

CONTRIBUTION OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN INDIAN ECONOMY

Dr.S.PraveenKumar MBA., M.Phil., Ph.d.,

*Assistant Professor, Centre for Tourism and Hotel Management,
Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai-21*

Abstract

The Indian slogan 'Athithi devo bhava' means that guests are like God. Indians have been highly hospitable and this trend is still present in modern India. A guest is revered. Intricate arrangements are made for a guest who comes home for a holiday. The family plans well for the comfort stay of a guest. Going to a broader picture, the tourist visiting India find our country very enigmatic. They have a quest to watch the villagers walk on the rope, heat the butter with rotis and partake in the ritual dance after sunset. Foreigners love India as it is a storehouse for art, culture, dance and drama. The ethnic culture is present in clothing which attracts several shoppers who love to collect trinkets and serious artifacts. Responsible tourism is conducted by way of giving the tourist the right concept in tours. Their accommodation in government lodges and private hotels is always a luxury. The importance to tourism is essential as they carry the picture of our culture and hospitality. Our courteous attitude reflects our inner self. On the economic context, foreign currency in India can be gathered via tourism. Several tourist spots do well all throughout the year and special seasons do exceptionally well as the foreign throng the place for sightseeing trips. A trip for any visitor has to be trouble free. With telecommunication network so strong it has become easy for a foreign visitor to have a pleasurable stay. Taxi cabs, translation books and a dependable guide make the trip interesting. The hygiene conditions in the areas are improving and the well maintained hotels and tourist sports are an all around attraction. The Ministry of tourism is looking for new ways to encourage tourism in India. It is very much essential for a visitor to enjoy the stay and this is enhanced by facilities like road transport, guides and good hotels. Many hotels have multi cuisine to accommodate the choices of foreigners who generally kind the Indian food very spicy. Tour operators are very systematic with their plans. Complete details about weather conditions, clothes required and facilities are given to the tourists to help them prepare for a holiday.

Key words: Athithi Devo Bhava, India find our country very enigmatic, Intricate arrangements and Sightseeing trip.

Introduction

Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure. As such, tourism has implications on the economy, on the natural and built environment, on the local population at the

destination and on the tourists themselves. Due to these multiple impacts, the wide range and variety of production factors required producing those goods and services acquired by visitors, and the wide spectrum of stakeholders involved or affected by tourism, there is a need for a holistic approach to tourism development, management and monitoring. This approach is strongly recommended in order to formulate and implement national and local tourism policies as well as the necessary international agreements or other processes in respect of tourism.

Tourism in India

The tourism industry of India is economically important and grows rapidly. The World Travel & Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated INR6.4 trillion or 6.6% of the nation's GDP in 2012. It supported 39.5 million jobs, 7.7% of its total employment. The sector is predicted to grow at an average annual rate of 7.9% from 2013 to 2023. This gives India the third rank among countries with the fastest growing tourism industries over the next decade. India has a large medical tourism sector which is expected to grow at an estimated rate of 30% annually to reach about ₹ 95 billion by 2015. According to provisional statistics 6.29 million foreign tourists arrived in India in 2011, an increase of 8.9% from 5.78 million in 2010. This ranks India as the 38th country in the world in terms of foreign tourist arrivals. Domestic tourist visits to all states and Union Territories numbered 1,036.35 million in 2012, an increase of 16.5% from 2011. The most represented countries are the United States (16%) and the United Kingdom (12.6%). In 2011 Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Delhi were the most popular states for foreign tourists. Domestic tourists visited the states Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu most frequently. Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai and Agra have been the four most visited cities of India by foreign tourists during the year 2011. Worldwide, Chennai is ranked 41 by the number of foreign tourists, while Delhi is ranked at 50, Mumbai at 57 and Agra at 65 and Kolkata at 99.

