahal. However, individual stakeholders are an integral part of any collaboration and a successful collaboration will require effective stakeholder management. The success of any tourism industry requires a high level of stakeholder management because tourism sectors are growing on a global scale, and the need for sustainable tourism is imminent, which can be achieved only through a high level of collaboration and co-operation between stakeholders (Jamal & Getz, 1995).

The situation at the Taj Mahal is not different in the sense that there are a number of relevant stakeholders that are integral to the management and operations who need higher degrees of management in order to address the issues that are affecting overall visitor's experiences. This effective management can only be achieved by increasing the level of collaboration between them. Therefore, the holistic management situation at the Taj Mahal is highly dependent on the collaborative measures in place, which involve management of a number of key stakeholders.

Collaboration requires increased communication and cooperation between stakeholders and it can only be successful if the individual stakeholder see the benefits of working together and share common goals. It has gained momentum with regard to the tourism industry because it is becoming evident that collaborative efforts have a higher chance of addressing more concerns (Jamal & Getz, 1995). The main problem identified with regard to the Taj Mahal was that, there were many relevant stakeholders from different levels of power (Central, International, State and Local governments and related offices) in the Taj management hierarchy. This implies that there could be disparities in power and resource allocation to the relevant stakeholders. Another concern was that there were ineffective communication channels between the stakeholders which were hampering achievement of the common goals and visions. Collaboration theory and its implications for the Taj Mahal were chosen as objective two because; the Taj is the most advertised and famous

destinations of India but there are lacks in the number of studies that have been conducted there and also because the overall development of the tourism sector is highly dependent on the degree of collaboration between identified stakeholders.

In order to investigate this objective, qualitative research methods were employed and this is the appropriate method to use because it is that type of research that deals with the why of phenomena (Silverman, 2008). It is important while trying to understand factors such as values, morals, attitudes, socio-economic and socio-cultural factors etc, and is different from quantitative research such that it is based on real life events, people's accounts and experiences (Neuman, 2006). The qualitative research methodology involved semi-structured interviews with ten relevant managers of various regulatory bodies that were delegated responsibilities of management at the Taj. The reason I chose semi-structured interviews because they allowed for more flexibility in research design with some element of structuring, but was not too rigid. The basis of the interviews was that, the areas that were found to cause declining satisfaction amongst visitors were deducted from the quantitative research phase (as described in objective one), and analyzed and presented to the ten managers; they were then questioned about their perspectives on the situation.

The qualitative data collected was categorized into three categories, and the relevant managers were allocated to these categories depending on where their department or authority belonged. This is presented in chapter 5 (Table 5.9). Understanding the managerial situation addressed objective two, and once objective one and two were completed, it laid the foundation for objective three.

### **7.2.3 OBJECTIVE 3**

“To synthesize objectives 1 and 2 with the literature reviewed, which will lead to an overall discussion”

Objective one and objective two covered two main areas that relate to the Agra tourism scenario. One of the main concerns for the tourism industry is that they must address visitor satisfaction issues in order to increase visitation numbers, thereby increasing the quality of the visitor's experience which will result in profitability of the sector. However, there are impediments to successful destination and tourist management which can be resolved through collaborative efforts. These two topics were the specific focus of objectives one

and two, namely, international visitors experience and successful collaboration between relevant stakeholders. Objective three aims to create a link between objectives one and two and to analyse the relationships between them.

It was observed during the quantitative research process that visitors experienced poor overall satisfaction levels because their ratings of the Taj Mahal based on service quality attributes were low. These attributes were factors that enhanced the visitor experience or subtract from it, and many of these attributes were controlled by the various departmental authorities in the hierarchy. It was found that there was a complex collaborative effort in place, and that there were many dependent and independent stakeholders involved in the process. The purpose of objective two was to create understanding as to why managerial actions resulted in loss of visitor satisfaction.

On studying the various relationships that existed between the various regulatory authorities it was found that the managerial process drew its power from the Supreme Court of India, and it had the maximum control in decisions regarding the Taj. UNESCO acted as the international overseer of affairs concerning the Taj, but had limited authority over the process. The central and state governments had an active stake in the management process and had the power scale tipped in their favour. The local government had some influence in the process, but had limited decision making authority. This shows that there is an imbalance in power distribution in the hierarchy, and that the interests of all stakeholders are not represented equally and unbiased.

