

Exploring Multimedia for the Promotion and Preservation of Tangible Heritage of India

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Abstract

Safeguarding and promoting the tangible heritage and culture is a much-needed task which has been initiated by UNESCO. The promotion and preservation are the utmost priority too in the context of Indian heritage and culture, museums, monuments, and edifices. Heritage is the soul of country/state/city and needs all the efforts and care in respect of its preservation. On the thresholds of modernism, the triumph of multimedia has given multiple ways to secure traditional and cultural heritage worldwide. The historical sites and other artifacts of India can be secured and promoted with the effective use of multimedia i.e. VR (virtual reality), digital art, etc. The heritage and culture can be promoted where visitors can have a virtual experience of the visit, the audio-video documentation, and digitization. The art and culture will be benefitted and promoted with the help of online tourism and multimedia. In the present timeline of communication and marketing, Virtual Reality is proved as an unbreakable spell. People or users not only get effective communication but can also virtually transport themselves from one ambiance to another. This aspect of virtual reality helps the people in various domains especially, to encrypt various world heritage sites into 360-degree vision. In addition to it, it can provide multiple ways to promote art and culture along with the sites in a different form of communication around the globe. The paper will analyze the possibilities and the use of virtual reality or VR vision, digital art, and multimedia with a notion that can give a new dimension to mankind with a better experience. This paper will also evaluate some case studies on the bases of new media art to seek related projects like monumental sites, museums, artifacts, etc.

Keywords: Digitization of Heritage and culture, preservation and promotion of heritage and culture, safeguarding tangible heritage, virtual reality, new media art, audio-video documentation

Introduction: Virtual is the new reality. The reality which has been created through multimedia is mesmerizing various components of material culture. The virtual reality and other related paradigms of innovative technologies are providing the new dimensions of the preservation of art and cultural heritage. In the situation of pandemic and similar situations, it can become up with a boon to nurture and foster the state of the art. The tangible cultural heritage is the narratology of a place, culture, traditions, lifestyle, and so on and on. The heritage of India is known for its variety and richness with a unique approach. The fusion of heritage and culture is the unique virtue of Indian culture. This culture and heritage need to be properly documented and preserved which can be possible with the help of multimedia and virtual reality vision. In this context, the documentation and preservation of the art and cultural heritage can be done with the help of multimedia and VR vision. The travel and tourism sector can also gain growth with the help of the effective application of multimedia and VR vision. The tour of art galleries can provide the relevant study material to the art students and scholars. The technologically sounds cultural heritage is a big dream which may be completed with the help of multimedia and VR vision.

Safeguarding the Tangible Cultural Heritage: The international symposium of UNESCO clearly described the aim of safeguarding the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in 2003. The digitization was one of the agendas to preserve heritage and culture worldwide. In this regard, various steps have been taken to promote and preserve the art and artifacts too. The emergence of multimedia and technology can provide multiple ways to safeguard the tangible cultural heritage, museums, galleries, etc. The agenda of promotion can also be looked at from a very different perspective i.e. in such pandemic like situations, the artifacts and heritage sites can be secured and opened through virtual reality. In the current scenario of the pandemic, it is high time to realize that virtual reality can be explored for adding more value to the cultural heritage.

Even if the heritage and artifacts will face any disaster in the future i.e. war or natural disaster, then this virtual documentation with the video and images can remain alive too. For instance, if the data related to the marvelous statue of Bamiyan Buddha have been recorded before the attack of the Taliban in 2001 than its beauty can still be explored through VR vision. The astonishing rock painting of Indian can also be taken into consideration because some of the ancient sites cannot be preserved until a very long period. If the 3D mapping will be done of all such marvelous and unique ancient sites and heritage sites than at least we can have a live vision of the same. Additionally, the people who are not able to visit these sites can have the virtual tour of the same. Subsequently, a virtual tour can also be helpful to pick the visiting destination for a personal visit after taking a short online trip. The visitors can be attracted to the places by giving the glimpses of some of the major artworks and historical sites. It works as like we are going to book a hotel room and first we are having a preview of the same to choose the best one as per our choice. Additionally, the safeguarding which is the priority of the current age can also be done by using multimedia and technology in more advanced ways.

The Innovation of Multimedia and Virtual Reality: In the age of technology, multiple things are easy to access. It is the advancement of technology that made life so easy and convenient. From the very perspective of marketing and commercialization, the multimedia and technology

benefitted the audience or consumer to take a real like experience at their home. There are various tools and mediums which are changing the pattern of information sharing and communication on a larger scale. The art world does not remain untouched with the technical advancement of this multimedia and animation. Various artists are documenting and promoting the visual culture, material culture, and heritage in their art with the help of new media. Going back to history, there are so many examples that can be seen as an opportunity for such art practices that were not acknowledged at the universal level. They do even not come in the category of arts like the folk and tribal arts of various places. But such disparities were gradually ended due to the initiative of some art historians, critics, and artists. For instance, the art of Jamini Roy was majorly influenced by the folk art of Kalighat paintings (Sarkar 2000, Sanyal 2013) but before him, no one has taken such kind of initiative. Unlike, from the remote past, digital art, new media art, and other related techno-based medium have provided a unique platform to modern artists. The impression of particular dance steps or sound has been recorded or recreated by the artists to promote a particular art or culture. Using this platform, the artists have promoted various unknown and unacknowledged art, heritage, culture, dance, music, and much more. New media art has opened the opportunity to showcase the heritage and culture in innovative styles.

