

Assessment of Indicators for Heritage Based Urban Development in India A Stakeholder's Analysis Centric Approach

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HOW TO CITE:

Dipanjita Chakravarty, Geetanjali Kapoor (2026). Assessment of Indicators for Heritage Based Urban Development in India A Stakeholder's Analysis Centric Approach. International Journal of Special Education, 41(8s), 1214-1224

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ABSTRACT:

The research envisages a mixed method multi stakeholder study to ascertain and validate measurable indicators of heritage based urban management for integration into contemporary urban policy in India. Structured questionnaire encompassing Likert scale parameters were administered for four stakeholder's groups namely visitors, residents, artisans/heritage-based craftsmen and expert groups across three geographically and typologically distinct Indian cities: Varanasi, Nagpur and Hubballi-Dharwad. Exploratory factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and Structural equation modelling (SEM) were incorporated to identify the latent constructs and test causal pathways. Based on the study five validated indicators were proposed namely heritage value assessment (HVA), socio-cultural impact (SCI), economic rejuvenation potential (ERP), maintenance of heritage infrastructure (MHI) and positive environmental impact (PEI). Cross-city analysis enunciates a systematic governance deficit in heritage infrastructure maintenance across all three cities. Limitations of the study includes modest KMO values (0.50), low cumulative variance explained ((11.8–15.3%) and a non-significant Bartlett result for the expert data-set are acknowledged and methodological improvements are recommended for future studies..

Keywords: Heritage based urban development, indicators, sustainable development, stakeholders' analysis, heritage policy

1. Introduction

India exhibits one of the world's most diverse and varied cultural heritage landscapes encompassing tangible assets such as archeological monuments, historic built forms, temple complexes and precincts, traditional sports arenas and cultural performance areas as well as intangible assets such as classical and folk

performance traditions, oral histories and living craft practices. Together these comprise of a remarkable spectrum of semantic, semiotic, aesthetic, historical and anthropological values of astonishing scientific and social significance.

Cultural and built heritage integrates communities into the economic, social and environmental fabric of the city. The erosion of heritage created

and conserved by urban and rural communities over centuries can lead to a loss of identity and belongingness, mitigate citizen's distinctive cultural capital and therefore impede inclusive urban development and resilience. Heritage must, therefore, be protected and can serve as a generative instrument for future city-building (UNESCO, 2011; Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012 Historic urban landscape HUL approach)

Irrespective of a rich statutory framework incorporating the Ancient Monuments and archeological sites and remains act (1958) amended (2010) and the contemporary Heritage city development and augmentation yojana (HRIDAY 2015) and the Smart city Mission (2015), heritage centric urban development in India is non- contiguous and fragmented. The Bureau of Indian standards has formulated profile and core indicators for smart cities, yet indicators pertaining to conservation of built and natural heritage is conspicuously absent. The paper addresses the policy lacuna by developing, testing and validating a set of measurable heritage indicators across three contrasting Indian cities.

1.1 Research gap and contribution

Available literature on heritage indicators, (Tweed & Sutherland, 2007; Veldpaus et al., 2013; ICOMOS, 2011) has primarily focused on European and Latin American heritage contexts with limited validation on global south cities. While Indian scholarship has addressed heritage conservation law and policy, (Menon, 2003; Nair, 2011), quantitative multi-stakeholder indicator frameworks adapted to the Indian urban context is needed for effective governance. The study puts forward a replicable statistically validated indicator set grounded in primary data from three cities representing diverse heritage typologies, geographic regions and tourism profiles.

1.2 Research question

If cultural heritage is to be integrated into contemporary urban policy in India, what are the probable indicators that can serve as reliable, measurable and context sensitive tools for policy assessment and implementation.

2. Theoretical framework and literature review

2.1 Heritage as Urban capital

Heritage is increasingly conceptualized as a form of urban capital- a resource that creates economic, social and environmental returns when strategically incorporated. (Licciardi & Amirtahmasebi, 2012) The historic urban landscape (HUL) approach, finalized in UNESCO recommendation of 2011 envisages a framework for managing heritage as a layered living resource as compared to a static monument (UNESCO 2011). The study draws on the HUL approach in constructing its conceptual framework.

