

A Study on History and Growth of Tourism in India

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Abstract

Tourism denotes the temporary, short-term movement of people to destinations outside the place where they normally live and work and their activities during their stay at these destinations. India is one of the world's most amazing tourist destinations. India offers a range of tourism options to every tourist who travels to India. From culture and history, adventure and wildlife, beaches and mountains, meditation and festivity, Ayurveda to modern medical treatment, busy cities and quiet backwaters, India has on offer all this and much more. The earliest recorded evidence of tourism could be traced back to the Roman Empire. The tourism in India was primarily one of pilgrimage. The blossom of Indian tourism industry can act as a major contributor for the development of balanced economy through its contribution to the foreign exchange reserves. The tourism industry is the second largest foreign exchange earner in India.

Key words: Tourism, Growth, History, Industrial Revolution.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism has witnessed a dramatic transformation into a multifaceted economic and social activity. Travel and tourism was confined to a privileged few, namely the rich, at the time of independence of India. Tourism is now an industry with many facets and varied activities. It calls for a perfect co-ordination among diverse segments that go to structure this industry.

The unique feature of the tourism industry is that in totality it rests on a base of natural resources. Such a base must be wholesome and attractive, preferably possessing unusual natural beauty and appeal to tourists. Attractions are arguably the most important component in the tourism system. They are the main motivators for tourist trips and are the core of the tourism product. Without attractions there would be no need for other tourism services. Indeed tourism as such would not exist if it were not for attractions. Tourism has merged as major activity encompassing a spectrum of social events such as sightseeing, entertainment, festivals, cultural events, and sports and even gambling. Thus, the whole planet becomes the stage for the operation of tourism industry.

The distinctive features of this industry are: It is an industry without smoke; education without classrooms; integration without legislation; entertainment without constraints and diplomacy without formality. Another notable feature is that this industry is a peace elastic phenomenon and promoter of International understanding. International bodies such as the United Nations have recognized the role of tourism as an ambassador and vehicle of international understanding and peace. Many world leaders and statesmen have also recognized this benefit and attribute to tourism. USA President John F. Kennedy called attention of the world on the significance of tourism and stated: "Travel has become one of the great forces for peace and understanding in our time. As people move

throughout the world and learn to know each other, to understand each others customs and to appreciate the qualities of the individuals of each nation, we are building a level of international understanding, which can sharply improve the atmosphere for world peace.”

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF TOURISM IN INDIA

Tourism has now grown to such dimensions and importance that it has become the largest industry in the world. This remarkable growth is not due to any particular phenomenon but only a result of evolutionary process. The earliest recorded evidence of tourism could be traced back to the Roman Empire. “The Romans visited temples, shrines, festivals and baths for health and amusement.” With the fall of the Roman Empire, tourism ceased to exist till the middle ages. In the middle ages, thousands of pilgrims made journey under the then existing difficult activities etc., between eleventh and fifteenth centuries gave added impetus to the movement of merchants, soldiers, clergy and pilgrims. During this period, pleasure tourism was conspicuous by its absence. Thus, travel before the industrial revolution was largely a matter of pilgrimage and to a limited extent for business or official purposes.

Till very recently, tourism in India was primarily one of pilgrimage. Traveling for religious purposes was an established custom. “The Vedas- the ancient religious texts of the Hindus – enjoined that unless a man went on pilgrimage to the four Dams or holy places of the country he would not attain moksha and would therefore continue to suffer rebirths for his sins.” Similarly the Muslims must undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina and the Christians should visit Vatican in Rome to have the glimpse of Pope during their lifetime. In fact, but for the religious compulsions, the stay-at-home ancient and rural societies would not have undertaken travel. To meet the requirements of the tourists there were rest houses, inns, etc. The ancient kings were increasingly concerned

about the safety and comforts of the pilgrims and provided “guard and guide” facilities, better roads with shady trees on both side and similar facilities. Some kings even introduced appropriate regulations, which could be equated to the present – day passports. Apart from domestic pilgrim tourists, many foreign scholars, students, explorers, invaders, traders and others had also visited the country. For instance, during the reign of Chandra Gupta II, the famous Chinese historian Fahien came and traveled in the country between 402 and 410 A.D. One of the invaders Alexander of Macedonia, Vasco da Gama, a traveler – cum – explorer of sea routes, and many such foreigners also traveled through the country.

