Indian Tourism Industry

Challenges and Strategies

Dr. Richa Bhalla

Asst. Professor, Dept. of MBA, Jyoti Nivas College

Ms. Anie Mathews

Asst. Professor, Dept. of MBA, Jyoti Nivas College

Abstract

The Indian tourism industry can be called the "industry of big paradoxes". On the one hand it has almost unbeatable competitive advantages, huge potential (in terms of generating foreign exchange & employment generation), and high growth rates. On the other hand, inspite of these strengths, the Indian Tourism and Hospitality Industry is still way behind - even against its smaller neighbours in South-East Asia, not to mention the larger counterparts like China. With everything on offer from heritage to wellness, mountains to beaches, just 18 million foreign tourists coming to India each year looks very bleak.

There are some inherent problems and these are well-known but till date nothing concrete has been done to resolve these issues. Foreign tourists visiting India have often voiced their frustration over the country's inadequate infrastructure, antiquated airports and railways, absence of proper roads, and the outrageous room prices which hotels impose because of a shortage of quality accommodation in the country. Personal safety is another issue that needs to be addressed. Women, in particular, feel unsafe in places such as Rajasthan, Goa and even Delhi where incidents of molestation of women and robberies of foreign tourists are reported on a regular basis.

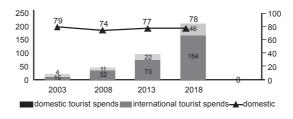
This article highlights and analyses challenges facing the Indian Tourism Industry and the strategies that can be adopted.

Key words: Services, Facilities, Challenges, Strategies, Competitiveness.

Introduction

Travel & Tourism are an inseparable part of the world in which we live, making a significant contribution to the country's economy as well as to the quality of life of its citizens. Globally, travel & tourism account for 10% of the GDP, 8% of Jobs and 12% of investment, annually. In India, travel & tourism is currently contributing 2.2% directly to the GDP and is expected to grow at 6.6% p.a. WTO had forecasted the Travel & Tourism Industry in India will grow by 8% per annum, in real terms, between 2008 and 2016. In the year 2010, 17.9 million foreign tourists visited India. Domestic tourism in the same year was massive at 740 million. Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra received a big share of these visitors. According to World Travel and Tourism Council, India will be a tourism hotspot from 2009-2018, having the highest 10-year growth potential.

Exhibit 1: Indian tourism industry- market size

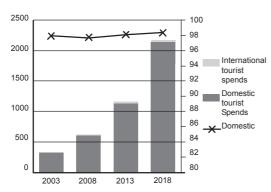


Y1 axis: Market size in U\$ Bn

Y2 axis: Domestic tourism mkt as % of total

Source: Euromonitor, Tourisms Statistic 2007, Ministry of Tourism of India, Technopak analysis

Exhibit 2: Tourist visits in India



Source: Euromonitor, Tourisms Statistic 2007, Ministry of Tourism of India, Technopak analysis

Elements of tourism

Tourism is a complex industry and the task of formulating a sound policy is very challenging. For each of this industry's stakeholders, the element of the industry relevant to them is unique i.e. for the hotel industry, it is daily room occupancy, for the airlines it is the seats & miles

flown, to the museum, art gallery or archaeological site the key metric is the number of visitors. It is therefore important that tourism planning be looked at holistically with every individual element being considered.

Exhibit 3:



(1) Attractiveness of the destination

Tourism options in India are so varied that very few countries in the world can provide such a mix of nature, richness of architecture, wildlife, festivities, shopping etc in one destination. Travellers of all ages, budgets and interests can find something to their liking.

