

Roaming Through *Hafta Bazaar*: A Walk-Route for Old Delhi's Sunday Markets

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Abstract: Delhi is well positioned in the tourism circuit. However, the heritage monuments are over-crowded especially during the weekends. The potential of weekly market (*Hafta Bazaar*) as a combination of cultural and heritage tourism is hitherto unexplored and can augment Delhi's tourism space. This research contribution attempts to document the weekly markets of Delhi. Sunday Markets around Old Delhi have been identified and mapped since this is one part of the city visited by large number of tourist groups. Developing these markets for tourists, by combining their historical, cultural and architectural heritage, and addition of photography or culinary delicacies in these walks could open up a new avenue for the tourists as well as tour operators.

Keywords: *hafta bazaar*, heritage, Old Delhi, tourism.

India continues to remain a prominent tourist destination for the global community (Ohlan, 2017). The tourism sector of India caters to millions of tourists every year but the lack of well-developed tourism sites and tourist routes greatly affects the carrying capacity of the existing monuments and other tourist attractions. Since tourism accounts for as much as 30% of the world's exports of commercial services and 6% of overall exports of goods and services, there is a compelling need to search for new avenues within India's tourism segment. Delhi, apart from being the capital of the country is also a tourist hub for heritage and cultural tourism. The National Capital Territory (NCT) attracts considerable tourist footfall which is ever increasing and the weekend rush makes it more complex for both the tourist and the tour-operators. *Hafta Bazaars* or weekly markets are commonplace phenomena all over Delhi. However, very few efforts have been made to assess the tourism potential of these

informal markets. The reasons include the absence of proper documentation and mapping of these *Bazaars* (markets), lack of selecting specific and interesting markets for inclusion in tour-walk and creating authentic information for the tourist regarding these markets. While Heritage Walk, Photo-Walk, and Food-Walk are getting attention in the tourism sector in Delhi, the *Hafta Bazaars*-Walks is a potential tourism product needing urgent attention. Preliminary investigation indicates that *Hafta Bazaars* have immense capacity to attract and sustain the tourism traffic in Delhi. This research contribution attempts to put forward a *Hafta Bazaar*-Walk through the alleys of *Purani Dilli* (Old Delhi) encompassing several Sunday Markets.

Old Delhi is famous for a plethora of culturally rich heritage places, shrines and bazaars which mesmerizes thousands of tourists every day (Liddle, 2011). According to the recent Census, human habitation in Old Delhi is well above 5,00,000 (Census of India, 2011). The presence of a multicultural and multiethnic population with equally diverse socioeconomic activities makes Old Delhi unique from all perspectives. The tour itinerary provided by several private tour operators in this region largely comprises two prominent historical places, viz. Red Fort and Jama Masjid. The list of monuments or marketplaces covered by existing tour operators is limited and does not include many other interesting historical sites. Media reports suggests that daily footfall to Red Fort alone is over 10,000 with annual growth rate of 7%. This figure will thus increase manifold in the coming years (India.com, 2017). The inclusion of presently ignored heritage monuments and marketplaces of this region in the larger tourism circuit will boost revenue generation and bring economic and cultural prosperity to the area and its people. It will also benefit the tourists who come from all over the world to visit this heritage destination.

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The itinerary suggested by the website of Delhi Tourism, the official tourism website for the Government of Delhi includes the less-explored monuments of Old Delhi. Some of these include *Digambar Jain Temple*, Central Baptist Church, *Sunehri Masjid*, *Gurudwara Sis Ganj*, *Fatehpuri Masjid* and a few *Havelis* (palatial mansion) of famous personalities (INTACH, 2000). Despite this, the suggested itineraries of most of the private tour operators include only the few overcrowded monuments. A few historical places and eateries have recently found mention in Heritage-walks and Food-walks curated by some start-ups. Some alleys of clothing and spice shops have recently been selected under the purview of Photo-walks. These innovative guided walks in Old Delhi are augmenting tourism, however, such initiatives need to be scaled up and there remain considerable untapped opportunities in the region which can improve tourist experiences and attract more tourists (Ohlan, 2017).

There are two types of markets in Old Delhi, 1) everyday markets and 2) weekly markets. The present research contribution is part of a larger project working to map and document Delhi's weekly markets. Preliminary estimate indicate that the number of weekly markets in Delhi is well over 500. Several such weekly markets come alive every Sunday in Old Delhi since a long time (Sharma, 1964). Although these weekly Sunday markets are visited by many residents and tourists, they do so in isolation and hardly any importance is given to the tourism potential of these weekly markets. We propose a Walk-route through these markets which, in combination either with other everyday markets and/or with heritage monuments in the micro-niche of Old Delhi, can cater to the weekend tourist footfall.