According to Freeman (1994), the responsibility of the organisation and its managers is to distribute expected value to its concerned stakeholders, and management should view all stakeholders equally regardless of the relative degree of power each individual is responsible for. The basis of collaboration and its theory is that all stakeholders must be clearly identified and allocated power and resources so that they see the benefit of working towards a common goal. The goal in regards to the Taj is overall effectiveness in management, however, it was seen from the qualitative research process that there was ineffective management processes in work and that there was no clear allocation of responsibilities to the various organisations. This was deduced because managers of different departments blamed other departments for existing problems that were reducing visitor's satisfaction. Although the tourism sector is vast and cannot be controlled as such

by any authority or stakeholder, the destination can be controlled and maintained as per the stakeholders' desire. One of the major flaws in the collaborative effort at the Taj Mahal is that there is no representation for the community and their interests and according to Ladkin & Bertramini (2002), citizens and communities must be represented in the process.

Now the most interesting trend observed in this research was that although the tourists experienced overall negative disconfirmation in all the three stages of the visit, and in thirty two out of thirty four attributes (when calculated based on the survey questions pertaining to the three stages and attributes); it was observed that when they were asked to gauge their own measure of level of satisfaction in a separate question they recorded overall satisfaction level of 3.23 which exceeds the range value of 2.8 – 3.2, thereby signifying overall positive feelings towards satisfaction. This implies that there are some aspects of a visit that account towards satisfaction levels, and although visitors experience overall negative satisfaction with individual attributes, the overall experience counts more. Similarly, it was observed that despite the negative gap values in all the phases of the visit, tourists were likely to recommend the Taj as a destination to others.

Overall, the Taj Mahal is the most famous tourist destination of India, and it experiences poor visitor satisfaction because of the poor quality of goods and services provided via the tourism sector. The management authority of the Taj Mahal rests with various authorities that draw power from the international, central, state and local levels. There is a complex collaborative effort in place but this effort is hampered by factors such as ineffective communication, disparities in power and resources distribution and ineffective stakeholder management.

In a nutshell: the focal question of the research is whether the Taj Mahal experience can be improved. During the research process I gained many insights into Taj Mahal tourism, which have led me to the conclusion that there is much to be improved in the experience. The Taj Mahal is one of the most precious monuments India has and every effort must be made to preserve it for future generations as well. The main problem here is that less importance is given to the perspectives of tourists and their views on satisfaction. This is a necessary part of improving the tourist experience because the relevant authorities need to acquire feedback in order to recognise the areas that are causing dissatisfaction. Once the

views of the tourists are given importance and taken into account, then only can appropriate measures be applied towards increasing their satisfaction.

From the managerial perspective, there is much to be improved in terms of the level of integration and cohesiveness between the authorities. It was observed that there were ineffective communication channels between the various authorities, and that the various needs of the stakeholder authorities were not given adequate importance. In order to improve on this, it requires a more authoritative stance from stakeholders that have higher power and interest resources; what this means is that the stakeholders with more power should implement and enforce the appropriate measures to improve cohesion between departments.

One of the major flaws in the Taj Mahal tourism industry is that little importance is given to the views and opinions of local communities. This is an area that requires action because the local communities must be viewed as important stakeholders in any destination, and at the same they should be educated about the benefits of tourism to their communities. This might improve the tourists experience in the sense that local tourists might change their perspectives and habits towards foreigners. These are the major areas that I observed that require immediate action in order to improve the experience for international visitors, which will ultimately improve it for all visitor categories. Change is an essential part of life, and can be a painful one. However, every big change starts with a single step, and this research is my first step towards understanding and improving the visitors experience at the Taj Mahal.

### **7.3 BENEFITS OF MY RESEARCH**

I believe that it is vital for every region to investigate its strength, weaknesses and also its tourism potential. Consequently, the Taj Mahal tourism should analyze how it could adopt the new tourism concept and benefit from it in the best possible way. I feel that there are considerable reasons to carry out this research:

First of all, it is of high strategic importance for the tourism industry in India as in July 2011, the Taj Mahal, was the top draw in terms of tourism revenue, logging a gate entry income of INR19,89,49,560 (NZD 58,51,458) for the fiscal 2010-2011 (“Taj Mahal rakes in Rs. 19 crore revenue from ticket sales”, 2011). The outcome of the research will help to

identify possible improvements in the tourism strategy of the tourism office and the new knowledge might prove useful in order to attract more tourists and enhance their experience.

