

# Tourist Destination Pressures Task

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## Introduction

Tourism plays a vital role in the economy of any country as it brings millions of dollars into the economy and also makes the circulation of money faster and regular due to the ample amount of money spent by the tourists in the country. This report is about one of the most important tourist sites in Amsterdam, Netherland; the Rijksmuseum. The museum plays a vibrant role in the tourism industry and the economy of the city and the country as well. Every year, thousands of people from within the country and around the world come to visit the museum and in this way, give a boost to the Dutch economy (Pekel, 2014). It has been reported that the Rijksmuseum contributes about €235 million to the Dutch GDP with each visitor contributing €110. It is also reported that the museum is expected to contribute approximately €3 billion to the GDP of Dutch economy till 2017, and 5%-10% of the tourist expenditures in Amsterdam are dedicated to the museum only. The museum is also the source of income for 3700 people in the form of jobs (ING, 2015).

It has been reported by (Trend, 2013), that one fourth of the tourists coming to Amsterdam come only to visit the Rijksmuseum. The increasing number of tourists every year at the museum puts a lot of pressure on the economy and environment of the city and also makes it even more challenging for the management of the museum and the city as well. There is a need to make proper policies to tackle the increasing number of tourists that turn towards the city and the museum every year so that sustainable tourism can be ensured (Dutchnews.nl, 2009).

The report is divided into six major sections. The first section of the report is a detailed review of the destination that is the Rijksmuseum located in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The section includes the history of the museum and its cultural importance. It also covers the details about a major decade-long renovation project of the museum. The second section specifically focuses on the tourism situation of the museum, its popularity among the tourists and future prospects. The third section explains the carrying capacity and sustainable tourism with respect to the museum. The fourth section explains the issue that the museum faced and might face in the future due to increasing tourist pressure. The fifth section provides possible solutions for those issues and also

explains how other similar sites are coping up with the situation and how their policies and tactics can be used in making this museum able to deal with the tourism pressures. The last section concludes the report.

## 1. Rijksmuseum and Its History

Dedicated to history, and art of the city, the Rijksmuseum is one of the most famous museums in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The meaning of the word Rijksmuseum is ‘The State Museum’. It is not only well-known among the local people of Amsterdam and Netherlands, but people from all over the world come to visit the museum due to its unique and focused dedication to the culture of the city. People who are more interested in knowing about the cultural details and history of the city and Netherlands always put it into their to-do list while coming to Amsterdam. The location of the museum the south of the city and is also significant due to its proximity to other historical sites including Van Gogh Museum, the Concertgebouw and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (Keogh, 2015).



(Taylor-Foster, 2014).

The Museum was erected about 200 years ago in 1800 by the name of the ‘Nationale Kunstgallerik’ meaning the National Art Gallery. Since that time, the museum went through series of episodes of renovation, and reopening and always received great appreciation from its visitors and critical acclaimers. Initially, the museum was developed in The Hague in 1800 but after eight years, it was moved to the city of Amsterdam. In Amsterdam, the location of the museum changed twice; first being The Royal Palace and second being the Trippenhuis that is the current location (Taylor-Foster, 2014).



Source: (Taylor-Foster, 2014).

(Fabrikant, 2013), reported that after being moved to Amsterdam, the museum went through rigorous and detailed remodeling and this neogothic cathedral was mainly dedicated to the Dutch art. The renovation and remodeling started in the year 1876, and Pierre Cuypers was the main architect of the building. After long renovation and construction episode, the museum was opened for public nine years after the renovation in 1885. The work on the building was highly appreciated by the common visitors and critics but during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the building started experiencing terrifying decay raising many questions in the historical and cultural society of the city.



(Rijksmuseum, 2015).

