

ROLE OF TOURISM TO THE GROWTH OF ECONOMY

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Introduction

Tourism is a major contributing sector in the modern globalised economy. In terms of employment and income generation, it has emerged as a growing sector. World Travel and Tourism Council has identified tourism as the world's most rapidly growing industry. Tourists spend billions of dollars in countries they visit. Tourism occupies a prominent place in the ever changing modern world. It, a growing industry, denotes the voluntary movement of people from the place of residence and work to a distant destination in search of rest, relaxation and also a new experience.

Tourism is of major economic and social significance in both developed and developing countries. It stimulates improvements to the quality of physical environment available to the residents. Tourism also supports and helps to fund arts, folk traditions festivals and events and provides a market for local crafts and manufacturing. The tourism industry embraces different branches of tourism such as health tourism, eco-tourism, educational tourism, pilgrim tourism etc and it has far reaching implications on transport industry, hotel industry, education sector, public relations and cultural organization. The activities of tourism are manifold and pervade into different sectors of the economy. The tourism and travel industry in many countries function as a dynamic organization and feeder industry for promotion of international peace and understanding.

Origin of Tourism

The 'tourism' originated from the Latin word 'Torros' which means a tool for describing a circle. This term was used during the seventeenth century, for denoting a travel, a journey, an excursion, or a circuitous journey touching the principal places of the country. It is from this word that the idea of round tour or a package tour has come into effect. The term tour in Hebrew means learning, studying and searching. A tourist wants to learn about various factors such as education, culture, life styles, art of living, customs and cultural factors. India is a multi-motivational destination for tourists in the world. It has its own unique

image in the tourism map of the world. India had always beckoned visitors from all over the world to experience its 5000 year old civilization. The country's diversity of culture, faiths, languages, fairs and festivals, majestic monuments and captivating wildlife make for a variety, which can take in almost the whole world. All these provide a unique set of opportunities for tourists to enjoy themselves.

Characteristics of Tourism

Tourism is a complex phenomenon. It is an amalgamation of phenomenon and relationship rather than a single one. Tourism is both dynamic and static in the sense that journey is dynamic and stay is static. Tourism is a distinct activity. People's travel and their stay are two important elements of stay and in destinations outside the normal place of residence and work. Tourism is non-remunerative. Various destinations are visited by tourists. The visit is not for the purpose of paid work. There is no intention to take up employment and there is no idea for business or vocation. Tourism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. There are many and varied activities which make their own separate and individual contribution to a comprehensive service to tourists Developing social and physical infrastructure and amenities to facilitate visitors; giving rise to recreational and cultural events to attract tourists; Developing pleasure activities and professional service providers and giving rise to various service demands which are provided by commercial sense of tourist industry.

Kinds of Tourism

The tourism based on the purpose and areas of visit can be classified into different kinds. International Tourism involves visiting the place of foreign countries. The people involved in this tourism mainly seek change and rest. It earns foreign exchange for a country.

Inter-Regional Tourism involves visiting the places within a country by its own people. Cultural Tourism aim is to experience new cultural activities and aspects i.e., folklore, art, music, etc. It is undertaken to gain more knowledge about people around and their respective culture.

India is known for its rich cultural heritage that is why tourists come to India to experience it for themselves. The various fairs and festivals that tourists can visit in India are the Pushkar Fair, Taj Mahotsav, and Suraj Kumb Mela. This type of tourism in India has grown and this has boosted the Indian economy. Heritage Tourism involves visit to heritage locations, museums, monuments etc. Visiting Agra Fort, Mysore Palace, Thanjavur Art Gallery, etc. is an example of this kind. Ethnic Tourism involves contact with unusual or

quaint customer in remote areas visiting the family, country of origin and relatives and friends. The higher income groups in particular are interested in visiting remote environments with scenic beauty, serenity and calmness. In this type of tourism, the tourist mainly seeks relaxation and rest.

As a kind of tourism, adventure tourism has recently grown in India. This involves exploration of remote areas and exotic locales and engaging in various activities. It is a tourism involving travel in rugged regions or adventurous sports such as mountaineering and hiking (tramping). The lush greenery of the valleys, splendid sites, the hill tops, blue water, sunny days and starry nights, boating, canoeing, trekking, rock climbing and parasailing are the different branches of adventure. Health tourism aims usually at escaping from cities or at relieving stress, perhaps for some 'fun in the sun'. As a number of doctors have highlighted the benefits of bathing in sea water, even sea bathing has become a part of health tourism. Even though health tourism had existed long before, it gained importance only during eighteenth century. Medical tourism is a concept that is attractive to visitors who love combining well being and life style, health care service with a strong desire to travel overseas. With the cost of medical care being about 10 times cheaper in India, health tourism is also emerging as an important segment. Tourists from all over the world have been thronging India to avail themselves of cost-effective but superior quality healthcare in terms of surgical procedures and general medical attention.