Later came the Dutch, the Portuguese and the British for trading purposes of whom the British became the rulers of the country. Thus, all along India remained a fascination for the rest of the world attracting a number of people.

In spite of these favorable natural factors, the then British Government did not give either direct or indirect incentives for the development of this industry. However, people traveled on their own. Only since independence conscious efforts have been made to develop tourism.

Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries specialized education in advanced countries become very common which encouraged the elite to go abroad. Travel also had been recommended as a part of curriculum development. In fact, foreign travel was a part of education of the aristocratic men in those days. During the same period, domestic travel to sea resorts and hill resorts for health reasons become popular. Gradually, such resorts become places of entertainment. Further, the youth, far away from home on education tour in foreign countries turned out to be pleasure seekers besides being knowledge seekers, because of prolonged exposure to high sophistication. Factors such as the above culminated in pleasure tourism.

The industrial revolution brought about far-reaching changes in the socio-economic set-up. It resulted in large – scale migration of people to industrial centers and an urban society eventually developed. The newly emerged urban society, which was comparatively more prosperous and carefree provided fillip to the development of tourism. This new urban population with family roots elsewhere made trips to their native places during occasions. Transport facilities also developed to cope with the changing social needs. Gradually, organized tours were also thought of by the end of the eighteenth century.

The nineteenth century is particularly significant in the history of tourism in the sense that it was during this period that tourism, as understood today, came into being. By then professional travel agencies were established. Thomas Cook, an English man, in the 1840s organized the first package tour. He had the foresight of providing almost all modern facilities to his customers. It is his entrepreneurship that primarily made tourism a recognized economic activity. Overseas tours, as understood today, were organized for the first time during the 1860s. In the later years of that century, such developments as holiday with pay in certain countries, establishment of travel and tourism clubs, etc., added new dimensions to tourism.

In the first half of the twentieth century, tourism grew to new heights due to developments in the transport industry and other factors. Travel by private cars and coaches for the first time become popular in the 1910s. As tourism is sensitive to world peace and prosperity, during the world wars periods it had a short set – back. However, the wars had brought about many changes, which gave an added impetus to tourism in the post – war periods, the social – economic hangs, such as better standards of living, broader outlook of the people, increasing exposure to outside world, development through different media, development of infrastructure facilities, reduction

in international barriers, etc., brought about by the wars resulted in the emergence of a new “global life” and internationalism. These developments collectively created an atmosphere more conducive to the growth of tourism. By this time travel became an infectious habit of the people. This, coupled with development of many large travel agencies, transport companies, hotel chains, etc., gave a boost to tourism.

From 1950 onwards, tourism got another boost as most of the governments of the third world countries started patronizing tourism as an important economic activity. It is but natural that with outright government patronage the industry has grown into one of the major industries. As a natural corollary, private individuals and organizations have started taking active part in this newly developing industry. All these have given a new direction to the industry.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - TOURISM CONTRIBUTION

The tourism has often been thought of as primarily an Export Product. Tourism accounts for 8 percent of the Worlds exports making it the largest internationally traded product or service. As an export product tourism is consumed by person’s resident external to its place of production. It is consumed at the place of production though not necessarily at the place of consumer’s residence. As consumption process usually involves some form of expenditure, like other export industries, tourism gains external income for the economy of the country concerned. Tourism is an industry, whose products are consumed on the spot, forming invisible exports. Tourism is now rightly added to the long list of established industries with tremendous economic and social potential. The income generation, employment potential and poverty alleviation capabilities of the industry are quite considerable. Tourism is the largest industry in the world in terms of earnings and is also the largest employer of the people. It has come to

play a prominent role in the economic development of several nations. To a developing country, tourism industry is an economic bonanza. For a few nations, France, Spain, Switzerland, Nepal, Hungary, Hong Kong and Singapore, tourism is the main stay of their economies. World tourism is a major money-spinner. Tourism along with information technology and biotechnology would appear to be the engines of transformation to the world economy into the 21 century.