Exhibit 4: Indian tourist circuits



Services on Offer

- a. Medical Tourism & Spas India has become a very important hub for medical tourism. Many people from other countries come to India for rejuvenation promised by yoga and ayurvedic massage therapy as well as for high-end surgeries like cardiac bypass surgery or knee/ hip replacement. Health/Medical tourism has been identified as a major thrust area by the Government of India. In order to maintain the current pace and capture a larger market share, healthcare professionals, regulatory authorities, government and other key partners will have to play a much more responsible role in attracting and serving global as well as domestic health travellers.
- b. Meeting, incentives convention and exhibitions Tourism (MICE) MICE tourism is one of the fastest growing in the global tourism industry. It largely caters to business travellers. It caters to various forms of business meetings, international conferences and conventions, events and exhibitions. The Ashok, New Delhi; Hyderabad International Convention Centre, Hyderabad; and Le Meridian, Cochin are forerunners in the Indian MICE tourism industry, facilitating domestic and International business meetings and conferences.
- c. Religious Tourism Religious tourism has a big future in India. India is richly endowed with ancient temples and religious festivals. Religions originating in India, be it Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism or Buddhism, have a vibrant culture and spiritual philosophy. Religious tourism in India can provide an experience that cannot be had anywhere in the world.
- d. Culture, Heritage and Ethno- Tourism States like Chhattisgarh amongst other states can be developed as ethnic villages. The private sector can also be encouraged for proper maintenance and professional site management of important heritage sites.
- e. Adventure Tourism Adventure sports such as water sports, trekking, rock-climbing, para-

- sailing and bungee-jumping (popular with the younger travellers and working executives) can also be developed.
- f. Eco-Tourism India's forests, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries can become a major attraction for a whole lot of tourists from around the world.
- g. Avian Tourism It can be added as another dimension to the Kerala's backwater and health tourism is the avian tourism to attract birdwatchers from all over- the world.
- h. Highway Tourism Planned development of highway tourism may open an opportunities for enhancing local employment and uplifting rural economy through local feeder enterprises.
- i. Rail Tourism The Indian Railways has introduced several new services to promote rail tourism luxury tourist trains, exclusive steam & hill charters, tour packages, 'Bharat Darshan' special tourist trains for the budget travel segment, budget hotels near important railway stations all over India and car rentals can create new tourist segment.
- j. Caravan Tourism A new policy guideline should be made to promote 'Caravan Tourism' in India and Infrastructure facilitation should be done.
- k. Wellness Tourism Wellness tourism is regarded as a sub-segment of medical tourism. Here, the primary purpose is achieving, promoting or maintaining good health and a sense of well-being. India with widespread presence of Ayurveda, Yoga, Siddha, and Naturopathy, complemented by its spiritual philosophy, is a well-known wellness destination.
- I. Heliport Tourism With a view to promote tourism in hilly and remote areas, guidelines can be framed to provide central financial assistance to States and Union Territories for construction of helipads/heliports at selected destinations which will have tourism potential, but lack good connectivity.

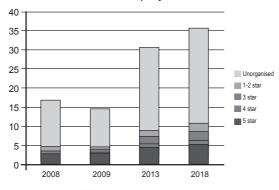
(2) Facilities at the destination

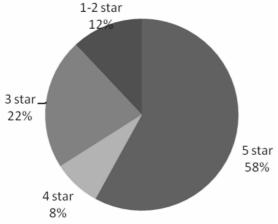
a. Hospitality Industry

The Indian Hospitality Industry is one of the fastest growing sectors of the Indian economy. The size of the Indian hospitality industry is estimated as a sum of revenues of two segments; hotel and restaurants.

i) Indian Hotel Sector There has been a consistent increase in the number of hotel rooms in recent years. The growth was almost 5% in the last 3 to 4 years. However, this rate of increase is still not enough to meet the rising demand of tourist inflows. Much more investment is required in this sector to meet demand. The hotel sector is expected to see an estimated Investment of US\$ 12.17 billion in the next 2 years, and an addition of over 20 new international hotel brands by 2013.

Exhibit 5: Market size & projections





i) Restaurant sector – The size of the Indian restaurant sector is estimated to be US\$ 6 billion now and expected to approximately grow to US\$ 10 billion by 2018. Almost 90% of the industry is unorganized, close to the remaining 10% is organized. Despite the slowdown, the unorganized sector is expected to grow at > 5% in 2012. The organized sector is in fact expected to grow faster at 20% to 25%. Within the overall restaurant sector the quick service restaurants (QSRs) segment will grow the fastest. Cafe Coffee Day, Dominos Pizza, KFC are some of the examples, each having remarkable expansion plans.

Exhibit 6: Expansion plans of few prominent international and national brands.