Secondly, the Taj Mahal tourists will benefit from the improvements made on some suggestions. Satisfying tourists' needs and wants is likely to result in the fact that they will come back to the Taj Mahal for another holiday or recommend it as a tourist destination to their family and friends. If the tourists are satisfied, the Taj Mahal will have a long-term benefit.

The third beneficiary group is the local group. The research is of great value for the local people in Agra, as working in the Taj Mahal tourism is the main source of employment for them. Also, the city could improve its image and by attracting more tourists profitability will be higher. Especially the guides, the retailers, hoteliers and landlords of home stays might increase their profit.

#### **7.4 NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Based on this research, it can be said that there is a need for further research in order to gain a more comprehensive knowledge base on: the subjects of the Taj Mahal as a visitors destination of India; the quality and extent of the tourists experience at the Taj Mahal; and in regards to the current stakeholder management and collaborative efforts in place concerning the Taj Mahal.

The main reason is that there are existing gaps in this research that can be addressed or filled by further research. The primary quantitative data collection period used only international visitors as the sample size and ignores the domestic population; further study may be conducted on the perspectives of domestic tourists and their levels of satisfaction at the Taj Mahal. Also, the study uses a very small sample size, which is an area that can be improved on to gain a holistic understanding of the tourism scenario. Only one hundred and fifteen tourists were surveyed, which allows to make some inferences and patterns, however is not very applicable to entire tourist populations across a period of time. Additionally, the duration of the primary data collection period lasted only one week and is reflective of only one tourist period during the calendar year. It should be noted that tourist numbers and visitation patterns differ seasonally, and this research does not take into account these variations in visitor numbers for the remaining months of the year.

The network model presented in chapter 6 is only my interpretation of the current stakeholders that have an active role in the Taj management process. The actual number of stakeholders involved that have interests in the Taj Mahal could be more, but require more detailed studies in order to identify their roles and appropriate them according to their power, time and interest resources. Furthermore, I was referred to some stakeholders that were based out of Agra and Delhi cities, however due to time and distance constraints, this research was unable to take in-depth interviews with them. This is another area that may be studied further in order to comprehend the holistic management situation. The stakeholder analysis in this research qualifies as a partial stakeholder analysis only, and more detailed study on the various stakeholders will lead to a more complete picture, which can be achieved through further research. Once all the relevant stakeholders have been identified, it is essential to organise them according to their interest and power in a stakeholder matrix, which is another area that needs to be studied in detail.

In addition, the quantitative data obtained in the research process can be analysed using a larger array of statistical tools such as cross-tabulations, correlations, regressions etc. This comprehensive statistical analysis will allow gaining deeper inferences and will result in a more solid knowledge base.

In conclusion, this chapter provides an overview of key points outlined in this research, in relation to the three main objectives of the research. It provides the methodology used and the rationale behind selecting them, and also overview their applicability to the tourism situation at the Taj Mahal, Agra. This chapter briefly states some of the benefits of this research and addresses the need for further research on the topic of Taj Mahal as a tourist destination in India.

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## **APPENDICES**

### ***APPENDIX 1 (Tourist Survey)***

## EVALUATION OF DESTINATION

### Part-I The Taj Mahal Surveys

S

1) i. Have you ever been to a cultural/ heritage site except this trip in the past 3 years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

ii. How many times have you been to the Taj Mahal? \_\_\_\_\_ Time(s)

2) Please indicate the expectation and satisfaction of the following attributes at the Taj Mahal (Please circle).

ATTRIBUTES	EXPECTATION					SATISFACTION				
	Very low					Very dissatisfied				
<b>Pre-visit</b>										
<b>a) Surrounding Environment</b>										
(i) Local transportation	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(ii) Traffic	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(iii) Boarding & lodging	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(iv) Tourist information centres	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(v) Directional signage	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
<b>b) Arriving at the Taj Mahal</b>										
(i) Friendliness of the staff										
- at the ticket counter	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
- at the gates	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(ii) Entrance - permit fees	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(iii) Guides										
- well-trained	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
- interpretation	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
- clarity	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
- interaction	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(iv) Priority lane at the entrance	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(v) Waiting time in the line to enter	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(vi) Cleanliness at the entrance	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(vii) Signs about do's & don'ts inside the Taj Mahal (no eating, no books etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