The new media art includes all kinds of technological advancement which involves computers and technology (Sampanikou, 2015). The term is a refined version of Net Art, Digital Art, or Computer art and nowadays, artists are doing this in the form of digital painting, digital installation, audio-video representation, still images of computer, etc. It is stated that “New Media enhance art in many ways it gave art a wider platform to be displayed, artist use new media to project their ideas fast than before” (Pereira 2019). The representation of ideas became easy too with the help of technology and the internet. Additionally, the VR vision of many heritage and monuments provides a new angle to the preservation and promotion of dying art and culture. It is also stated that “the invention of new materials also gave artists scope and freedom for different methods of working. Acrylics revolutionized painting in the 1950s and 60s and plastics and polymers led to innovations in 3 D works” (Butler et al. 1994).

The virtual reality works when a particular site, object, or artwork has been mapped with a 3D view in 360⁰ angles. The VR vision is particularly followed by a headset and the user can feel a live experience of the particular visit through a versatile experience (Burch, 2016). This VR vision was used initially to promote commercialism to give the viewers a live experience of the content. This unique phenomenon has also been used by various museums to provide a virtual tour to the desired individuals. The crowd who are not able to go personally to these museums can have a virtual tour of the particular by this 360-degree video with an aesthetical approach. For example, we can watch the videos of J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Vatican Museums, Rome, and Guggenheim: Bilbao, National History Museum, London, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, South Korea, National Gallery, London and many more (Wilson 2020). This initiative is not only limited to art museums, but most of the world’s best landmarks are also mapped in this 360-degree view to provide the onlookers or viewers a great experience and just sitting at their homes.

In India, this application can be seen as a powerful medium to start virtual tourism in such kind of pandemic crisis. Moreover, this initiative can help to preserve and document the tangible heritage of India by using 360-degree mapping. This very initiative can be helpful for research and development for such heritage and cultural sites including artifacts that are not accessible to common people. This step can also use as a digital learning process in the form of entertainment which is a requirement of the current time and need for the present and future generations. It is quoted that “Preservation, education, and entertainment are essential points regarding cultural heritage sites, and technology integration is viewed as an essential element of service delivery in a museum environment” (Voinea, et al. 2019). The paintings of renowned artists can be seen and observed as sitting in a comfortable room. The art students can also be benefitted from the virtual reality for the betterment of their study.

The effective Tourism through the lenses of virtual reality vision can also be done to bridge the gap between the art and onlookers. The Travel World VR is a New Jersey-based company that has created a free app featuring 360-degree videos of some destinations (Rogers 2020). Such a kind of initiative can also be taken by the tourism companies in India.

In India, there are some museums and art galleries which are promoting their artworks through digital media like video, lecture series, etc. but if the virtual reality vision will be served up, it can give the better experience. The old monuments and edifices of Delhi, Bombay, Agra, and similar places need immediate attention for the documentation, preservation, and promotion. The visual communication and aesthetic stimulation can also be added with the help of field experts during the making of the videos. An expert’s voiceover can also be added to describe the history and relevance of a particular artifact and site. This service can also be started with a nominal charge to boost the tourism industry. The folk and tribal culture can also be promoted to give a boost to Gross Domestic products and economy as well. The production can be seen internationally through the lenses of virtual reality. A comprehensive growth can be assumed by using multimedia and virtual reality of art and heritage with a global approach.

Conclusion

The art and cultural heritage is the story of the existence of human beings and this story is needed prior attention to the preservation and promotion for the future generation. The art and cultural heritage are like a precise treasure for any country so the fellowship of carrying the treasure forward is the urgent need. The multimedia and VR vision can be adopted for this required cause because the certainty of an artifact or a heritage monument cannot be assumed. In this concern, the adoption of new media, multimedia, VR vision can at least give some certain possibility to the tangible cultural heritage of India. The possibility to preserve and promote the treasure of India with its multiple forms can be created with the help of multimedia. The online tourism may be taken as an opportunity for the same cause.

Virtual reality can also help the travel industry for the planning and programming of the touring package by showing the start feature and start destination through VR. Various art and culture of different states of India can be visited with endless interactive streaming. VR vision can also help

the users or tourists to make their plan and schedule through the VR vision. It helps those users or tourists who cannot reach/ go/ visit some particular places like the top view from Qutub Minar, Taj Mahal, Statue of Unity, underwater diving, and many more. So they can enjoy and experience those breath-taking and amazing views of places like never before. It can also help people visiting spiritual places extraordinarily. So they can reach virtually at those places where they cannot go physically for example Gravagriha of Tirupati Balaji temple or some other restricted places like this. This VR vision technology can also help the children to explore their favorite places in a very adventurous way. The Tourism Company can be the leader of this future travel history.

If the travel agency can design their traveling program through technology then it will be very effective not for the customers only, but the commercial world of tourism as well. Through virtual reality, the agency and hotels can give more efficiency and flexibility to the user/tourist/customers to plan every single detail of their trip. For instance, to book their hotels as per the view, surrounding, price, services, facilities not only through pictures and words, now they can do the live virtual survey of every single aspect of the trips. It is stated in Business world Innovative Technology (2019) that “A virtual tour of the hotel room can help travelers better plan their trip by showing visitors how many closets are in the space as well as the size of the bedrooms”. It will also boost the economic growth of the tourism of a country. When a user wants to enquire about the services, travel packages, rooms, and other things through online VR presentation then it will also bring money to the particular travel agency through server and pay-per-click system. The art and cultural heritage can also be secured by using this technology with proper documentation and preservation. In the situation of this pandemic, it is the high time when these aspects should be considered these aspects for the welfare of cultural heritage, art and architecture, and economy. The virtual reality can also be looked at as a solution to various problems including damage controls, the longevity of artworks, and heritage sites because the physical interfere can be controlled by the virtual visit.

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