QSRs	No. of Outlets	Expansion Plans
Cafe Coffee Day	1300	20-25 cafes every month
Domino's Pizza	220	
Barista	189	
Pizza Hutt	137	
Nirula's	60	
KFC	59	1000 outlets by 2014
Costa Coffee	43	
Yo-China	30	

b. Tour operators/Travel agent - A tour operator is one who buys the individual elements in the travel product on his own account and combines them in such a way that he is selling a complete travel package to his clients. A tour operator bears the responsibility of delivering the services. They create their own packages by buying or reserving necessary supply elements and often retail through travel agents or their own offices and by direct mail or by direct enquiries from consumers. They offer a number of packages known as tour programmes. They are like wholesalers. Today, tour operators are so well equipped that individual or group booking in any hotel of any category and

in any part of India can be made instantaneously. They have very good network all over the country and are in position to offer very attractive discount rates to their clients.

c. Marketing information system for tourism -Knowledge is supposed to be the power. Of late, to manage a business is to essentially manage information. The sophistication in the evolution of communication technologies in tourism industry has paved avenues for the development of a technology-driven MIS. In an age of information explosion, it is pertinent that an organisation develops and institutes MIS to have an easy access to information needed for planning. The key problem in the management of information is to establish a tourist information network. There is no doubt that Indian tourism industry has developed sophisticated communication facilities and is also in a position to utilise the benefits of new generation of communication technologies. The designing of package tour, innovation in the promotional measures, a change in the pricing strategy or using it as a motivational tool, the management of tourist organisations, tour operators, transport operators, travel agents would be made productive

(c) Accessibility of the destination

i) Aviation Industry – A massive boom in the tourism industry and increasing levels of disposable incomes has increased the importance of Indian Aviation industry. Today, a need for strong government support and private sector participation, coupled with the availability of skilled manpower, and favourable business environment have become all the more important to make India an attractive tourist destination on the world map. But the industry is facing many problems. Some of which are – Low air connectivity to many of 2 tier and 3 tier cities of our country, complex taxes system, outdated airport facilities, amongst others.

The increasing share of Low cost carriers (LCC) from 33% to 47% between 2006 and 2008 has supported the tourism industry. These low-cost carriers have brought down the cost of travel and boosted the growth of domestic air travel immensely. The airports of several metros are undergoing renovation and repositioning. State-run oil companies have slashed aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices and government is drawing up a whopping bailout package – for aviation industry.

Govt has relaxed external commercial borrowing (ECB) norms (announced in the Union Budget 2012-13 for the aviation sector). Buoyed by the success of implementation of public private partnership (PPP) model in airport development, the government plans to invest US\$ 30 billion in next 10 years with more existing airports being opened up for modernisation.

- ii) Rail –In order to carry out the broader social goal of providing affordable transport service to the country, Indian Railways (IR) have made substantial investments in resource saving technologies. The progressive implementation of IT served as a thrust towards better responsiveness to the rising passenger demands. The communication infrastructure that IR built up over the years not only helped it cater effectively to the rising customer needs but also opened new avenues for revenue generation. The Internet reservation system, unreserved ticketing system, railway credit cards and mobile reservation are only some of the instances where upcoming technologies gave new dimensions to customer satisfaction.
- iii) Metro One of the most liked travelling options which have caught the fancy of all is the "Metro". And now cities like Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore and Mumbai are fast developing this option for intra-city travelling. It makes the travelling within city easy and comfortable.

iv) Highway – We see a big visible improvement in highway developments. Work is already under way at many places. Once these are completed (say in 4/5 years time), it will create a road network with comfortable transport – systems, now that quality cars & buses are available in India. There will be further boom in industry with improved infrastructure on highways. This will bring big boost to tourism, especially domestic tourism. A lot of infrastructural facilities are coming on the highway in the form of wayside amenities, shopping malls, petrol pumps etc. This will open up many new opportunities in tourism related activities.

The ambitious National Highway Development Program (NHDP) envisaged 4-6 laning of the existing high-density highway corridors linking the four mega-cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Calcutta. It also aimed at the creation of north-south and east-west corridors. The modernization of the national highways is being implemented in two phases. The projects will be focusing on enhanced safety, better riding surface and road geometry, traffic management and noticeable signage. The other features are divided carriageways and service roads, grade separators, over-bridges and underpasses for uninterrupted traffic flow, bypasses and wayside amenities along with ambulances and cranes.