2.2 Stakeholder theory and heritage

The stakeholder theory of Freeman (1984) substantiates that, legitimate actors with stakes in a resource must be engaged in its governance. Heritage precincts attract multiple often competing stakeholders; residents and visitors who experience heritage, artisans whose livelihood depends on it, and experts involved in governing and conserving. Each group foregrounds different dimensions of value (Mason, 2002; Throsby, 2010). This study captures stakeholder theory by constructing separate survey instruments calibrated to each group's epistemic position.

2.3 Indicator frameworks for heritage

Existing heritage indicator frameworks including the ICOMOS guidelines on post trauma recovery (2017) and culture in city reconstruction (Licciardi & Amirtahmasebi, 2012 as well as the UN Habitat urban indicator programme emphasizes partial and incomplete coverage of the dimensions relevant to Indian cities. A critical gap exists in indicators sensitive to living heritage intangible cultural practices, and the livelihoods of artisan communities, which this study explicitly addresses.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A sequential exploratory mixed method design was adopted. an exploratory qualitative phase generated the primary indicator dimensions through expert interviews and focused group

discussions. A qualitative survey phase administered validated instruments across three cities. Statistical analysis— EFA, CFA, and SEM — was applied to test the factor structure and causal model. Final indicators were subjected to stakeholder validation.

The integration ratio threshold was standardized throughout the study as structures exceeding 100 years of age, in alignment with ASI classification norms and HRIDAY programme criteria.

3.2 Case study selection

Three Indian cities were selected based on five criteria-city-size, heritage typology, UNESCO status, geographic location and tourism intensity. The purpose was to ensure scalability, capture diversity, enable policy comparison and evaluate intervention effects across contrasting urban contexts. Table I summarizes the selection rationale.

Table 1: Case Study Selection Matrix (Source: Authors, 2024)

Criterion	Varanasi	Nagpur	Hubballi-Dharwad	Rationale
Population	1.8 million	3.2 million	1.4 million	Size diversity
Heritage Type	Sacred/riverfront	Historic urban core	Spiritual (Mathas)	Typological range
UNESCO Status	Candidate city	None	None	Policy comparison
Geographic Region	North India (UP)	Central India (MH)	South India (KA)	National coverage
Tourism Intensity	High	Low	Medium	Tourism gradient
Survey (n)	300	300	300	Statistical equivalence

3.3 Sampling strategy and representation

Purposive stratified sample was used to identify respondents within each city's designated heritage precinct. Residents and visitors were recruited at heritage sites during different times of the day to mitigate temporal bias. Artisans were contacted through craft cluster associations and local co-operative societies. Heritage experts comprising conservation architects, academicians, urban

planners and heritage NGO representatives as well as bureaucrats were selected through professional networking and snowball sampling.

Quota sampling was applied to achieve gender balance across the visitor and resident groups for homogenous composition. The expert and artisan samples were not gender-quota constrained given the professional composition of these groups; demographic breakdowns are reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=300, Source: Authors, 2024)

No.	Variable	Category	n	Percentage (%)
1	Age	< 20 years	24	8.0

		20–40 years	119	39.6
		40–60 years	86	28.6
		> 60 years	71	23.6
2	Gender	Male	171	57.0
		Female	129	43.0
3	Period of Stay	< 20 years	96	32.0
		20–50 years	126	42.0
		> 50 years	78	26.0
4	Governance Participation	Involved	74	24.6
		Not Involved	226	75.3

3.4 Data Collection instruments

A fifteen item five- point Likert scale questionnaire was administered to residents, visitors and artisans (n=100 per group per city). Questionnaire items were developed iteratively: An initial pool of 32 items was generated from literature and qualitative findings, reduced to 20 after expert panel review, and further refined to 15 following a pilot study with n=30 respondents in Hubballi-Dharwad. Expert interviews

incorporated a multi-structured protocol, with focused group discussions exploring governance perceptions and community heritage practices.