ATTRIBUTES	EXPECTATION					SATISFACTION				
	Very low					Very high				
						Very dissatisfied				
<b><i>During visit (inside)</i></b>										
(i) Cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(ii) Hospitality	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(iii) Over-crowding	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(iv) Pre-recorded audio station stops	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(v) Narrated visual presentation	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(vi) Videotape presentation	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(vii) Drinking water facilities	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(viii) Public washrooms facilities	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(ix) Security										
- In general	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
- Shoes (before entering the main dome)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(x) Maintenance of Mughal Gardens	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(xi) Light & sound show	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
<b><i>Post-visit:</i></b>										
(i) Petty crimes/ scam	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(ii) Nuisance caused by touts & beggars	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(iii) Feeling of safety	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(iv) Souvenirs	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(v) Specialty shopping	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
(vi) Information about next nearest monument to visit	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

**3) If you visited the Taj Mahal at night, how satisfied were you with your visit? (Please circle)**

Extremely  
dissatisfied

Extremely  
satisfied

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

- 4) **Overall, how satisfied were you with your visit to the Taj Mahal? (Please circle)**  
 Extremely dissatisfied Extremely satisfied
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7
- 5) **Would you come back to the Taj Mahal again if you had a chance? (Please tick)**  
☐ For sure                      ☐ Probably                      ☐ Probably not                      ☐ Surely not
- 6) **Would you recommend your family/ friends to visit the Taj Mahal? (Please tick)**  
☐ For sure                      ☐ Probably                      ☐ Probably not                      ☐ Surely not
- 7) **Any suggestions for improvement?**  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### **Part-II Tourist's Demographic Characteristics**

- 1) **Gender:**            ☐ Male                      ☐ Female                      ☐ Other
- 2) **Age:**              ☐ Under 20                      ☐ 20 - 30                      ☐ 30 - 40  
                              ☐ 40 - 50                      ☐ 50 - 60                      ☐ Above 60
- 3) **Place of Origin:**    ☐ National                      ☐ International  
 If International, please specify:    ☐ North America                      ☐ South America  
    ☐ Europe                                      ☐ Africa  
    ☐ Asia    ☐ Others
- 4) **Annual Household Income (US\$):**    ☐ Less than 10,000                      ☐ 10,000 - 29,000  
    ☐ 30,000 - 59,000                      ☐ 60,000 - 89,000  
    ☐ 90,000 - 109,000                      ☐ 100,000 or more
- 5) **Education:**                      ☐ Primary Education                      ☐ Secondary/ Upper Education  
    ☐ High Education                                      ☐ Technical Education
- 6) **Occupation:**                      ☐ Professional (Doctor, Lawyer, engineer etc.)  
    ☐ Business                                      ☐ Government Service  
    ☐ Agriculture                                      ☐ Student/ Researcher  
    ☐ Homemakers                                      ☐ Retired  
    ☐ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) **Source of information about the Taj Mahal:**  
    ☐ Newspaper/ Magazine                      ☐ Internet  
    ☐ Words of mouth                                      ☐ T.V.
- 8) **Are you travelling**    ☐ Alone                      ☐ With Family or Friends                      ☐ Travel group
- 9) **How did you come to the Taj Mahal? (check more than one if you need)**  
☐ Tourism Vehicle    ☐ Taxi                      ☐ Auto-rickshaw                      ☐ Bus                      ☐ Train
- 10) **How many hours did you spend in the Taj Mahal?**    [       ] hours

***Thank You For Your Co-operation In Completing This Questionnaire!***

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Indicative Semi-Structured Interview Questions (For Key Personnel)**

#### **Key Categories:**

##### **Management**

- In what way do the management and staff incorporate and reflect the values of the community and the tourists?
- What is the level of government involvement?
- What are the important actions that management needs to take to keep the Taj Mahal sustainable as a tourist site?
- Is the staffing level sufficient for adequate management of the property?  
If No, what is being done to improve the situation?
- What are the other partners, institutions or organizations that have management authority over the property as well as the arrangements that are in place for the coordination of their actions?
- What role does the community play with regard to maintenance?

##### **Factors affecting property**

- Can you indicate areas where improvement would be desirable and/or toward which the State Party is working?
- 
- What are the main goals of your organization? (increase visitation, make more money, develop additional features)

##### **Monitoring**

- What are the maintenance protocols regarding the Taj Mahal?
- How is the Taj Mahal monitored and evaluated over period of time?
- What role does the community play with regard to maintenance?