To encourage the country's road construction industry, the Central Government has offered many concessions and incentives to them. They include income tax exemption for 10 years from earnings from the Project and total customs duty exemption on road building equipment not being produced in the country. In the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) scheme, grants up to 40 per cent has been permitted.

Challenges for Tourism Industry

Challenges for Indian Tourism Industry – on basis of current performance, Indian Tourism Industry

can be termed as 'successful', but being 'successful' is very different from being 'competitive' and there are critical challenges which are negatively dictating and adversely affecting its competitiveness. These challenges can be classified into 3 broad categories:



1. Sector Specific

- a. High Exit Barrier One characteristic of services is that it is hard to escape from the consequences of a poor choice (of service and service provider). Tourists know this and they also understand that once they are at a destination, a U-turn is not easy. Hence, they are over cautious while deciding on the tourism services (choice of destination, transporter and hotels etc).
- b. Difficulty in trial Another service characteristic that affects tourism industry is 'reduced trialability'. Since the trialability is also almost nil in (tourism) services, in case of tourism industry, it is a prerequisite to have a good 'product' and a sound reputation in place, only then sustainable sales can be expected.
- **c.** Word-Of-Mouth (WOM) WOM is crucial in selling of (tourism) services because usually

the choice of destination is affected by WOM publicity. Here, it is important to realize that tourists tend to believe more on information from independent sources and less on promotions, thus, a destination may be 'pushed' through heavy promotion, but the longevity of its Product life cycle is finally dictated by the WOM.

- d. High Social Cost Tourism takes a toll on the resources (especially natural resources), and a large part of the revenues brought in by tourism is required for sustaining the resources, so the profitability of tourism industry is suspicious, especially in countries where proper 'sustainability' mechanisms are not in place.
- e. Intermediary Conflicts Components of the tourism industry have different commercial objectives, strategic interests and operational procedures, so as channel partners protect and advance their own interests, often at the expense of their partner's gains, several intrachannel conflicts emerge inevitably. Major reasons behind such conflicts are
 - o Price and Profit Margin Distribution.
 - o Exceeding Vertical Integration generates Oligopolistic Behavior.
 - Operational issues partners failing to fulfill their obligations or providing the service they promised.
- f. Tourists rates the overall experience Visitors tend to rate their overall experience at the destination and in the process they credit tourism industry for the performance of industries and sectors, which are not directly related to tourism. If 'anything' is not according to tourists' expectations, it might go against the tourism industry, because the negative WOM will be generated for the destination.

2. India Specific Challenges

Some challenges facing Indian Tourism Industry are uniquely India specific, like –

- a. Sensitizing the diverse Human Resources It is an industry where even the behavior of general public affects the overall experience of tourists, and people associated with this industry vary significantly in their background, education, occupation and experience etc (a hotelier is totally different from a taxi driver), it is a big challenge to sensitize such a large number of diverse people simultaneously.
- Although efforts like the "atithi devo bhava" campaign have been made to train and groom the HR associated with this industry, they have not been as successful in achieving significant and measurable results as they were expected to, and neither has much research has been done to measure and evaluate the impact of such efforts.
- **b. Economic Slowdown** Average room rates have fallen by 10% to 15%. As cost cutting measures hotels have put on hold their expansion plans for the moment. There has also been a freeze on new recruitment.
- c. Impact of Terrorism Leisure destinations like Goa and Kerala are likely to be affected more than business destinations. It is expected that average occupancy levels across major cities is likely to decline from the current average of 65% to 58%.
- d. Evening entertainment It needs to be developed in places including metropolitan cities. Some serious partnerships need to be formed between State Govts and private sector so that tourists can enjoy in the evening. They should get an opportunity to experience local culture. An increase in availability of facilities (like sports, healthcare, museums, etc) for longer hours / late in the evenings, will improve attractiveness for tourists.
- e. Basic Amenities Quality tourist literature, decent upkeep of monuments, amusement parks, multi -cuisine food plazas, shopping malls- all these are needed for successful tourism. All the more, some self control is

needed about hygiene. Hotels need to control prices; municipality for over all cleanliness of city; policing for security of tourists; control of beggars at tourist places; cleanliness inside the airport and crowd management outside; proper signage at all places; places need to be earmarked for paid parking; properly illuminated road junctions; if these can be done, one can see & feel a sea change improvement. Tourists will always feel it a pleasure to come back, and will come back in numbers.