The *Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013* ranks India 65th out of 144 countries overall. The report ranks the price competitiveness of India's tourism sector 20th out of 144 countries. It mentions that India has quite good air transport (ranked 39th), particularly given the country's stage of development, and reasonable ground transport infrastructure (ranked 42nd). Some other aspects of its tourism infrastructure remain somewhat underdeveloped however. The nation has very few hotel rooms per capita by international comparison and low ATM penetration. The World Tourism Organization reported that India's receipts from tourism during 2012 ranked 16th in the world and 7th among Asian and Pacific countries. The Ministry of Tourism designs national policies for the development and promotion of tourism. In the process, the Ministry consults and collaborates with other stakeholders in the sector including various Central Ministries/

agencies, state governments, Union Territories and the representatives of the private sector. Concerted efforts are being made to promote new forms of tourism such as rural, cruise, medical and eco-tourism. The Ministry also maintains the Incredible India campaign. India's rich history and its cultural and geographical diversity make its international tourism appeal large and diverse. It presents heritage and cultural tourism along with medical, business, educational and sports tourism.

Travel and Tourism Industry's Contribution to Indian Economy Likely to Grow by 7.3% in 2014

Travel and tourism industry in India is likely to post above-average growth this year, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). WTTC's annual economic impact report 2014 for India shows that travel and tourism's economic contribution is expected to grow by 7.3% this year, outperforming the general economy by 2.5% points. Revenues gained from domestic tourism rose by 5.1% in 2013 and is expected to increase by 8.2% in 2014. The amount that international visitors spent in India rose by 6.2% in 2013 but is forecast to slow to a 2.9% growth rate in 2014. "Inbound tourism is continuing to grow both in terms of international tourist arrivals and international tourism receipts. But it is the domestic market which will see particularly strong growth in 2014 with more investment and more Indians travelling," David Scowsill, president and chief executive officer, WTTC, said. The Government of India has announced that it proposes to extend visa on arrival and electronic travel authorization for tourists from 180 countries and to speed up the application process for those still requiring a paper visa. It plans to issue visa in three days in such cases. During 2013, travel and tourism industry contributed Rs 63,160 crore to the economy and generated 35 million jobs.

The Tourism sector of Indian economy is at present experiencing a huge growth. The Tourism sector of Indian economy has become one of the major industrial sectors under the Indian economy. The tourism industry earns foreign exchanges worth ` 21,828 crore. Previous year the growth rate of the tourism sector of Indian economy was recorded as 17.3% . The growth in the tourism industry is due to the rise in the arrival of more and more foreign tourists and the increase in the number of domestic tourists. Tourists from Africa, Australia, Latin America, Europe, Southeast Asia, etc are visiting India and their are growing by the thousands every year. Indian Tourism offers a potpourri of different cultures, traditions, festivals, and places of interest. There are a lot of options for the tourists. India is a country with rich cultural and traditional diversity. This aspect is even reflected in its tourism. The different part of the country offers wide variety of interesting places to visit. While the international tourism is experiencing a decelerated growth, the Indian counterpart is not affected.

The Factors for the Growth of the Tourism Sector of Indian Economy

- Increase in the general income level of the populace
- Aggressive advertisement campaigns on the tourist destinations
- Rapid growth of the Indian economy

The Objectives of the National Action Plan for Tourism

- Socio economic development of areas
- Increase in the opportunities for employment
- Development of the domestic tourism for the middle class segment of the society
- Preservation and restoration of the national heritage and environment
- Developing international tourism
- Promotion of tourism based product diversification
- Increasing the Indian share in global tourism

There are some parts of the world that once visited get into your heart and won't let go. For me India is such a place when I first visited, I was stunned by the richness of the land by its lush beauty and exotic architecture by its ability to overload its senses with the pure, concentrated intensity of its colors, smells, tastes and souls. It was as if all my life I was seeing the world in black and white and when brought face-to-face with India, experienced everything rendered in brilliant Technicolor. - Keitlt Bellows "It we were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow in some parts a very paradise on earth. I should point to India." -Max Mueller