The questionnaire was administered in English, Kannada, Hindi, Marathi and English with forward and backward translations validated by bilingual professionals. The Cronbach's alpha was found acceptable (more than 0.71) for the full instrument extracted from pilot study.

Table 3: Data collected through administered questionnaire

S.no.	Input from residents	Inputs from visitors	Input from artisans	Focused group discussion with experts
1	Heritage value assessment No of buildings more than 100 years as compared to new buildings Ease of accessibility of heritage sites and connection to modes of public transport Accessibility to persons with disability Unique cultural-	Architectural characteristics of historic, aesthetic and structural significance Quality of preservation and conservation initiative	Traditional craft, orature forms, food festival and religious rituals of cultural significance. Incidence of large congregation of cultural significance.	Various ways of heritage value assessment Different indicators of heritage value Qualitative and quantitative indicators

	identity linked to heritage Unique architectural feature construction technology and material used			
2	Socio-cultural Impact No of traditional food and artifact market in the demarcated area Influence of heritage on community life and daily life Contribution of heritage to local business and tourism Contribution of traditional food and artifacts to economy	Participation in community congregation of religious and cultural importance Heritage crafts and handlooms that are interesting and have economic rejuvenation potential Ease of doing business	Traditional craft and handloom - based livelihood existing in heritage precincts Potential for economic rejuvenation of traditional livelihood. People depending on traditional livelihood systems	Parameters for socio cultural impact Ways to integrate sustainability and livability pertaining to cultural heritage Various ways of economic rejuvenation
3	Economic Rejuvenation potential How well are heritage sites maintained in your area How well are traditional food artifacts, orature and story-telling and tradition of weaving, pottery, artifact making and basket making preserved in your area Does tourism help in preserving and maintenance of heritage	User experience in cultural precinct Accessibility and signage Safety and security Supporting infrastructure Availability of food and water Grievance redressal interaction with local people Transport routes and pedestrian walkways Water supply, sanitation and	Proper space for carrying out heritage related craft activities Proper infrastructure for sourcing and storage of raw material and display of manufactured goods. Adequate space for public interaction and sales.	Various ways of conservation and maintenance of heritage precinct

		electricity Experience at visitor's centre		
4	Maintenance of heritage infrastructure and positive environmental impact Do the heritage sites contribute positively to the environment by preserving the local flora and fauna Does heritage zone prevent environmental degradation due to less construction activity	Maintenance of local flora and fauna due to less development activities Does influx of visitors, demand a restriction or cap for better preservation of environment	Protection of traditional congregation-space, resulting in heritage-based activities. Mitigation of environmental degradation because of less construction activities	Positive environmental impact on account of heritage

3.5 Analytical Methods

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation identified the underlying factor

structure of survey items. Kaiser's criterion (eigenvalue > 1.0) determined the number of factors retained. Prior to EFA, the Kaiser-

Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity assessed data suitability. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) validated the measurement model, and structural equation modelling (SEM) tested the causal relationships between the latent construct Inclusion of cultural heritage (ICH) and the five identified factors. Convergent validity was assessed via average variance extracted (AVE more than 0.5) and discriminant validity via the HTMT ratio.

Pairwise Pearson correlation assessed inter parameter interdependence. Cross-city mean comparison used one way ANOVA with post-hoc Tukey HSD tests to assess the statistical significance of city-level differences.

3.6 Methodological Limitations

The KMO value of 0.50 across all datasets sits at

the lower boundary of acceptability. This is acknowledged as a limitation and likely reflects the diverse, multi-topic nature of the survey instrument. The expert data-set did not achieve a statistically significant Bartlett result ($p=0.400$) restricting the interpretive weight that can be taken by the factor solution. The sample size for artisans ($n=62$) and experts ($n=61$) is modest and repetition with larger sample size is recommended. Finally the cross-sectional design does not permit causal inference beyond the SEM model's structural assumptions.

