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A virtual time machine for tourists



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HYDERABAD: After the successful launch of the global positioning system (GPS)-enabled video tour of the Golconda Fort, plans are afoot to extend a similar service to the Qutb Shahi tombs and the Charminar. 26-year-old Kaushal Bhalotia, founder and CEO of My IndiEye, a company incubated by the Indian School of Business (ISB) and promoted by the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC), is the man behind the GPS video tour and he's now working on extending the same to the other monuments in the city.

Innovation at its best is what many call this GPS-video tour gadget, which looks similar to an iPhone. The concept conceived at the ISB caught the attention of the Ministry of Tourism for the same reason. The project which took almost a year to take shape, is also the first time that such a techno-tourism innovation has been made in the country.

A touch screen Google Android-powered device, it offers a wide range of options for tourists like credible and authentic content that award-winning historians and film-makers have documented, dramatic re-creation of historic events, animated stories with dialogues and sound effects and archival videography. The highly flexible device also allows customers to customize the content based on the time available to them.

Kaushal Bhalotia's major project at postgraduate level in the ISB took the shape of a public-private partnership entrepreneurial venture, when it was noticed by the Tourism department of the state. "Jayesh Ranjan, Secretary, Tourism, AP, and the ISB have been instrumental in the venture as they recognized the potential in a mere student," says a modest Bhalotia sitting at his office on the ISB campus.

Asked why the Golconda Fort was selected, he replies that it is the most famous tourist spot in the city along with the Charminar, and its history has been quite ambiguous. "There was scope for great research-based story telling and innovation," he points out. On whether his device could face competition from tourist guides, he explains that guides concentrate on groups whereas the GPS-enabled device provides an in-depth individual experience for people of all ages.

Kiran, a tourist, felt that "the venture is certainly a novelty and provides complete information, which in case of personal guides may not be receivable because of various linguistic constraints. Story telling with audio visuals, animation etc certainly was a unique experience". Another tourist Dileep, a research scholar, felt that, "The history told here is well researched and mostly unknown. I have been to the Golconda fort so many times, but this time, I felt like the place had come alive from a mere collection of rocks."

"The unique feature about the video tour is that it is active and participative. The delivery of history is not in one's living room like in the case of a NatGeo documentary but at the very location," said Viswesh, an associate who handles the technology section in the project.

Presently the equipment is being rented for `350 and `500, through major hotels in the city like, Taj Krishna, Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre, Tank Bund, Hotel Novotel, Hitech city; and The Golconda, Masab tank. Online bookings and phone bookings are also available on (<<http://www.myindieye.com/contact/>>) and +91 9666407234 respectively. A counter at the Golconda fort is to be opened soon, which would make the facility available for the local tourists. "The talks are in the process with the archeological department and we expect to have it soon for the benefit of locals," said B Manohar, Deputy GM, APTDC.

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