The most valuable assets of India as a desirable tourist destination lies in thousands years old historical and cultural heritage. Every region, every part of India encompasses culture of its own, entirely distinct in traditions, language, festi'll4 beliefs and rituals with different and unique style of living and dresses. No country in the world comprises such distinction such diversity with a unity and integration. This diversity may be attributed to the historical roots of developments of each region, due to different dynasties ruled the differed regions. The development of different life-style, celebrations of different festivals, adopting different lan different dressing sense, all exit as per the norms fixed by the then ruling dynasty. region has unique physical features, soil types and climatic conditions, so has distinct vegetation and wild life. When all the natural beauty is mingled with culture the resultant harmony present a unique land sparkled picture, reflecting destination in its unique and colorful way. One finds everything in India: exotic as well as native, the snow clad Himalayas crowned the head in the north, enveloped all the beauty within itself, releases the mighty rivers, Indus, Ganges, and Yamuna and their tributaries. These rivers

roll over the whole country like arteries, supplying life blood to the body of the country and its inhabitants throughout the year. The complex beauty of the desert state of Rajasthan is found rarely in any part of the world. With Thar at its background and vivacious sand dunes, mirages and camels, the huge and glorified palaces, forts and Havelies, present a complex and unique beauty. The culture of Rajputs with bright Badhani colors intricate designs and the Royal background give their sharp look different from others. In their unique architectural style in the series of palaces are lake palace of Udaipur, sand colored forts' in Jaisalmer, city palace of Jaipur, the pink city of India coupled with the vibrant folk dances and folk songs make India an "Cultural".

The Taj Mahal at Agra, symbol of Mughal romance and faith, in its architectural perfection and splendor attracts tourists from all over the world. Taj Mahal reflects the Persian cultural and their architectural eminence, today counted among the seven wonders of the world. The caves of Ajanta-Ellora. the Sun Temple of Konark. the Temple of Khajurao and Dravidian style stone carved temples of Hoysalewara and Ranganathswamy, the medieval glory of Qutab Minar, Red fort, Fatehpur Sikri and other forts and mausoleums with Persian architectural influence, the Victoria place at Kolkata, beautiful and elegant churches at Goa. each and every symbolizes the clarity of Indian culture with tremendous diversification and each has its own attraction for the tourist. India has witnessed many eras blooming on her soil. Each era and dynasty has left incredible mark, on her different regions with uniqueness and distinction. From Harappas to Mauryas, Guptas to Sultans and Mughals to Portuguese and English, witnessed a metamorphosis in each era. Different cultures with different life styles and beliefs, intermingled. Each century brought a new culture, made its impact, kept intact -original identity and beliefs also, and thus a unique diversity with integration is the present India.

The Bhool Bholaiyan at Lucknow. the mystery of shaking Minarets in the mosque and tomb of Rajbibi in Ahmedabad, the acoustic wonders of Gol Gumbaj, the famous Golden Temple at Amritsar, the oldest church at Palayurin Goa, the oldest synagogue at Mattancherry in Kochi and the oldest mosque in Eheraman Malik Manzil in Kodungallor, also the modern Lotus Temple, the Bahami temple of worship. the Stupa of Sanchi, Tower of Silence at Mumbai, and tallest statue of Bahubali at Kamataka, all speak of the glorious heritage of our country and so are the of attraction for tourists throughout the world. Nowhere in the world, can be found such multifaceted, most diversified culture with rich heritage reflecting many dynasties and regimes. India is known for its unparalleled religious beliefs as well as for its vast variety of people, the animal kingdom and the rich flora. India is a miniature world, where the tourists find the best of the west and east coexisting in perfect harmony for centuries. Another aspect of Indian culture can well be seen in its vibrant and colorful festivals. India has been the birth place of many religion. The

Hinduism, The Buddhism, The Jainism, The Sikhism, The Islam and The Christianity also nourished and flourished here well. The Desert festival, the Kite festival, Boat race festival in south India, the Durga Pooja festival of Kolkata, Dussehera of Mysore, Puri festival of Orissa, Ganesh Chaturthi festival of Maharashtra, all are celebrated so colorful and in such a grand manner, that reflect the wonderful observance of religious and cultural heritage of our country. Not only the above historical festivals, the modern festivals, like the Taj Mahotsava, Khajurao Dance festival, Konark Dance festival, also give an opportunity of seeing all internationally acclaimed faces of Indian classical dance and music on one stage. Over the years we have developed the concept of eco- friendly tourism, means that while promoting tourism in very possible manner we should not forget importance of ecological balance. Many of the places at the foothills of the Himalayas, have become the dumping ground of tourists. While promoting the tourism in wild life, it must be ensured that the tourists should not become a threat to the tranquility and ecological balance of the forests.