3. Industry specific

Challenges to Hotel Infrastructure – India has approximately 150000 hotel rooms, which are insufficient to meet the existing demand, let alone catering to new demand. Moreover, concentration of Hotels - approximate 7000 rooms are in Delhi itself - is causing an acute shortage of rooms in other tourist destinations.

- a. High Operating Costs Indian hotels suffer from high operating costs and this ultimately reflects in their higher prices. And when the facilities are not in line with the prices, it leads to dissatisfaction and makes the destination unattractive for tourists.
- b. No Uniformity in Taxes & High Tax Structures
 - Due to high duties and the imposition of several taxes by state governments, the industry ends up paying multiple taxes, substantially increasing overall costs, and impacting profits. India has the highest tax rate on tourism projects in the Asia Pacific region. Each state has its own criteria for luxury tax, varying from 5% to 20% on rack rate, rather than the actual rate. Luxury tax on the rack rate increases the effective rate of tax to 25% to 30%.
- c. Cost of Land Land prices in India constitute almost 25% of total cost of the project, whereas it accounts for only 15% to 20% of project cost overseas. The rising land cost and low Floor Space Index (FSI), adds to the industry's financial dilemma.

- d. Cost of Debt The industry is capital intensive and has a long gestation period, with repayment of loans typically running at 11-15 years and even beyond. However, the current borrowing and lending scenario is not something to cheer about, as (a) banks are not looking at funding beyond a period of 7 to 9 years; and (b) they have made lending norms and the process more rigorous.
- e. Skilled Manpower Shortage The hotel sector is labor-intensive with an average employee-to-room ratio of 1.8:1 in India (compared to 1.5:1 globally). However, there exists a huge gap in manpower availability, especially in the budget hotel segment.

Transportation Chaos – Increasing number of airlines (from 2 to 10 in last 4 years) has rapidly increased the number of passengers, resulting in a virtual collapse of facilities at Indian airports. Moreover, there is no supervising authority, maintaining and monitoring the quality and standards of services delivered by airlines making an unpleasant experience a rule, rather than an exception. Indian Railways, another popular mode of transportation suffers from conditions worse than the airlines (in terms of reservations, punctuality, cleanliness, facilities etc). Since India welcomes tourists mostly from developed countries these problems convert their trip into a 'mission' and few return with good memories.

Strategies to Enhance Competitiveness of Indian Tourism Industry

Strategy for the Industry

- Promote Public Private Participation.
- Deliver on scheduled timelines and share accountability with the government on public private partnership projects to reduce the cost involved in development.
- Develop an academic think-tank to trigger the right kind of training in hotel management institutes in India.

- Establish commendable Master's and PhD programs in hospitality.
- Undertake measures towards employee retention.
- Coaching, development and training of employees for their long-term career development and retention process.

Strategy for Government

Government has implemented many new policies in support of tourism infrastructure and services. The government has permitted 100% FDI into construction of hotels and resorts, recreational facilities, and city and regional level infrastructure. A five year tax holiday has been given to organizations that set up hotels, resorts and convention centers at specific destinations. Government has also introduced a new category of visa - 'Medical Visa' ('M'-Visa) for Medical Tourism. Govt. has tied-up with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to promote rural tourism. The Ministry has sanctioned 102 rural tourism infrastructure projects to spread tourism and socio economic benefits to identified rural sites with tourism potential. The Government also has announced a scheme of granting Tourist Visa on Arrival (T-VoA) for the citizens of Finland, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Singapore. During the 11th Five Year Plan, (as on 31.12.2010) Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned an amount of Rs. 31.13 billion for 991 tourism infrastructure projects, including rural tourism and human Resource development projects. Some more suggestions for govt for supporting and promoting the tourism industry

 Effective Market Research to 'Understand Tourists'- Market research to know about the desired destination attributes and what provides tourists' satisfaction to develop overall 'competitiveness enhancement strategy' for Indian Tourism Industry.

