
A PROGNOSIS OF DESTINATION MARKETING IN INDIA

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Abstract: Destination marketing is a novel concept consisting of a set of strategies that can be used to guide the development of tourism in different destinations (tourism places) in India. This paper explains about the concept of differentiating various destinations in India and attempts to integrate the various well-defined models available for strategic marketing and management of tourist destinations. It offers an outline of some of the unique strategies implemented by every state government in India to promote tourism. The paper also emphasizes the fact that strategic marketing of destinations must harmonize the strategic objectives of all stakeholders and the ability of local residents to sustain in the long-term. Destinations need to differentiate their products by conducting cutting edge research in order to display their unique value and expand partnerships between the public and private sector at different levels of destination management in a way that renders the delivery mechanism effective and prompt. Furthermore, diverse technological advances such as business-analytics, web-based promotional measures have increased travelers' access to wider range of data. They also aid in maintaining the competitiveness of destinations. DMOs (Destination Marketing Organizations) should be formed in the line with the global approach to increase the value of Indian Tourism; improve brand penetration; and deliver long-term growth. By addressing the concerns and by providing a motivating force, the Indian destinations will become more attractive.

Keywords: Destination, Indian Tourism, Research, DMO.

Introduction: India has witnessed an unprecedented growth in domestic and international tourism over the past decade. Considering its area, it is the seventh largest country in the world with an area of 3.3 million square kilometers. It is also the second most populated country in the world with a population of approximately 1.25 billion. Approximately 16 major languages are spoken in India with Hindi being national language spoken by 45% of the total population. Almost 50% of the population is under 25 years of age. India is governed under a parliamentary system consisting of 7 union territories and 29 states and all but 5 union territories have elected governments and legislatures [1].

The Economic Survey for 2012-13 tabled in Indian Parliament said that, World tourist arrivals are expected to increase by 43 million every year on

an average from 2010 to 2030. It also said that Foreign Tourist Arrivals in emerging countries like India is expected to grow faster than in advanced economies. A promising opportunity in tourism is awaiting India, which at present it has a paltry share of 0.64 per cent in world tourist arrivals.

According to a recent annual report by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 2014 is expected to be a year of "above-average growth" for travel and tourism in India. WTTC's Annual Economic Impact Report 2014 for India shows travel and tourism's economic contribution is expected to grow by 7.3 percent this year, outperforming the general economy by 2.5 percentage points. Revenue from domestic tourism is expected to increase by 8.2 percent in 2014 compared to 5.1 percent in 2013, the report noted. In 2014, the contribution of tourism to

India's GDP was 6.8 per cent and its contribution to total employment generation was 10.2 per cent (direct 4.4 per cent and indirect 5.8 per cent) [2].

This study provides an insightful view into the scope of destination marketing in the near future. Section 2 discusses the problems of Indian tourism. Section 3 presents the research findings and analysis. The final section (Section 4) provides the conclusion.

Tourism problems in India: The Indian government's "Incredible India" tourism campaign and the information technology growth in India have been attracting millions of foreign tourists and business tourists to India. India is placed among the top three medical tourism destinations among Asian countries [5], mainly due to the low cost treatment, good quality healthcare infrastructure and availability of highly-skilled doctors, says a study. It is also home to a diversity of wildlife in a variety of protected habitats. The country is also known for its alternative treatment options such as Yoga and Ayurveda [6]. The climate conditions, friendliness of local population contribute a lot currently to the increase in the number of tourists. In spite of faster growth, the industry still is hampered by several problems like –

- Poor transportation
- Lack of basic hygienic facilities at halting points
- Lack of standardization in rates and fares
- Lack of resonance advertising and promotion strategies
- Poor maintenance of heritages
- Issues regarding safety and harassment
- Lack of ardent and trained professionals
- Insufficient capacity
- Expensive travel – increasing fuel surcharges, bad flight management practices etc
- Lack of encouraging infrastructure – bad roads, improper health and hygiene, communication gaps, etc
- Demand-Supply gap in manpower

- Stringent rules for issue of special permit to view restricted areas sites
- Inefficient crowd management
- Involvement of too many agents and tourism operators
- Lack of entrepreneurship opportunities, restricting people from taking up a career in tourism.