No doubt, India's diversified culture presents a 'paradise for tourists' but to keep it intact, a number of judicious and prudent policies to facilitate the tourists and attract more and more tourists are to be framed and require to be implemented at a fast pace. The tourists visiting India, should be enchanted not only with the rich heritage, but they should also feel here safe, sound and welcomed.

Rapid Growth of Tourism

Tourism has taken shape as the world's largest industry growing rapidly in the last two decades. Today it has a share of 6 percent in world output and provides jobs to more than 100 million people around the globe. Since the end of the Second World War, it has developed a solid gain in revenue and development potential and stands as a notable natural renewable resource industry. Tourism - the travel based recreation provides an interesting alternative to people who lead a busy and routine life in their profession. They get a change in their normal and usual life. It is a normal desire for everybody to see new places and know about their life style. They wish to use their summer spells in the best possible manner. Tourism provides an opportunity to fulfill this instinct. This instinct gives a thrust to the tourism industry which has become the main source of income for several places not only in India, but abroad also.

In India, we can take examples of places like Varanasi, Vaishno Devi, Agra, Haridwar, Mussoorie, Manali etc. in this regard. Besides there are many stations which are thronged by tourists. It is a pride to note that India has a considerable number of tourists spots. They have a craze to visit these stations to satisfy their quest for exploring the historical aspects of this country. In 1992-93, we earned good amounts from 1.82 million tourists. Tourism helps in filling up the gaps of budgets if any. Tourism generated inter-relationship, hospitality and employment, potentiality for people. Besides advantage, there

are certain side effects on this account. It is a normal habit with the backward or under - developed nations to take every tourist as a rich person. The tourist are often accompanied by some sales agents, who in old terminology, can be called as 'THUGS'. These guides or agents increase the prices in super effects. The tourist forms a very bad opinion about a place where he had been cheated so badly by the residents. We must remember that every tourist is an embassy or a representative of his country moving in our country. They are the best source of publicity attracting or repelling further tourists in our country. Thus, a bad experience for his deprives us from the visits of further tourist from the area.

Spoiling the environment is a common outcome of rushed tourist visits. Himalaya mountains having places like Nanda Devi tract gives a sad look due to over crowd of the tourists. It is a fact that his people cannot provide very high level of amenities for tourism. The shortage occurs for electricity or water or disposal of fuse. These problems create further damages to local masses. They create particular disturbance to circle of wild life up keep and natural settings of wild life are also affected due to excess tourism. Monuments too have suffered from tourism. The Taj Mahal, the seventh wonder of the medieval world, has suffered lot of wear and tear from trampling feel of tourists. General instability of nation is causing damage to this industry, Kashmir is one of the examples Violence in Ayodhya, bomb - blasts in Mumai, disturbance in Vadodara and Surat caused reduction of tourist visits to the area. Even on the whole India has to struggle hard to promote tourism. She must make use of this plan to earn more revenue. We have all the lush attraction to generate desires for a visit to this country by the tourist.

A major contribution in this respect can be by offering the best hospitality and courtesy. They should attempt to win their love and praise. We must be prepared to share the burdern movement as host to tourist. As stated above, a tourists is the mouthpiece of a particular industry/country. The good image can induce them to talk good about us and bad behavior can make them spirit bad experiences and discourage tourism. We should keep it in mind that many of the Kashmir tourists have been diverted to Switzerland or any other hill stations. We have a very meagre share of 0.4 per cent in the world tourism and it must be increased. There is need to create awareness about tourism, the ignorance about a particular language and tradition does not mean that the person be cheated by the locals. On the other hand, people can cultivate permanent relationship by rendering honest help to the needy when they are trapped in such a situation. The soothing help can go a long way in developing good relations and bring expert contracts for our country.