### **1.1. Renovation and Reopening**

According to (BBC News, 2012), due to the increasing number of visitors every year and rising pressures of tourists, it was the need of the hour to do something about the worsening condition of the museum and form another plan that operates for the conservation of the culture make the museum a growing tourist destination. By the time when the renovation project was designed, and the museum was closed for public, the building was already 128 years old, and a critical strategy was needed to meet the needs of the building. The renovation project covered the inside and the outside of the building including the building, structure, sculptures, paintings, and other art objects. After the extensive renovation of a decade, the museum was opened for public. According to critics, the renovation project did live up to the expectations and changed entire façade of the museum and turned into a whole new and interesting masterpiece (Volner, 2013).

Apart from the objects in display, structure and sculptures in the museum, a keen attention was also given to the lighting of the building to make the displays and façade more attractive. For that purpose, various light systems and showcases were installed in the building. The rooms and halls of the building were also painted in a certain way to make them brighter. Below images portray some of the lightings in the building.

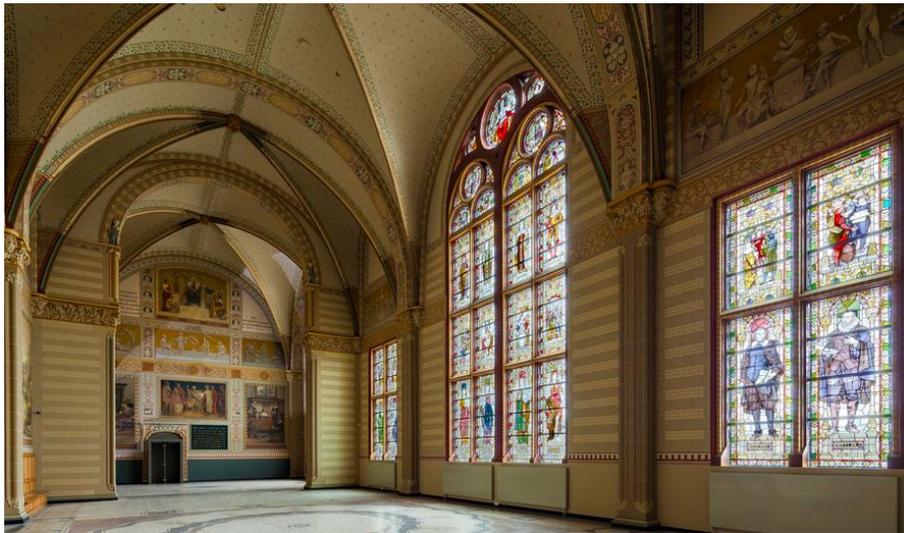


Source: (Volner, 2013).



(Volner, 2013).

After the re-engineering of the museum, its art objects and displays, the museum became an even more beautiful piece of history, art and time. The museum is now regularly visited by hundreds of people that not only come from Netherlands and Europe but from all over the world. According to research, it is one of the most famous museums in the European region and has confirmed sustainable tourism prospects (Rijksmuseum, 2015).



Source: (Reuters, 2008).

Although the initial cost of the renovation project was estimated to be around 375 euros, but by the end of the project, an estimated cost of \$500 million had been incurred due to extensive focus on arts, objects, paintings, ceilings, structure of the building and lightning that was stretched across the magnificent 80-room building. At the time when the renovation project was going on, it was also estimated that the renovation is most likely to increase the number of visitors by double reaching about 2 million per year (Holland, 2013).

As Amsterdam is one of the most famous cities and visitor sites in the world, it also has several other attractions and in that scenario, the renovation team was also facing some marketing challenges, and there was need of some rigorous marketing strategies that can make the museum tourists' first and foremost priority in the city. For marketing only, \$16 million were allocated, and that money is still spent every year on the marketing of the museum to attract tourists from

all over the world. The main focus of the marketing strategy was to make it the most famous and yet a regular tourist site in the city, so the tourists do not just rely on one visit but always considering coming back to the museum (Fabrikant, 2013).

## 2. Increasing Tourism at Rijksmuseum



Source: (Volner, 2013).