### **Conservation**

- Do you feel the need for the Taj to be included in the list of World Heritage Sites in Danger?
- What is the present state of conservation?
- How often do you research on the Taj? On which aspects?

### **Tourist facilities/managing tourists**

- Is the public use plan (tourism/ visitor management plan) in use for the site?
- Have you ever had direct contact with tourists? What kind?
- What services/facilities do you provide to tourists?
- Have you ever heard of/ dealt with complaints from tourists?
- How do you tackle negative responses or conundrums with regard to tourists and their experience?
- How do you make sure the tour guides give the authentic interpretation to visitors? What qualifications are required? Is any training or evaluation available?
- What are your views on the current marketing strategy for the Taj Mahal viz. the Tourism Board of India?

**Thank you very much for you time!**

**APPENDIX 3 UNESCO Reports pertaining to the Taj Mahal at three different sessions**

**APPENDIX 3 (a)**

**Distribution Limited WHC-10/34.COM/7B.Add**

**Paris, 22 June 2010**

**Original: English / French**

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL  
ORGANIZATION  
CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD  
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE  
World Heritage Committee**

**Thirty-fourth session**

**Brasilia, Brazil**

**25 July - 3 August 2010**

**Item 7B of the Provisional Agenda: State of conservation of World Heritage properties inscribed on the World Heritage List**

**SUMMARY**

This document contains information on the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. The World Heritage Committee is requested to review the reports on the state of conservation of properties contained in this document. In certain cases, the World Heritage Committee may wish to decide to discuss in detail the state of conservation reports which are submitted for adoption without discussion.

**Decision required:** The World Heritage Committee may wish to adopt the draft Decision presented at the end of each state of conservation report.

The full reports of reactive monitoring missions requested by the World Heritage Committee are available at the following Web address in their original language:  
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/34COM/>

**68. Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri (India) (C 252; C 251; C 255)**

**Year of inscription on the World Heritage List:**

Taj Mahal: 1983

Agra Fort: 1983

Fatehpur Sikri: 1986

**Criteria**

Taj Mahal: (i)

Agra Fort: (iii)

Fatehpur Sikri (ii) (iii) (iv)

**Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger**

N/A

**Previous Committee Decisions**

**28 COM 15B.58; 29 COM 7B.59; 31 COM 7B.80**

**International Assistance**

Total amount provided to the property: USD 38,753 (Taj Mahal)

**UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds**

Total amount provided to the property: USD 158,200 under the UNESCO/Aventis project “Preservation of Taj Mahal and other Monuments in Agra”.

Previous monitoring missions

2004: Joint World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS

Factors affecting the property identified in previous reports

In 2003: Development project negatively impacting the World Heritage value of the properties of Taj Mahal and Agra Fort (‘Taj Heritage Corridor Project’). The project was suspended by the Indian authorities in 2004.

Illustrative material

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/252>

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/251>

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/255>

Current conservation issues

No progress report has been received from the State Party, as requested by the Committee at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007).

In August 2009, the World Heritage Centre received written and photographic information concerning the construction of a new bridge over the Yamuna River in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal, which might impact adversely on the Taj Mahal and the Agra Fort World Heritage properties.

In accordance with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, in December 2009 the World Heritage Centre requested the State Party to provide the World Heritage Centre with comments on the information received and, if the project was confirmed, it further requested the State Party to provide to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, detailed information about the project, together with any impact assessment studies that might have been undertaken. No response has been received from the State Party.

The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies regret that no details have been provided by the State Party on the apparent proposals to construct a rope bridge near to the Taj Mahal and consider that information on whether this project is still being considered, and if so its potential impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, need to be submitted as a matter of urgency to the World Heritage Centre, for review by the Advisory State of conservation of World Heritage properties WHC-10/34.COM/7B.Add, p. 121 inscribed on the World Heritage List

**Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri (India) (C 252; C 251; C 255)**

**Decision: 34 COM 7B.68**

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-10/34.COM/7B.Add,
2. Recalling Decision **31 COM 7B.80**, adopted at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007),
3. Regrets that the State Party did not submit a progress report on management and boundaries as previously requested by the World Heritage Committee;