Role of Tourism Industry in India GDP

Role of Tourism Industry in India GDP has been quite alarming since the past few decades. Tourism industry has contributed enormously in the flourishing graph of India's economy by attracting a huge number of both foreign and domestic tourists traveling for

professional as well as holiday purpose. The tourism industry in India witnessed a stupendous growth in 2006. The growth in the inflows in India's tourism industry is calculated both in terms of business and vacations. The number of foreign tourists arriving from all over the world rose from 0.37 percent to 0.53 percent as has been stated by UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in the year 2006. This remarkable growth in the graph of tourism industry in India popularized the entire South Asia as one of the most spectacular tourist terminal. Indian tourism industry contributes to around 5.9 percent of the country's GDP and it provides employment to around 41.8 million of inhabitants.

Some of the most significant features of India's tourism industry or the Role of Tourism Industry in India GDP have been listed below:

- The percentage of foreign tourists in India has increased by 12.4 percent in one year, that is, from 2006 to 2007. In 2006, Indian tourist industry witnessed a growth of 14.3 percent, which reached around 3.89 million in 2007
- The foreign tourists arrival led to a robust growth in the foreign exchange earnings that increased from USD 5.03 billion during January-October 2006 to USD 6.32 billion during January-October 2007, which is apparently a 25.6 percent rise.
- Deeming the growing rate of the tourists arrival in the country, the Indian tourism industry designed a wide spectrum of holiday packages and cheaper airfares to attract more tourists.
- Nonetheless, the outgoing graph of tourism industry in India is in no way lagging behind from the inbound one. People traveling from India to abroad or states within India have increased by 25 percent.
- The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has estimated the outgoing tourists to reach around 50 million by the year 2020.
- According to the European Travel Commission, the average expenditure per trip of Indian tourists traveling abroad has increased from USD 611 in 2000 to USD 822 in 2006
- The booming success of Indian tourism industry has led to a drastic change in the hospitality department as well. The increase in the ratio of tourists resulted in the increase of room rates and also setting up of a wide range of hotels and other residing areas.
- A number of international hotels such as the Hilton, Accor, Marriott International, Berggruen Hotels, Cabana Hotels, Premier Travel Inn (PTI) and Inter Continental Hotels groups have professed about making some large-scale investments to append 65,000 additional rooms to suffice the needs

- India is most likely to set up forty hotels of global brands by 2011. The hospitality segment in India is assumed to reach USD 11.41 billion in the coming two years
Following are the few benefits ensured by the tourism industry in India GDP in order to boost up the GDP of India:

- The Indian tourism industry offers online booking system, one of the basic proofs of technological advancement in this sector. These online bookings are applicable for booking the air tickets via Internet by logging on to the website and also booking the hotel room of the place to be visited
- The online tourism industry has accounted for a turnover of USD 800 million which is apparently 14 percent of the entire travel and tourism industry
- The Role of Tourism Industry in India GDP also features medical tourism that includes traditional therapies like yoga, meditation, ayurveda, allopathy and other conventional systems of medicines is currently estimated at USD 333 million and is most likely to reach USD 2.2 billion by the year 2012.

India - Travel & Tourism Total Contribution to GDP - Travel & Tourism Total Contribution To GDP - % Share

The share of Travel & Tourism spending or employment in the equivalent economy-wide concept in the published national income accounts or labour market statistics. Visitor exports are compared with exports of all goods and services Domestic Travel & Tourism spending is compared with GDP Government individual Travel & Tourism spending is compared with total government spending Internal Travel & Tourism consumption is compared with total internal consumption (i.e. total domestic spending plus total export) Leisure Travel & Tourism contribution to GDP is compared with total GDP Business Travel & Tourism contribution to GDP is compared with total GDP Travel & Tourism capital investment spending is compared with all fixed investment spending

Date	Value	Change %
2014	6.8	3.03%
2013	6.6	1.54%
2012	6.5	-1.52%
2011	6.6	1.54%
2010	6.5	-2.99%
2009	6.7	-6.94%
2008	7.2	0.00%
2007	7.2	1.41%
2006	7.1	1.43%
2005	7.0	-19.54%
2004	8.7	-1.14%