In 2003, the museum was shut down due to its 'not so good' condition and a renovation project was designed for the museum that was focused on cultural conservation of the museum and the city. After the period of ten years and the expenses of about € 375, the museum was reopened for the public. Right now, the Rijksmuseum has one million objects in the display, 8000 of them are related to arts and culture of the city. The objects belong to different time periods, some of them being as old as eight centuries. The museum also has a library in it that has a fascinating collection of old books and literature (Keogh, 2015). According to some critics, the renovation project took more than expected and a decade is a lot more time than what should normally be taken for a normal renovation project. But there were many reasons for the delay including

budget constraints, management, and bicyclists' resistance who did not want the route to be closed due to the renovation project (Rijksmuseum, 2015).



Source: (Fabrikant, 2013).

In 2008, the renovation project was again stopped due to some dispute over the financial issue between the government and the contractor who was given the tender to renovate the building. The government official said that the contractor won the bid of the project due to its lowest cost, but now the project is costing more than expected. Later on, the issue was resolved and after deciding the estimated cost of the project, it was announced that the building would be opened for public after the renovation project ends in 2013. In 1995, the museum had about 942,000 visitors that raised to 1,146,438 in 2000 and raised to 2,450,000 in 2014. The number is expected to rise even more and rapidly in the future (Reuters, 2008).

(Fabrikant, 2013), reported that apart from the fact that the museum renovation project attracted a huge number of people annually from around the world, there are several other reasons that are making the site more and more famous every day for the tourists; the growing surroundings of the museum. By the start of the 21st century, as the world has witnessed rapid changes, so did the city of Amsterdam. The surroundings of the museum started growing and getting more

advance by the passage of time, making the site more attractive for tourists. Several hotels have been opened in the city and many of them upgraded including the Conservatorium Hotel, Hotel de L'Europe, Andaz, and the Amsterdam Hotel that is also dedicated to providing special offers to its customers promoting the culture and heritage of the city. Critics and people from the tourism industry believe that the museum has a high probability of becoming more famous in the next few years, and the number of tourists is more likely to increase to a major extent as well raising the pressure on the museum management and the local authorities as well (Keogh, 2015).



Source: (Holland, 2013).

### **3. Carrying Capacity and Sustainable Tourism: An Overview**

Carrying capacity holds a very important spot in the survival of a tourist destination as it represents the number of tourists it can address in one year. The management of every tourist destination always tries to maximize the carrying capacity of the destination so that more people can come to visit the destination every year, and more profit can be generated and for that, a huge amount of money is allocated to the renovation and construction projects. The management of the tourist destination need to make sure that the destination is ready to accommodate the

anticipated number of tourists, and proper arrangements have been made. If the destination receives tourists more than the carrying capacity of the destination, there can be consequences e.g. lack of inability to handle the number of tourists, poor management and lack of tourist satisfaction. On the other hand, when the tourist destination can attend the anticipated number of tourists and can also attend the increasing number of tourists every year; it means that the destination has sustainable tourism (Salerno, et al., 2013).

(UNESCO, 2015), have designed a special sustainable tourism plan for the cultural and historical tourist sites around the world. The vision of the plan is that it is the responsibility of the stakeholders to work collectively for the conservation of the world heritage, and culture, and proper tourism management action plan is to be adopted. Rijksmuseum is also one of the tourist sites that is supported by the project, and sustainable tourism is ensured at the site. The main actions plans of the strategy at the Rijksmuseum include the promotion of the site, ensuring that the carrying capacity of the museum is maintained and increases by time. It is also ensured to develop a proper marketing plan and strategy for the museum and make sure that the tourists that visit the museum or are planning to get proper information about getting there and other necessary information so that their experience can be made unforgettable and comfortable (Tjolle, 2015).