4. Case studies

4.1 Varanasi- Sacred heritage and riverfront identity

Varanasi situated in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh is eloquently regarded as one of the oldest continuously inhabited places on earth and represents India's one of the most concentrated amalgamations of tangible and intangible heritage. The city is known for the historic Kashi Vishwanath temple which has been rebuilt several times and the ceremonial Ghats of Ganga which serve as its spiritual and social spine. Varanasi is also home to master craftsmen in weaving,

pottery bead making and wooden toy carving, making it a rare confluence of sacred landscape and living crafts tradition.

The study precinct comprised Dashashwamedh ghat, the Kashi Vishwanath temple, Alamgir mosque and Panchganga ghat. The delineated area is more than thousand years olds with multiple layers of urban accretion. Post independence, built level conservation in the 1980s gave way to studies of urban morphology in 1990s (Rana P.B. Singh 1993). Concerns about urban decay surfaced in the early 2000s followed by documentation of intangible heritage. Post-2015 frameworks like the Smart City Mission and HRIDAY (Heritage city development and augmentation yojana) enabled heritage-led riverfront development. However future policy must address climate resilience, intellectual property, cultural rights, and data-driven governance envisaging the requirement of an encompassing framework.

4.2 Nagpur- Historic Urban Core

Nagpur is the second largest city in Maharashtra and the geographic centre of India. It is famous for its colonial era urban core including the civil lines district, the Mahal area and the Sitabuldi fort complex. The study precinct focusses on the Itavari area with lime mortar construction, curved wooden facades as well as shared courtyard

building is exhibited in the vernacular architecture typology which remain superimposed with modern commercial intrusions. Survey findings revealed moderate integration ratios and low governance participation, with 58% of respondents rating public amenities in heritage zones as insufficient.

4.3 Hubballi Dharwad-Spiritual edifices and craft traditions

Hubballi-Dharwad, a twin city conurbation in northern Karnataka is characterized by its network of Veerashaiva Mathas and Chalukyan temples together with a tradition of Kasuti embroidery and classical music. The study precinct covered the Shri Siddharudhamatha complex, the surrounding historic residential quarters and associated craft markets. The city provided the primary data-set for qualitative validation of the five-factor model (n=25) for the pilot study which concluded that the diverse parameters were covered. The comparative results are incorporated in the cross-city analysis.

5. Results

5.1. Summary of adequacy tests

Table 2 represents a comparative overview of the sampling adequacy and factorability test across all four datasets with KMO values representing minimum acceptable thresholds.

Table 4: Summary of KMO and Bartlett's Test Results* Expert dataset: Bartlett's test not significant

Test / Measure	Residents	Visitors (Exper.)	Artisans	Experts	Threshold
Sample Size (n)	319	89	62	61	
No. of Variables	16	16	8	6	
KMO Measure	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	>0.60 ideal
Bartlett's Chi-Sq	332.34	149.10	52.02	15.74	
Bartlett's p-value	< 0.001	0.037	0.004	0.400*	p < 0.05
Factors Extracted	7	7	4	3	

Test / Measure	Residents	Visitors (Exper.)	Artisans	Experts	Threshold
Cumul. Variance Explained	13.22%	14.83%	15.25%	11.81%	>50% ideal

5.2 Eigenvalue Analysis

Using the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue > 1.0), fifteen factors were extracted from residents' datasets and seven from visitor's datasets. Four factors were from artisan's data and three from expert's data. (table 3). The cumulative variance explained is modest across all data-sets (11.8-15.3%) indicating significant item level uniqueness. While this is common for exploratory social survey data spanning diverse topics, future instrument refinement may aim at higher cumulative value. Parallel analysis (Horn, 1965) was conducted as a supplementary check; results were consistent with Kaiser's criterion in all datasets.

5.3 Correlation analysis summary

The artisan's dataset exhibited the strongest inter variable correlation (maximum $|r| = 0.513$), followed by expert data (0.326), visitor's experience (0.290) and resident's perception (0.227). The gradient reflects the degree to which each group's experiences are structurally interconnected, artisan's whose livelihoods directly depend upon heritage infrastructure are more strongly knit. Fig1 shows the correlation matrices and heatmaps.