Source: World Travel and Tourism Council Data, 2013

The Share of Tourism and Travel Industry in India's GDP

Year	GDP Share Percentage
1988	7.80%
1989	7.40%
1990	7.70%
1991	7.70%
1992	7.60%
1993	7.00%
1994	7.70%
1995	8.40%
1996	8.30%
1997	9.10%
1998	8.90%
1999	9.00%
2000	9.20%
2001	7.30%
2002	8.30%
2003	8.80%

Source: World Travel and Tourism Council Data, 2013

Expected Share of Tourism and Travel Industry in India's GDP in Future

Year	Expected GDP Share
2015	6.80%
2016	6.80%
2017	6.80%
2018	6.80%
2019	6.80%
2020	6.80%
2021	6.90%
2022	6.90%
2023	6.90%
2024	6.90%
2025	7.00%
2026	6.90%
2027	7.00%
2028	7.00%
2029	6.90%
2030	6.90%
2031	6.90%
2032	6.90%
2033	7.00%
2034	7.00%
2035	7.00%

Source: World Travel and Tourism Council Data, 2013

Some of the Important Tourist Destinations in India**North India:**

- *New Delhi*: The capital city of India and has a rich cultural past
- *Agra*: The city of the Taj Mahal and one of the greatest tourist attractions in India
- *Simla*: A splendid hill station in the Himalayas
- *Dehradun*: The capital of Uttaranchal and famous for its fantastic scenery

East India:

- *Kolkata*: The cultural capital of India, the city of Tagore, and Satyajit Ray
- *Guwahati*: Important base for tourism in the region
- *Shillong*: The capital of Meghalaya, and famous for its breathtaking lush green landscapes
- *Patna*: One of the oldest cities in India and famous for its historical relics
- *Jamshedpur*: An important industrial township, home of the Tata industries

Central India:

- *Allahabad*: The city of the Prayag and the Kumbha Mela
- *Varanasi*: The holiest city for the Hindus, famous for its temples and ghats
- *Bhopal*: The capital of Madhya Pradesh and important center of tourism

West India:

- *Mumbai*: The commercial capital of India and the city that never sleeps
- *Panjim*: The main city in the state of Goa which is famous for its golden beaches and pristine waters
- *Udaipur*: The city of palaces famous for its Lake Palace in the middle of Lake Pichola

South India:

- *Chennai*: The Automobile capital of India
- *Bangalore*: The Silicon Valley of India, famous for its software companies and has a beautiful weather
- *Trivandrum*: The city of the famous Kovalam Beach
- *Cochin* : A coastal city famous for its historical relevance
- *Ooty*: A fabulous hill station in the Nilgiris famous for its verdure valleys

Economic Facts

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, Indian tourism revenue grew 6.9 percent to almost \$42 billion in 2010 despite a global recession. This compares to a worldwide tourism industry that remained flat during the same time period. Domestic tourism fueled much of the growth as Indians increasingly visited other areas of their country, but international arrivals also played an important part in the industry's expansion.

Just over five million international tourists arrive in India annually (2009), and while that represents less than 1 percent of total worldwide international travel, tourists to India spend almost twice as much as the average international tourist.

Benefits

Tourism benefits India in three ways---employment, foreign currency and infrastructure development. Over 20 million people work in India's tourist industry. This includes jobs in hotels, transport, attractions and tour companies. Others indirectly benefit such as restaurants and retail shops. Tourism generates over \$11 billion in foreign currency, assisting the country's trade balance. Another benefit is infrastructure development such as hotel construction, airport improvements and ground transportation systems. As an example, the government set a deadline for opening a major expansion of Delhi's metro system concurrent with the opening of the 2010 Commonwealth Games. The city met the deadline and welcomed thousands of tourists with improved transportation throughout the city. In addition, tourism promotes understanding among people, both among Indians from different parts of the country, and with foreigners.