According to (Amsterdam, 2015), the management of the museum had done a lot to ensure sustainable tourism at the museum. The management has arranged for city tours for the tourists that includes tour to many historical sites in the city including the Museum. As the museum attends thousands of tourists every day, and most of them also prefer to go other sites near the museum, therefore the management has arranged bicycles for the tourists which they can use to move around the neighborhood because if every tourist starts to use motorbike or a car for transportation around the site, it would definitely generate a chaos in the surroundings of the museum. The management also supports and instructs the tourists to use these eco-friendly bikes or walk for the sake of greener tourism (Salerno, et al., 2013).

## **4. Pressures Faced by Rijksmuseum**

### **4.1. Financial Constraints**

The renovation project of the museum costed millions of dollars that included the money spent on infrastructure, ceiling, doors, entrance, objects in the display, marketing, paintings and gardens of the museum. The money spent on the project made dramatic changes into the façade of the museum but it is obvious that it was not a one-time cost, and the museum needs some money put into its maintenance every year so that the museum does not face the terrible decay it was facing before the renovation project. Right now, the city management spends about 500 million euros for the cultural conservation of the city but as the museum is becoming more famous by the passage of time and has to tackle more tourists every year, the government is facing the financial constraints and the management also feels that the increasing demand for funds has started to become a hurdle in sustainable development (Higgins, 2013).

### **4.2. Competition**

The Rijksmuseum is located at one of the most important places in the city of Amsterdam. The place is not only home for the museum, but many other important sites are also near the museum and, therefore, is even more important and busy. Several hotels have been opened near the museum, and there are also other museums including Van Gogh, Diamante Museum, several cafes and eat out spots, theaters, display galleries, canal boats experience opportunities, Coster Diamonds, Zuiderbad and many more places to go. Therefore, the museum faces competition with all of them and with the increasing number of tourists every year coming to the museum, the competition is more likely to increase with every coming year (Holland, 2015).

### **4.3. Litter**

The local people of Amsterdam complain that the increasing number of tourists in the city is making the city more dirty and filthy by the passage of time as the number of tourists is increasing every year. More importantly, the space near the Rijksmuseum, as is also home to many other historical sites is even more affected by the high number of tourists. People report that a huge number of tourists come to the neighborhood every day and only some of them care

enough to put their litter into the trash cans and the others just litter on the road or the parks making it difficult for the residents to deal with and also for the management team that gathers up the litter later on. In this scenario, keeping the place clean and litter-free has started to become more and more challenging with every passing day (Tjolle, 2015).

#### **4.4. Congestion**

Local people also report that the tourists are way too much in the city, and that's why have made the city full of people that is not easy to deal with. The local people visiting the Rijksmuseum report that they are tired of waiting in long queues because there are more people from outside the city or country to visit the museum that even the local people have to wait for hours to visit the museum (Tjolle, 2015).

#### **4.5. Marketing**

With the increasing number of visitors, more competition, and advance communication means, it has also emerged as a challenge for the management team of the museum to design a specific well-focused marketing technique for the museum and make sure that the museum is a visiting site not only for students or a limited number of tourists (I am Sterdam, 2015).

### **5. Solutions for Long-term Success of the Destination**

#### **5.1. Finance**

Most of the funds (50-70%) for the maintenance of the museum come from the government, but the ratio has now started to reduce and most of the money is generated with the help of ticketing etc. The museum management now needs to make sure that it develops a proper system of financial flow for the museum so that the maintenance projects do not come to a halt due to financial constraints. For that purpose, the management team needs to rely on fund-raising, and marketing for the museum because bringing more visitors to the museum is one of the most influential ways to deal with the financial constraints (Martin, 2013).

#### **5.2. Urban Museum**

It is stated by (Tzortzi, 2015), that museums play a significant role in the urban development of a city and the country as well. They are a vibrant way to represent the heritage and culture of the

city and should, therefore, be focused for urban interpretation of the city. The design of the museum should be focused to make the environment of the surrounding more open and culturally broader so that more tourists get attracted towards the site in the form an 'urbanized museum'. The method can make the museum site more commercial and can also help to manage the increasing flow of visitors.

