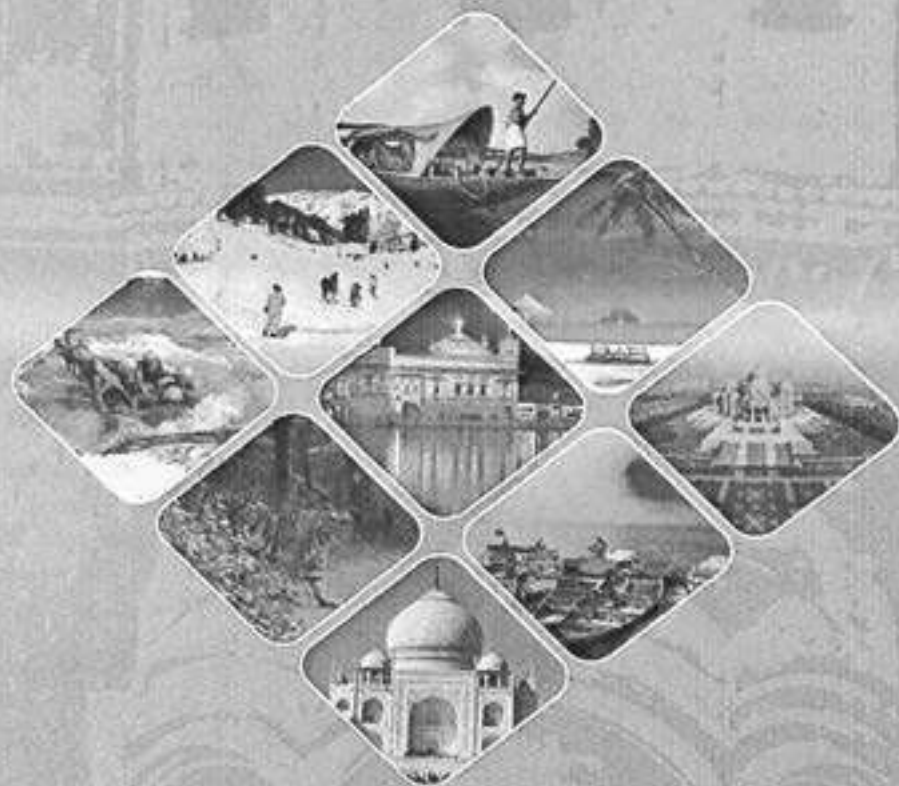


TOURISM IN INDIA: OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES



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[Signature]
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Tourism in India: Some Issues

Dr. Ranjula Jain

The tourism industry of India is economically important and is growing rapidly. The World Travel & Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated INR 6.4 trillion or 6.6% of the nation's GDP in 2012.

- Supported 39.5 million jobs, 7.7% of its total employment.
- This sector is predicted to grow at an average annual rate of 7.9 % from 2013 to 2023.
- India ranked as 38th country in the world in terms of foreign tourist arrivals.

Challenges

Various challenges/issues faced by the domestic travel & tourism industry in India.

1) Lack of Proper Infrastructure: -

Infrastructure needs for the travel & tourism industry range from physical infrastructure such as ports of entry to modes of transportation to urban infrastructure such as access roads, electricity, water supply, sewerage & telecommunication. The sectors related to the travel & tourism industry include airlines, surface transport, accommodation [hotels] & infrastructure and facilitation systems, among others:

- Access and connectivity: To harness India's tourism potential, several efforts are being taken for opening new destinations & exploring niche segments. However, infrastructure facilities such as air, rail, road connectivity & hospitality services at these destinations and the connecting sites are inadequate. This remains a major hurdle for development of tourism.
- Roadways form a vital network in the tourist industry with almost 70% tourist in India travelling by road. Despite numerous efforts to improve road infrastructure, connectivity remains a major problem. Thus, there is a greater need for strengthened road & rail network.

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- Aviation infrastructure is also critical since it is a major mode of entry for inbound tourism. Passenger traffic is expected to increase in the coming years, however, infrastructure facilities at airports are a cause a concern, which further poses a great threat for this industry.

2) Human Resource

Availability of skilled manpower is a major challenge faced by the travel & tourism industry. To sustain growth in the tourism industry, trained manpower is required at entry level - management, supervisory etc. A study conducted by Ministry of Tourism suggests that existing supply of human resources do not cater to even 40% of the demand. Thus, the industry has no alternative but to fill the void with untrained resources. Such a high proportion of untrained manpower would adversely affect quality of services offered to the tourists.

3) Service Level

In addition to tour operators and hotel staff, tourists interact with persons from different backgrounds, occupations & experience. Such people include staff at bus/railway station, immigration staff at airports, taxi/coach operators, staff at heritage sites, among others. The degree of service offered by these various stakeholders has a significant impact on determining the tourist's destinations. Therefore, the training provided for these purposes play an important role. Though, many such initiatives have been taken such as AtithiDevoBhava, this doesn't prove to be enough to cater to the demands of the tourist.

4) Lack of Marketing & Promotion

Marketing and promotion of India as a major tourist destination is critical for the industry to achieve its potential. Lack of adequate budgetary support for promotion & marketing, compared with competing tourist destinations, is a major concern. To remain competitive in the fiercely competitive field, India needs to change its traditional marketing approach to a more competitive & modern approach. There is a need to develop a unique market position & the brand positioning statement should capture the essence of the country's tourism products.

5) Taxation

Travel & Tourism in India is a high-taxed industry, which makes India expensive as a tourist destination. This is affecting the

growth of the industry in India and India is losing out to other low cost destinations. Various taxes are levied across the entire industry right from tour operators, transporters, airline industry to hotels & these include service tax, luxury tax, tax on transportation etc. In addition, these taxes to vary across different states in the country.

6) Security

Security has been a major problem as well for growth of tourism for a number of years. Terrorist attacks or political unrest in different parts of the country have adversely affected the sentiments of foreign tourists. Thus, the government needs to take a proactive approach in addressing these issues and in averting the potential impact on the industry.

7) Regulatory Issues

For inbound international tourists, visa procedures are such a hindrance. A number of countries competing with India for tourists provide visa on arrival. This strategy would prove to be a hindrance of the development of tourism industry in India.

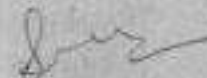
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- 1,000 Places to See Before You Die - A Traveler's Life List by Patricia Schultz
- Tourism in India by Vijay Kumar Gupta
- Travel Kit of Northern India by C. C. S.Menon



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