Market Types

India caters to several market types. Historically, the cultural tourist vacation market attracted the most foreign visitors, but marketers now target the business travel market as well, enticing them to schedule conventions and business meetings in conjunction with cultural activities. Additional markets include adventure and eco-tourism, as well as the pilgrimage market, which is a major source of Indian domestic tourism. The medical tourism market attracts many foreigners to India's quality low cost hospitals for treatment. Package programs include both medical treatment and tourist activities.

Features

For those seeking culture and historic sites, the "golden triangle" encompassing Delhi, Jaipur and Agra offers visitors many options in close proximity. The area features six UNESCO World Heritage sites including Agra's Taj Mahal, Delhi's Red Fort and Jaipur's Jantar Mantar. In all, India boasts 23 cultural and five natural World Heritage sites. India's natural attractions include several national parks which feature game viewing, alpine scenery and white-water rafting. Eco-tourism thrives in the northern Himalayas as well as in the southern state of Kerala in its "backwaters" region. Both seek to preserve natural habitats of native flora and fauna. Many Indians and foreigners alike make pilgrimages to religious sites. While many travel to the Ganges River to bathe in its waters, others travel to holy temples located in Haridwar, Amritsar, Varanasi and elsewhere.

Tourism Development Corporation

India's government established the India Tourism Development Corporation (TDC) in 1966 to promote and manage tourism development nationally. It is responsible for all of

India's tourism marketing operations, including the "Incredible India" campaign. The corporation has five divisions: Travels and Tours, International Trade, Group of Hotels, Institute of Hospitality and Tourism Management and Consultancy. Each state has its own government-funded TDC, which manages tourism-related infrastructure and facilities on a commercial basis. Ventures include accommodation, transport services, tourist service centers, hospitality venues and attractions. They also organize fairs and events, operate package tours and finance tourism training institutes.

India's Northeastern Region

The Indian government perceives tourism as being vital to the Northeastern region, yet in spite of its attributes, which include snow-capped mountains, beautiful scenery, historic sites and white-water rivers, tourism arrivals so far have been insufficient to sustain the local economy. Some blame a lack of tourism infrastructure, so development plans include the construction of tourist accommodation and wayside amenities, the beautification and refurbishment of historical buildings and monuments and the creation of adventure tourism facilities, with all programs to be funded by central government. In addition, an Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology has opened in Shillong.

Adapting to Change

India's Ministry of Tourism has recognized the need to respond to changing tourism markets by adapting to new global trends within the sector, such as the growth in medical tourism. Haryana state is a good example of the way in which tourism in India has changed. The original tourism infrastructure, created in the 1980s, concentrated on cultural and pilgrimage tourism. In the 1990s, operators introduced golf tourism and adventure tourism into the region, including rafting, mountain-climbing, abseiling and kayaking; at the beginning of the 21st century, there was a trend toward village tourism, arts and crafts, and the development of new tourism locations. The luxury end of the market also has been catered to, with 44 government-owned vacation resorts featuring golf courses, swimming pools, landscaped gardens and tennis courts.

Eco-Tourism

The World Tourism Organization says eco-tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors within the tourism industry. Although eco-tourism is still in its infancy in India, the government has enthusiastically embraced the concept. Promotion of the country's natural resources and culture to eco-tourists not only creates employment in remote rural areas, but also provides funding for conservation schemes to protect the country's flora and fauna, such as the Himalayan ecosystems, and helps preserve the cultural heritage of the nation's indigenous peoples. India has seen an increase in nature tourism, wildlife tourism and adventure tourism, as well as a growth in eco-friendly accommodation, such as

campgrounds, eco-hotels and developments such as the Tree Houses at Vythiri and house boats at Kerala.

Conclusion

"Incredible India," the marketing slogan that attracts tourists to India from around the globe, also reports incredible results for its marketers. Indian tourism, stimulated by nonstop flights from Europe and North America, continues to develop new markets. And via low cost domestic airlines, Indians themselves fuel growth as they discover their country. Tourism is the largest service industry in India. Government figures show tourism contributes 6.23 percent of GDP and accounts for 8.78 percent of jobs. The World Travel & Tourism Council has predicted that tourism in India will continue to sustain steady growth. The Ministry of Tourism is the primary driving force behind tourism development in India, and it manages many of the country's tourism enterprises.

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