5.4 Exploratory factor analysis (Visitor's perception) 7 factors

Factor 1 (Cultural heritage Identity) is dominated by Unique food and cultural practices (loading-0.534). Factor 2 9heritage preservation is driven by preservation of intangible heritage (0.518). Factor 3 (community heritage activities captured periodic heritage- based community activities-(0.444). Factor 4 environmental protection enunciates prevention of environmental degradation (0.338). Factor 5 (social inclusion) is based on inclusive activities and governance

(0.446). Factor 6 and 7 relate to accessibility and maintenance of heritage sites.

5.5 Exploratory factor analysis (artisan's data) 4 factors

Factor 1(supply chain infrastructure) encompasses infrastructure for sourcing and storage (0.492) and people depending on livelihood (0.302). Factor2 (workplace adequacy captures proper space for craft activities (0.446) Factor 3 heritage space protection reflects protection of traditional congregational space and traditional craft livelihood. Factor 4 market access is defined by adequate space for peoples' interaction (0.406). The artisans' factor structure is the most coherent among all data sets, consistent with the highest inter variable correlation and clearest thematic structuring.

5.6 Exploratory factor analysis (expert data) 3 factors

Factor 1 (socio-environmental value) groups socio-cultural significance (0.389) and environmental sustainability (0.353). Factor 2 Urban planning integration focusses on heritage integrated future city design (0.440). factor 3 Livability is defined by sustainable and livable environment (0.251). However given the non-significant Bartlett test for this data set, the factors have to be substantiated.

5.7 Cross-city comparative analysis

Table 4 presents the mean indicator scores across the three cities (n = 300 per city). One-way ANOVA examined statistically significant city-level differences for HVA ($F = 12.3$, $p < 0.001$), SCI ($F = 8.7$, $p < 0.001$), ERP ($F = 10.1$, $p < 0.001$), and PEI ($F = 6.4$, $p = 0.002$). MHI differences were not statistically significant ($F = 1.8$, $p = 0.17$), reinforcing the interpretation that low infrastructure maintenance is a universal rather than city-level governance deficit.

Table 5: Cross-City Indicator Comparison — Mean Scores with ANOVA Results (Source: Authors, 2024)

City	HVA	SCI	ERP	MHI	PEI
Varanasi	3.85	3.81	3.92	2.88	3.41
Nagpur	3.42	3.55	3.38	2.73	3.09
Hubballi-Dharwad	3.70	3.66	3.73	2.99	3.24
Overall Mean	3.66	3.67	3.68	2.87	3.25
ANOVA p-value	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	0.17 (n.s.)	0.002

Varanasi recorded the highest scores on HVA, SCI, ERP, and PEI, reflecting its tremendous heritage density and well-established tourism economy, but also has the lowest MHI score, highlighting a critical infrastructure deficit. Nagpur records the lowest HVA and PEI scores, consistent with low visibility of heritage assets and limited public investment. The uniformly low MHI scores across all three cities (range: 2.73–2.99) constitute the study's most significant cross-city finding: a systemic governance deficit in heritage infrastructure maintenance that transcends city size, heritage typology, and geographic location.

6. Structural Equation Modelling

CFA confirmed acceptable model fit for the five-factor structure derived from the Hubballi-Dharwad dataset: CFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.068, SRMR = 0.072. AVE exceeded 0.50 for three of

five factors (HVA, ERP, MHI), and HTMT ratios were below 0.85 for all factor pairs, supporting discriminant validity. SEM tested the hypothesis that the latent construct 'Inclusion of Cultural Heritage' (ICH) predicts each of the five indicators. Path coefficients were statistically significant for HVA (beta = 0.61, $p < 0.001$), SCI (beta = 0.54, $p < 0.001$), ERP (beta = 0.58, $p < 0.001$), MHI (beta = 0.47, $p = 0.003$), and PEI (beta = 0.50, $p = 0.001$), accounting for 37–45% of variance in each indicator. These results support the validity of the five-indicator framework as a coherent measurement model for heritage integration in urban policy.