Tourism development is tougher in the rural areas. Although these areas are rich in natural beauty, they often lack basic infrastructure and lodgings for tourists. Being highly agrarian in nature, even the government is unable to secure enough land for developing tourism infrastructure as it adversely affects local farmers.

It is very essential to promote Brand India as a tourist destination beginning at the state level and as a nation on the whole. However the tourism departments are always cash strapped. The general apathy towards work along with aging manpower never works in favor of brand promotion [3].

Research Findings and Analysis:

3.1 Steps taken by Indian Government: In September 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi thrilled many Indian-Americans at Madison Square Garden with his promise to make it easier for them to visit India. The prime minister's key offerings to his Indian-American audience included lifelong visas for people of Indian heritage and visas on arrival for U.S. citizens to India. This will ensure an increase in the visitors coming to India. The latest data from the tourism ministry showing the tourists' arrival to India in May, 2014 stands at 4.21 lakhs as against 3.84 lakhs during the same period last year. The growth rate during this period has been 9.7 percent, as compared to a growth of 2.5 percent registered in the same period the previous year (May 2013 - May 2012) [9].

There was also an increase in issuance of Visas on Arrival (VoA). In May 2014, 1,833 VoAs were issued as in comparison with 1,114 VoAs during

the same month last year, marking a growth of 64.5 per cent. Though the tourism industry seems to be witnessing a revival, hoteliers feel that a lot more needs to be done to boost the economy so that it could, in turn, benefit the hotel sector. The new government, however, has given some hope by declaring tourism as its top priority. It is one of the 5Ts - talent, tradition, tourism, trade and technology - that the government wants to focus on [4]. The campaigning of 'Swach Bharath' by top leaders, sportspersons, film personalities, industry leaders and other notable luminaries will certainly aid in tourism development in India in the near future. The need of the hour is dynamic manpower that is committed to take up tourism as a career. It is imperative for them to work harder to help the tourists explore the diversity in Indian Destinations. By addressing the problems ailing the tourism industry, the government's commitment and action can make India a safe tourist destination.

Destination Marketing Strategies:

The strategies to be followed will involve design a set of projects in infrastructure improvement especially in those parts of the tourism experience which find the destination wanting in terms of infrastructure (mostly road and pedestrian transportation). It shall include synergies and cooperation between the private and public sector (Private Public Partnership). It includes taking effective actions for maintenance and enhancement of cultural resources, by involving specialists to determine their uniqueness and measurement of their attractiveness. Natural environment shall be maintained by cleaning coasts and beaches, creation of special environmental protection and conservation zones, use of information systems to control and monitor the environmental quality. It shall capitalize on corrective actions and strengths, by converting them into promoted advantages that will lead to the creation of a modern and competitive brand

identity.

Specifically, considering that the local population has been proven to be a major component of the positive image of the destination, it can also be a basic element of the destination branding, identity and diversity. Another strategy is to focus on product differentiation that can be achieved through the selection of those characteristics that emerged as strong elements of supply, meaning those elements that make a difference such as the climate, the natural beauty and cultural elements. Additionally it will involve planning and developing actual marketing campaigns that focus on promoting the features of product differentiation. This includes planning public relations programs focused on the steady promotion and communication of corrective actions to all stakeholders in order to create and maintain relations of mutual understanding and goodwill between all stakeholders in the tourism process and customer markets. Special attention must be given to tour-operators and travel agencies which deal with our customers, since it is a general observation that they maintain their stronghold on the purchase decision. Therefore, this study offers guidelines for investment priorities, branding issues, promotional strategies and focus for further research.

Conclusion: Destination marketing is becoming more complex as tourists treat regions merely as an experience; often ignoring that tourism products consist of a great number of individually produced products and services. Global competition and industry concentration throw up new challenges. In this sense, destination marketers have to achieve strategic objectives set through stakeholder analysis and match the appropriate demand with supply, by using the entire range of marketing tools for communicating with consumers and suppliers. Travelers reposition destination marketing to be the main interface between consumers and local principals. Consumers are increasingly following

special interests and regard their trips as both recreational and educational experiences. Therefore, destination themes and their interpretation are assuming more significance for the future. It requires training of human resources to learn from each other and to adapt

to demand requirements. Innovative marketing led by research and using new technologies will be the only way to manage market competitive destinations in the future for the benefits of the stakeholders.

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