4. Encourages the State Party to continue progress in the development of an integrated management plan for the Taj Mahal and the Agra Fort, and for Fatehpur Sikri, and of a Visitors Facilitation Centre, and requests it to submit the plans when completed to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;

5. Reiterates its request to the State Party to provide the information to the World Heritage Centre concerning the boundaries and area of the three World Heritage properties in the Agra District, as requested by the World Heritage Centre within the framework of the Retrospective Inventory project in 2006;

6. Also requests the State Party to provide urgently detailed information, and any associated impact assessment studies that have been undertaken, on the proposed construction of a new bridge over the Yamuna River in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal, and for any other development proposals, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines* before any commitment has been made;

7. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre by **1 February 2011**, a progress report on all of the above for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session in 2011. Bodies, before any commitment is made, in line with paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*.

The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies also regret that no further information has been received from the State Party on progress with integrated management plans for the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort, and for Fatehpur Sikri, nor has information on boundaries for all three properties been submitted, in connection with the retrospective inventory.

Paris, 3 September 2010

Original: English/French

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL  
ORGANIZATION  
CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD  
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE  
WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Thirty-fourth session

Brasilia, Brazil

25 July – 3 August 2010

Item 20 of the Agenda:

REPORT OF THE DECISIONS  
ADOPTED  
BY THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE  
AT ITS 34TH SESSION (BRASILIA, 2010)

Draft Decision: 34 COM 7B.68

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. Having examined Document WHC-10/34.COM/7B.Add,
2. Recalling Decision **31 COM 7B.80**, adopted at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007),
3. Regrets that the State Party did not submit a progress report on management and boundaries as previously requested by the World Heritage Committee;
4. Encourages the State Party to continue progress in the development of an integrated management plan for the Taj Mahal and the Agra Fort, and for Fatehpur Sikri, and of a Visitors Facilitation Centre, and requests that it to submit the plans when completed to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;
5. Reiterates its requests the State Party to provide the information to the World Heritage Centre concerning the boundaries and area of the three World Heritage properties in the Agra District, as requested by the World Heritage Centre within the framework of the Retrospective Inventory project in 2006;
6. Also requests the State Party to provide urgently detailed information, and any associated impact assessment studies that have been undertaken, on the proposed construction of a new bridge over the Yamuna River in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal, and for any other development proposals, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines before any commitment has been made;
7. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre by **1 February 2011**, a progress report on all of the above for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session in 2011

**APPENDIX 3 (c)**

**Distribution Limited WHC-11/35.COM/20**

**Paris, 7 July 2011**

**Original: English / French**

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC  
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION  
CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF  
THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**World Heritage Committee**

**Thirty-fifth session**

**Paris, UNESCO Headquarters**

**19-29 June 2011**

**DECISIONS ADOPTED  
BY THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE  
AT ITS 35th SESSION  
(UNESCO, 2011)**

**67. Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri (India) (C 252; C 251; C 255)**

**Decision: 35 COM 7B.67**

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-11/35.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decisions **31 COM 7B.80** adopted at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007) and **34 COM 7B.68**, adopted at its 34th session (Brasilia, 2010),
3. Urges the State Party to continue progress in the development of an Integrated Management Plan for the Taj Mahal, and Agra Fort properties, and requests it to submit the plan when completed to the World Heritage Centre, for review by the Advisory Bodies
4. Encourages the State Party to continue progress in the development of a separate management plan for Fatehpur Sikri, and also requests it to submit the plan when completed to the World Heritage Centre, for review by the Advisory Bodies;

5. Further requests the State Party to reconsider the inappropriate design and installation of the Door Frame Metal Detectors and barricaded queue arrangements at the Eastern and Western gates of the Taj Mahal;
6. Regrets that the State Party did not provide any details of the new bridge over the Yamuna river, nor a heritage impact assessment, as requested by the Committee, before any commitment was made in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*;
7. Expresses its concern at the apparent impact on visitor numbers that the new bridge could have and considers that an overall visitor management strategy which considers traffic management in the hinterland of the property needs to be developed urgently as part of the management plan for the property and Agra Fort;
8. Requests furthermore the State Party, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, to ensure that impact assessment studies are undertaken for any other development proposal that could affect the properties, including the current visitors traffic access, and museum development proposals at Fatehpur Sikri, before any operational work commitment is entered into;
9. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2013**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and on the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 37<sup>th</sup> session in 2013.