A Glimpse of these *Hafta Bazaars* is provided below.

1. Sunday *Sadar Bazaar*

Sadar Bazaar Sunday market is one of the busiest and chaotic weekly markets in Delhi, which remains abuzz with middle class Indian shoppers. While *Sadar Bazaar* remains as the largest wholesale market of household items in Delhi, on Sunday the main market is closed. The weekly market takes its place and offers reasonably low priced clothes, vegetables, crockery and other household items. Interestingly, this is one of the day long *Hafta Bazaars* of Delhi and it is setup in the morning and continues up to 9.00 pm or later. Although this market affects the traffic of the area considerably, the crowd does not seem to recede till the end of the day as almost every type of product (from clothes to food items, from spices to copy products, from dry fruits to shoes, etc.) is available here.

2. *Mithaipul Market*

Located at one end of the *Sadar Bazaar*, one enters into the *Mithaipul Bazaar* while walking away from *Sadar Bazaar*, even without realizing it. A large number of shops of the *Mithaipul Market* sell a variety of pulses, legumes, spices, almonds and other edible items. It is probably for this reason that this market was earlier known as *Daal* (pulses) Market. Its present alternate name is *Nakli* (fake) *Bazaar*, perhaps due to the availability of cheaper alternatives to common household items that are sold here. These items may be called generic or counterfeit, however, this does not bother the consumers who readily buy these products which strikingly resemble the name and design of many well-known brands. The other side of the *Mithaipul Market* is a place to buy vegetables and fruits.

3. *Chor Bazaar*

Chor Bazaar or Thieves' Market was once located behind the Red Fort, away from the prying eyes of the citizens but due to security issues, after the Red Fort shootout in 2000, it was shifted to its present location (Times of India, 2004). Although the market has been shifted from its earlier location but not much has changed and this market continues to be Delhi's most prominent flea market. The market starts early in the morning, from 4.00 am and continues till 7.00 pm. The market sells everything from shoes to electronic goods to clothing and hardware. *Chor Bazaar* sells varied items which could even be damaged or second-hand or some presumably stolen. The early morning rush of customers every Sunday reveals the secret of the continuity of this otherwise questionable weekly market.

4. Book Market, *Daryaganj*

The Book Market of *Daryaganj* is one of the oldest known weekly markets of Delhi, which continues to thrive in the present day. Like the other weekly markets discussed above, the Book Market starts settling early in the morning and concludes in the evening. Although it is famous for second-hand or used books, vendors selling stocks of new editions of books and magazines can also be found here. Apart from academic curriculum related books, the Book Market also sells magazines, novels, storybooks and various stationery items. Although the exclusive character of this Book Market has declined over the years, with the entry of other items like garment and shoe shops, customers can still be seen thronging to this Market for the charm of the old treasures. The nearby attractions to the Book Market include *Dilli Gate*, *Moti Masjid* and the recently closed single screen theatre, *Golcha Cinema*. Located on the main road, this market is a must visit for any walk-route in the Old Delhi region.

5. Mahila Bazaar

Mahila Bazaar (Women's Market) is the least crowded of the Sunday Markets in Old Delhi. Though it is situated at some distance from the other markets discussed above, this has been included for its uniqueness. As the name suggest, the *Mahila Bazaar* has only women sellers or vendors taking charge of this market. The market sets up every Sunday on Tagore Road located on the Southern side of Old Delhi. The items sold in the market are mostly used products, mainly clothes and footwear. While over the years there is a gradual decrease in total number of vendors and customers in this market, the *Mahila Bazaar* has immense sociocultural value which could be showcased separately or in combination with other tourist attractions.

The nameless and faceless weekly markets of Delhi with their temporary shops, primarily stalls, road side/ footpath shops etc. have been continuing their existence for decades despite the increase in organised market spaces and malls. The Sunday *Sadar Bazaar*, *Mithai Pul Bazaar*, *Chor Bazaar*, Book Market *Daryaganj* and *Mahila Bazaar* are located in close vicinity and are walking distance from each other. The estimated time taken to cover one market is approx. one hour. The tourism potential of some of these markets, which have individualistic and characteristic flavors, should not be overlooked. Delhi's *Hafta Bazaars* offer limitless possibilities for the tourism sector, which need to be

explored and established for inclusive and sustainable development of Delhi city.

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