- The planning framework of Indian Tourism Industry needs to be redesigned Professionally designed plans for specific destination responding to changing consumer demand and other critical and contemporary issues, like:
 - Destination marketing; Product, branding and competitive positioning, Pricing, Market segmentation, Promotion and distribution
 - Cross agency cooperation
 - Site Management
- Effective Destination Management through Encouraging Business Operators for Adopting Higher Standards Management is another area where Indian Tourism Industry has performed miserably and negatively affects the impression of tourists.
- Public Private Partnership is critical for enhancing competitiveness – Enhancing coordination and cooperation between public sector and private sector undertakings of the industry will help in creating a wholesome experience for the tourists.
- Sensitize the Community for sustainable competitiveness – Community is an important stakeholder in tourism industry and can play a vital role in enhancing its competitiveness through sharing the responsibility and thus easing out the job of sustainability and destination management to some extent, but unfortunately, in Indian Tourism Ministry this important stake holder of tourism industry has been rarely involved and sensitized for such efforts.
- Effective deployment of 'Human Resources' –
 Although, some private players have opened
 their own academies to develop talent, it is
 not possible either for the private sector or for
 the public sector, to cater to the growing
 demand single-handedly.
- Local Infrastructure development Local govt. and municipal corporation needs to develop means to improve the existing infrastructure

- and hygiene conditions at places of tourist interest and public places.
- Conduct a Joint promotional campaign for various states in India and allocate budgets for marketing at international travel fairs to boost tourist inflow in the country.
- Rationalizing land cost Govt. can play a significant role in rationalizing the cost of land auctioned for hotel development. This would assist the industry in creating value by adding substantial inventory of hotel rooms required to diminish the demand-supply gap.
- Granting 'Infrastructure' status to the hotel industry under SEC 80-IA of IT Act and increase depreciation on hotels from 10% to 20%.
- Rationalise Floor Space Index (FSI) Floor Area Regulation (FAR). This would allow hotels to build more rooms on the same property eventually leading to more affordable room rates. Subsequently, the government can reduce development charges for adding more rooms in existing hotels. Further incentives will boost investments in the sector such as offering a tax holiday to the industry.

Implement a uniform luxury tax code

References

- C Anita Rani "The Emerging Role Of Medical Tourism In India- Opportunity And Challenges, Marketing Mastermind, June 2011.
- "Civil Aviation Minister Makes Presentation Before Union Cabinet On The Status Of Civil Aviation Sector ", Business Standard, August 13, 2009
- Hitesh Bhatia "MICE Tourism, Opportunities And Challanges Of India", Marketing Mastermind, February 2010.

- Lokesh Kumar, Rahul Alex Daniel, Nikhil Saigal, Barbara Cebula – "Indian Tourism: Managing Growth By Breaking Barriers", Technopak Perspective – Volume2/2009
- Lokesh Kumar, Tarandeep Singh, Nikhil Saigal, Barbara Cebula – Dissecting The Indian Hospitality Industry, Technopak Perspective – Volume1/2009
- Manish Kumar Srivastava, Ravindra K, A K Tiwari - "Medical Tourism In India", Marketing Mastermind, September 2010.
- Rajnish Jain "Health Tourism: Strategies For Growth", ", The Icfai Journal Of Service Marketing, December 2005.
- Sweta D Vajir "Strategic Integrated Infracture Development In Orissa", The Icfai Journal Of Business Strategy, March 2008.
- Uma Krishna "Travel And Tourism- A Service Marketing Perspective", Marketing Mastermind, August 2010.
 - 1 http://www.ehow.com/ about_5463563_problems-tourismindia.html#ixzz22HvZnd92
 - 2.http://www.indiatradefair.com/
 - 3.http://www.chillibreeze.com/articles/ Religious-Tourism.asp
 - 4. http://www.cci.in/pdf/surveys_reports/ tourism-hotel-industry.pdf
 - 5.http://www.ibef.org/industry/tourismhospitality.aspx
 - 6.http://www.dpncindia.com/news/ Hospitality%20Industry.pdf
 - 7.http://www.india-briefing.com/news/fdiindias-tourism-industry-4657.html/
 - 8.http://tourism.gov.in/writereaddata/ Uploaded/Tender/053120110313488.pdf