The economic contribution of tourism is generally measured in terms of its contribution to gross domestic product and employment generation. With very meager investment of foreign exchange, the foreign exchange earned from tourism has a ventilating effect on suffocating balance of payments position. The tourism industry does not utilize more than 7 percent by way of foreign exchange expenditure and thus retains 93 percent of the foreign exchange earnings, which is higher than export earning industry. The tourism industry contributes, around 11 percent of all indirect taxes paid worldwide according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). Total revenue directly attributable to tourism, including travel and purchases by tourists is estimated at US \$3,300 billion. It constitutes over 13 percent of the global GDP. Internationally tourism is seen frequently as a beneficial exploitation of redundant infrastructure as well as means of employment creation. The tourism industry provides direct employment to 262 million people at the global level. Statistics indicate that one job is created every two and half seconds by the travel and tourism industry. The tourism industry is directly or indirectly providing more than 10 percent of the world's employment today, as highlighted in a study conducted by the India Chapter Pacific Asia Travel Associated (PATA).

Besides being a source of megabucks and an employment multiplier, another significant feature of tourism industry is that it employs a large

number of women, educated and skilled. Women in fact outnumber men in hotels, airline services, travel agencies, handicraft and cultural activities. The overall employment multiplier figure in tourism sector is 2.36 i.e., direct employment of one person in tourism creates 1.36 in other sectors of the economy. World Travel and Tourism Council has estimated that international travel and tourism accounts for over 11.4 percent of global investment with an estimated output of US \$ 3.4 trillion. The employment per million rupees of output is much higher in tourism than in any other sector.

INDIAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

India is known worldwide as the ancient and mysterious civilization and the second most populated country of the world after China, with a population of 1.2 billion. India has a tremendous potential to promote both inbound and outbound tourism and the need of the hour is to promote its diversity in a big way among the global tourists. India can offer separate feeds for international and domestic tourists. By and large the population is peace loving and very tourist friendly, thereby ensuring the acceptance of tourists and their security. Despite a plethora of tourist attractions for every type of visitor, India has reached only around 5 million marks.

There is a huge gap between the existing low tourism demand in the region and the vast untapped potential in heritage, culture, beaches, pilgrimage centers, architecture and eco-tourism. So there is a necessity to narrow this gap. Countries far smaller in size such as France with 70 million arrivals ranked 1, Spain with 41 million arrival ranked 3, Hungary with 21 million arrivals ranked 8 and Poland with 19 million arrivals ranked 9 are much ahead of India. Even a country as small as Sri Lanka, despite the ethnic conflicts plaguing it for the last 12 years, it has about 4 million international arrivals.

Small city-states such as Hong Kong and Singapore have set the benchmarks of the tourism industry. With very little by way of natural resources or tourism potential, they have built an empire over the years. Honkong receives about 10 million tourists a year and Singapore recently crossed the 7 million marks. India ranks 46 among the world's top 60 tourism destinations, generating less than 1 percent of the global tourism business.

CONCLUSION

India is an exotic destination. From the western perspective, it is a land of mysticism with astoundingly diversified culture and tradition. There is undoubtedly enormous potential; India has all tourist attractions in a single country – coast line, snow capped mountains, inviting deserts, wild life, hearth-taking picturesque locales, heritage sights and monuments and a grand variety of regional culinary delicacies. India, though endowed with both natural and man-made attractions has not been successful in promoting itself as the most sought after tourist destination. India's share in the Global tourism receipts is just 0.7 percent over the last few years. The share of India in the international tourist arrivals is just 0.4 percent. The tourist population ratio (TPR) in India is minuscule. Tourism occupies 267 positions in the priority list for funds allocation of the government of India. The "national priority status" has been denied to tourism industry in India, which is reflected in the meager annual budget allocation (as low as 50 crore per annum) by the government. The developing nation like India should try to develop tourism oriented economy because the tourism industry does not utilize more than 7 percent by way of foreign exchange expenditure and thus retains 93 percent of the foreign exchange earnings, which is higher than any export earning industry.

The blossom of Indian tourism industry can act as a major contributor for the development of

balanced economy through its contribution to the foreign exchange reserves. The tourism industry is the second largest foreign exchange earner in India. This phenomenal growth is not due to any particular factor but only the result of evolutionary process. This process should continue to reap the benefits of tourism to the society in the years to come. We hope and pray for this vision to become reality at the earliest possible time for the benefit of the industry and the society at large.

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