7. Discussion

7.1 interpretation of factor structure

The multidimensional factor structures obtained across various stakeholder groups reflects the

complex and intrinsic nature of heritage value. The resident's perception enunciates that heritage has profound impact on the livelihood of people staying near historical sites. The seven-factor solution for visitor's indicate that the heritage experience cannot be reduced to a single latent construct envisaging distinct dimensions of cultural identity, environmental sustainability, social inclusion and infrastructure quality. The findings from artisan's and expert groups also enunciates the relevance for preservation of heritage structures.

7.2 Policy Implications

The five validated indicators-heritage value assessment (HVA), socio-cultural impact (SCI), Economic rejuvenation potential (ERP), maintenance of heritage infrastructure (MHI)

and Positive environmental Impact (PEI) are proposed for adoption in India's smart city Mission and HRIDAY programme. The systemic deficit of infrastructure across all case study cities suggests a priority intervention domain-governance and funding mechanisms for heritage infrastructure maintenance. This may be accomplished by allocating exclusive budget for heritage precincts, tax incentives, private-public partnerships and framework for dynamic decision making.

The artisan's dimension highlights that heritage policy must address supply chain infrastructure, workplace provision and market access integral to heritage vitality, not merely as economic gains, but also integration of artisan livelihood indicators into heritage governance.

7.3 Comparison with International frameworks

The five indicators proposed here share thematic ground with UNESCO's HUL toolkit (2016) and ICOMOS principles for the conservation of heritage sites in China (2015). However, the study conceptualizes these themes with India specific survey items and statistical validation. Unlike the HUL toolkit which is primarily qualitative and contextual, this framework offers quantitative comparable scores enabling inter-city benchmarking, a feature particularly relevant to India's Smart city mission.

7.4 Communalities analysis and factor robustness

Communalities represent the proportion of each variable's variance explained by the extracted factors. Across all datasets, communality is generally low to moderate range: 0.10–0.29), consistent with the modest cumulative variance explained. In the visitor perception data, Unique Food and Cultural Practices ($h^2 = 0.290$) and Preservation of Intangible Heritage ($h^2 = 0.272$) have the highest communalities. In the artisan data, Infrastructure for Sourcing and Storage ($h^2 = 0.270$) and Proper Space for Craft Activities ($h^2 = 0.234$) are best-represented.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Answering the research question

The study was motivated by the research question- if cultural heritage is to be integrated in the contemporary urban policy in India, what may be the probable indicators? Based on a mixed method study across three contrasting Indian cities, Varanasi, Nagpur and Hubballi-Dharwad the five validated indicators are proposed.

Heritage value Assessment (HVA) Integration ratio; Proportion of structures more than 100 years, accessibility index and cultural identity index.

Socio-cultural Impact (SCI) Vitality of unique cultural practices, perceived importance of heritage revival as well as perceived rate of cultural loss.

Economic rejuvenation potential (ERP) Heritage based livelihood opportunities, vitality of local businesses and quality of infrastructure and smart governance.

Maintenance of Heritage infrastructure (MHI) Tourism linked amenity improvement, government conservation effort and adequacy of public infrastructure.

Positive Environment impact (PEI) Heritage landscape's role in maintaining bio-diversity, reducing construction pressure and enabling sustainable public space.

8.2 Study Limitations

Limitations include KMO values of the lower boundary of acceptability (0.50), low cumulative variance explained (11.8-15.3%), non-significant Bartlett result for the expert data-set, modest artisan and expert sample sizes, cross-sectional design and the absence of longitudinal tracking to assess indicator change over time. The purposive sampling strategy limits claim of statistical representativeness beyond the studied precinct.

8.3 Recommendations for future research

Replicate the instrument across additional Indian cities, including metropolitan and heritage towns to assess scalability.

Expand the present sample (target $n \geq 150$) to achieve Bartlett significance and improve the

robustness of the expert factor solution.

Develop multi-item sub-scales for each of the five indicators to improve internal consistency and communality.

Incorporate longitudinal data collection to track indicators change in line with heritage policy interventions.

Integrate qualitative case narratives with quantitative scores to provide contextual depth in city level reporting.

Test the heritage framework in various cities with distinct typologies not covered in the present study like coastal maritime heritage, tribal/indigenous heritage and industrial heritage.

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