

Opportunities, challenges & strategies to market India as a destination to foreign tourists

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Tourism is an important sector of the economy. With its strong backward and forward linkages with other sectors of the economy, tourism has the potential to not only be the economy driver, but also an efficient tool for society upliftment. India's rank in international tourist arrivals is 41st with the percentage share a meagre 0.59%. Tourism is an important contributor to Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE). In terms of international tourism receipts worldwide, India's percentage share is 1.24% of the world. While it is a fact that tourism is a sunrise sector in India, primarily because of the tremendous variety and richness of its innumerable tourist destinations that have not yet been fully exploited, it is also a fact that almost all the sectors in the country have a tremendous potential fueled by decades of non deliverance. The low tourist numbers, therefore, do not surprise, despite the euphoria in the domestic hospitality and tourism sector. The euphoria is there because the relatively low supply levels choke the available infrastructure in the hospitality and tourism sectors. Hence, there is a need to ponder and ultimately find ways to provide the fundamental tourist necessities that are considered as passé by the roving tourist. While India is rich in terms of richness of its tourist destinations, culture and history; it lags behind in infrastructure and service sectors compared to European countries. To reach tourist destinations in India, it requires long and tiring travel unlike in Europe, where destinations are nearer and travel is pleasant. Tourism is developing as a key service sector for India. However, it still gets only 0.58% of international travellers and much lower than outbound travels also. This is the right time to scale up at a much higher pace, some of the reasons which are limiting India in attracting potential tourist.

Low Brand Recall of many key Destinations/ Circuits, thus not featuring in consideration set

- Poor Infrastructure and Accommodation gaps
- Perception of safety in the region
- Hygiene and sanitation
- Competitors having more competitively priced packages
- Acute shortage of trained manpower
- Perception of tourism environment
- Lack of seamless travel

The potential of tourism industry is tremendous. With a proper understanding of the key issues that are limiting the level of growth the Indian tourism industry deserves and undertaking proactive measures to address them by including all the stakeholders in the process, India can become a preferred tourist destination for many foreign tourists. This paper uses secondary data to highlight the various impacts of tourism, its linkages with other industry segments, the challenges being faced by the industry and the strategies needed to market India as a destination to inbound tourists.

Key Words: Tourism, Destination, Inbound, Economy, Foreign exchange, Employment

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