### **5.3. Indoor Environment**

A higher number of visitors every year coming to the museum does affect the environment of the city in several negative ways; it results in congestion, chaos, rush, more waiting time even for the residents who come to see the museum, trash, and many more problems. But the higher number of visitors does not only affect the outer environment of the museum; it also affects the inner environment of the museum in the form of congestion and rush. Although the building of the Rijksmuseum is big and airy but it is still pretty obvious that higher number of tourist visiting the museum is more likely to cause congestion problems and indoor environment issues at the museum (Rijksmuseum, 2015).

For that purpose, the management of the museum can cope with the situation by focusing more on the indoor environment infrastructure of the museum with specially designed cooling systems. (Ferdyn-Grygierek, 2014), studied the cooling system developed in a museum in Poland to cope with the humidity and indoor environment issues at the museum and the paper was focused to analyze the outcomes of the system. The study narrated that the indoor environment of the museum is in higher need of a cooling system in summer than in winter because of the outer environment. Another reason to that is that in winters, people do not prefer to travel that much and stay at home while, in summers, people plan domestic and international trips and, therefore, the visitor sites are more likely to face the tourist pressure in summer. Therefore, the management of the museum and every indoor visitor site should focus on developing a cooling system for the summer than the winter (Krupinska, et al., 2013).

#### **5.4. Visitor Learning Project as a Tool for Marketing**

Marketing is certainly the most influential way to promote something whether it is a product or a place. The importance of marketing got even more intensified when the world entered the era of technology and started relying more on digital media rather than one on one conversations. In the case of Rijksmuseum, the marketing strategy is also one of the most influential ways to attract more visitors to the site. The Museum of Malaysia adopted a very innovative strategy to attract more visitors in the form of an informational session, temporary exclusive exhibitions along with the permanent exhibitions at the museum and other informational campaigns for the visitors (Stylianou-Lambert, 2011). The theory behind the sessions and arrangements is that the people coming to visit the museum are looking for something much more than just entertainment. If it was only about entertainment, they could have gone to a movie theater or a zoo. But at a museum, people look for information, knowledge and want to get a trip to the history in a couple of minutes. Visitors can never be willing to come to a museum again if they notice that it only conveys a limited amount of information every time with no increment. Therefore, these extra and exclusive sessions can play a vital role as a marketing strategy for the museum to attract more tourists and ensure sustainable tourism (Ahmed, et al., 2014).

### **6. Conclusion**

The tourism industry has an influential role in the economy of a country as it brings thousands of people from around the world to the visitor sites in the country and also supports the country in terms of culture, heritage, strategic, economic and political aspects. On the other hand, it also brings lots of challenges to the country especially to the visitor site as the popularity of the tourist site begins to increase.

The Rijksmuseum is one of the most famous tourist destinations in the beautiful city of Amsterdam, Netherlands. More than two hundred years old, this museum was initially developed in The Hague but moved to Amsterdam and after a long construction period was opened for public in late 1980's and gained rapid popularity. But by the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the

management felt terrible decay in the building and closed the building for a renovation, project in 2003. After a prolonged period of renovation the museum was opened for public in 2013.

After the reopening, the museum gained rapid popularity and with the increasing number of tourists, it had faced several challenges including constant maintenance of the building instead of financial constraint, congestion in the city, competition with other tourists' sites in the city leading to the need for proper marketing strategy, and litter issues. To deal with all these problems, the management team needs to work on some long-term plans including rigorous marketing strategy, diverse projects for marketing in the museum, urbanization of the museum and building an indoor environment conservation system for the building. As finance is one of the major issues it is facing because in the past, government was the major sponsor of the museum and about 70% of the budget came from the government but now the percentage has started to decrease, the museum needs to develop a marketing strategy to attract to the site so that more people come to the museum, and higher revenue can be generated. Research says that there is a bright chance that the museum would get more tourists with every coming year and therefore, proper strategies and action plans are necessary to make sure that the museum can handle the increasing number of tourists and ensure sustainable tourism at the museum.

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