There are several medical institutes in the country that cater to foreign patients and impart top-quality healthcare at a fraction of what it would have cost in developed nations such as the USA and the UK. It is expected that medical tourism in India will hold a value of around US\$ 2 billion by 2012. The city of Chennai attracts around 45 per cent of medical tourists from foreign countries. The following are the grounds on which medical tourism gets its attraction. In a country like India, rural tourism deserves special attention. Rural tourism signifies the tourist's interest in the customs of the indigenous and exotic people. Foreign tourists are deeply interested in local customs, festivals, dances, rituals and, in fact, the very life style of the indigenous people intrigues them. Rural tourism development is community-based. It helps revive local people's interest and pride in their culture, traditions and values and to sustain the environment.

Eco-Tourism

Eco tourism is a purposeful travel to nature's lap within a country to understand its natural and cultural history. It is the management of ecology in such a way as to obtain maximum pleasure with an eye on conservation needs. Countries like Kenya, Costa Rica, Canada and the United States have made concerted

effort to promote eco tourism. Eco tourism also involves participation of the local community in nature tourism project. Eco systems have to become major eco tourism centres. These include biosphere, reserves, mangroves, coral reefs, deserts, mountains and forests, flora and fauna, lakes and rivers and caves, sustainable tourism which has minimal impact on the environment, such as safaris (Kenya) and rainforests. Among the types of tourism in India, ecotourism has grown recently. Eco-tourism entails the sustainable preservation of a naturally endowed area or region. This is becoming more and more significant for the ecological development of all regions that have tourist value. The places such as Kaziranga National Park, Gir National Park, and Kanha

National Parks are important for the eco tourism in India.

Tourism in India

Tourist arrivals are just a fraction of those in such popular Asian destinations as Bangkok. Industry experts say that in order to attract more visitors, India needs to upgrade its airports, roads and other infrastructure to global standards. India is a country gifted with all natural resources, which can promote tourism in a big way. India's great Himalayan peaks, historical monuments, flora and fauna etc are its great assets. All these go to make India a paradise for tourists. India is a country of monuments. Monuments form an integral part of India. India's historical heritages are; the epitome of endless love, Taj Mahal, the axis of Islam, Qutub Minar, the pride of free India , Red Fort, the Chariot Temple of the Sun God, Konark, the mighty Mughal Citadel, Agra Fort, the glorious island cave land of Lord Shiva, Elephanta; the cave site of numerous Chaityas and Viharas, Ajanta, the grand memorial of an Emperor, Humayun's tomb and last but not the least, the forgotten walled city of Fatehpur Sikri.

India's tourism industry is thriving due to an increase in foreign tourists' arrivals and greater than before, travels by Indians to domestic and foreign destinations. India is probably the only country that offers various categories of tourism. Medical tourism in India is a developing concept whereby people from world over visit India for their medical and relaxation needs. With yoga, meditation, ayurveda, allopathy and other systems of medicines, India offers a unique basket of service to an individual that is difficult to match by other countries. Ayurveda is the system of traditional medicine in India. India is also the birth place of the concept of yoga and meditation.

Important Tourism Centres in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is a land of all kinds of tourism. Tamil Nadu, which has many tourist destinations such as Ooty, Kodaikanal, Madurai, Rameswaram and Courtalam, is also benefited by the surge in the tourism industries. Tamil Nadu or "the land of Tamil", a beautiful state nestled in the southern Indian peninsula, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal and the deep blue Indian Ocean, is known for its cultural heritage and temple architecture. Tamil literature is amongst the oldest in India and in the world. According to history, more than 2000 years ago the ancient Tamils had traded with the civilizations of East and West Asia, who sought its spices, sea wealth, silk and textiles. The coastal stretch of the Gulf of Mannar is also one of the attractive centers for both foreign and domestic tourists. As a tourist destination Tamil Nadu has an important place in Indian Tourism.

The widely scattered planes, full of coconut groves, the tall sculptured temple towers, artistic statues, wide range of mountains, the never ending sea shores and also the place where the three seas meet in Kanyakumari, really make a tourist to stay back and enjoy. Ooty, "the Queen of hills", Kodaikanal, "the Princess of Hills", Madurai, "the city of temples and festivals", Kanyakumari, "the place where the three seas meet having a beautiful sight of sunrise and sunset", Chennai, Rameshwaram, Tiruchendur, Mudumalai, Vedanthangal and

Courtallam are all important tourist places which are worth visiting.

The Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation, a Government of Tamil Nadu undertaking, which was established in the year 1971 to develop the tourism sector in Tamilnadu is actively working towards the development of the tourism industry by creating different centres exclusively for tourism related activities. As a result, the number of tourists' arrival in the state is steadily increasing year by year.

Tourism and Economic Development

The economic development means increase in the level of living of general masses. It means increase in national income as well as per capita income which would become possible when the rate of growth of national income is higher than the growth rate of population. Tourism is now one of the world's largest industries and one of its fastest growing economic sectors. For many countries tourism is seen as a main instrument for regional development, as it stimulates new economic activities. Tourism may have a positive economic impact on the balance of payments, on employment, on gross income and production, but it may

also have negative effects, particularly on the environment. Unplanned and uncontrolled tourism growth can result in such a deterioration of the environment that tourist growth can be compromised.

The environment, being the major source of tourist product, should therefore be protected in order to have further growth of tourism and economic development in the future. This is especially true with regard to tourism based on the natural environment as well as on historical-cultural heritage. Sustainable tourism has three interconnected aspects: environmental, socio-cultural, and economic. Sustainability implies permanence, so sustainable tourism includes optimum use of resources, including biological diversity; minimization of ecological, cultural and social impacts; and maximization of benefits for conservation and local communities. It also refers to the management structures that are needed to achieve this.

Creating Income and Employment

Tourism in India has emerged as an instrument of income and employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. It contributes 6.23 per cent to the national GDP and 8.78 per cent of the total employment in India. Almost 20 million people are now working in the India's tourism industry. Tourism is an important source of foreign exchange earnings in India. This has favourable impact on the balance of payment of the country. The tourism industry in India generated about US\$100 billion in 2008 and that is expected to increase to US\$275.5 billion by 2018 at a 9.4 per cent annual growth rate. Tourism helps preserve several places which are of historical importance by declaring them as heritage sites. For instance, the Taj Mahal, the Qutab Minar, Ajanta and Ellora temples, etc, would have been decayed and destroyed had it not been for the efforts taken by Tourism Department to preserve them. Likewise, tourism also helps in conserving the natural habitats of many endangered species.

Developing Infrastructure

Tourism tends to encourage the development of multiple-use infrastructure that benefits the host community, including various means of transports, health care facilities, and sports centers, in addition to the hotels and high-end restaurants that cater to foreign visitors. The development of infrastructure has in turn induced the development of other directly productive activities. Honey and Gilpin (2009) suggests that the tourism industry can also help promote peace and stability in developing country like India by providing jobs, generating income, diversifying the economy, protecting the environment, and promoting cross-cultural awareness. However, key challenges like adoption of regulatory frameworks, mechanisms to reduce crime and corruption, etc, must be addressed if peace-enhancing benefits from this industry are to be realized.

Financial Contributions

Tourism can contribute directly to the conservation of sensitive areas and habitat. Revenue from park-entrance fees and similar sources can be allocated specifically to pay for the protection and management of environmentally sensitive areas. Special fees for park operations or conservation activities can be collected from tourists or tour operators. The government through the tourism department also collect money in more far-reaching and indirect ways that are not linked to specific parks or conservation areas. User fees, income taxes, taxes on sales or rental of recreation equipment, and license fees for activities such as rafting and fishing can provide governments with the funds needed to manage natural resources. Such funds can be used for overall conservation programs and activities, such as park ranger salaries and park maintenance.

Tourism and Environmental Awareness

The development of tourism has moved the Indian government towards this direction leading to improved environmental management. Sound environmental management of tourism facilities and especially hotels can increase the benefits to natural environment. By planning early for tourism development, damaging and expensive mistakes can be prevented, avoiding the gradual deterioration of environmental assets significant to tourism. Tourism has the potential to increase public appreciation of the environment and to spread awareness of environmental problems when it brings people into closer contact with nature and the environment.

Conclusion:

Tourism can significantly contribute to environmental protection, conservation and restoration of biological diversity and sustainable use of natural resources. In India, new laws and regulations have been enacted to preserve the forest and to protect native species. The coral reefs around the coastal areas and the marine life that depend on them for survival are also protected. Tourism creates more employment to educated and uneducated women and men and also to the entire family members involved directly and indirectly. Thus, tourism is a powerful source of income, employment and regional development and at the same time it will create more foreign exchange earnings and national integration.

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