

Tourism in India: The way towards Sustainability

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Abstract—Tourism industry has grown rapidly over the years. International tourism has increased over the past 50 years. It is said to have increased by 6.5% per year averagely.

India is a home to numerous tourist destinations. From Jammu and Kashmir to Kerala and Gujarat to Arunachal Pradesh, the country offers several points of interest for ecotourism and business tourism to medical and educational tourism. The tourism and travel related industry contributed about \$113.2 billion in 2013. In the same year it provided employment to about twenty million people across India. The nation forms the second largest tourism market in Asia and lags only behind China.

It is noteworthy that these facts and figures which seem to be large and fascinating do not turn out acceptable at the broad level. In 2013, tourism contributed to just about 5.35% in the entire GDP. Similarly, it provided jobs to just about 1.5% of the population.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry is the key towards the development of a developing economy like India. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the industry contributed to about Rs. 7,642 billion and generated 36.7 million employment opportunities in 2014. The sector's GDP contribution has been forecasted to grow by 7.5% and its employment by 1.8%.

As per the projections, the travel and tourism industry is expected to contribute about Rs. 8,21,500 crores, 7% of India's GDP, and 37.4 million jobs, almost 9% of total employment by the end of 2015. India's travel and tourism economy is due to grow by 7.5% in 2015, which is the highest level of growth for any of the major economies in the world.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the sector has the potential to contribute to nearly 46 million jobs to the Indian economy by 2025. India is becoming a global destination as far as the tourism sector is concerned. Travel and tourism industry is one of the most profitable industries of India. During 2006, India was visited by approximately four million tourists which spent US \$8.9 billion.

The middle income class is the driver of the nation's domestic tourism growth. Disposable income has grown by 10.11% annually from 2001-2006 and a larger portion of it is being invested for travel.

Foreign tourists spend much more in India than in any other country worldwide. Tourist arrivals in India are projected to

increase by over 22% per year through till 2010, with a 33% increase in foreign exchange earnings as recorded in 2004.

Tourism sector has also enhanced the growth and development of other sectors in the country by creating employment opportunities. The growth of tourism is also boosted administratively by the formation of a corporation in each and every state.^[7]

2. TIRUMALA VENKATESHWARA TEMPLE, TIRUPATI

A major pilgrimage centre and cultural city in the state of Andhra Pradesh, Tirupati is located in the Chittoor district. It is the largest urban agglomeration in the Rayalseema region of Andhra. Located on the foothills of the Eastern ghats, it is regarded as one of the best heritage cities.

Out of the total number of tourists visiting the state of Andhra Pradesh, 99% visit the religious shrine at Tirupati, most of whom are domestic. Domestic Tourists which visit the city of Tirupati form 51% of the entire set of domestic visitors within the state. In this way, Tirupati forms the most visited tourist destination within the state.

Tirupati is the home to one of the richest Hindu temples and most visited place of worship in the world. The temple belong to the vedic times and is referred to as the 'Temple of seven hills'.

Tirumala Sri Vekateshwara Temple alone employs about more than 9000 people to manage the social and religious welfare activities. It forms the richest temple in the world in terms of the donations received. The temple was visited by about 22 million people in 2011 and had received an exorbitant amount of Rs. 1700 crores as the income.^[8]

As per the recent scenario, the temple suffered a decline in its Hundi collection in 2013. Despite of the fall of Rs. 26 crores, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams had an annual budget of Rs. 832 crores in 2013. The overall revenue was about Rs. 2,262.52 crores i.e. a hike of Rs. 15 crores over the previous year's revenue.^[2]

According to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Authorities, the Hundi collections for 2014-2015 is projected to Rs. 900 crores along with an annual turnover of Rs. 2401 crores.^{[10][11]}

The attainment of the status of a World Heritage Site requires the satisfaction of certain criteria. Of these, Tirumala Sri Vekateshwara Temple fulfills following three criteria:

- To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared: Outstanding testimony of the Pallavas of Kanchipuram (9th century AD), the Cholas of Tanjore (10th century), and Vijayanagara pradhans (14th and 15th centuries).
- To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history: This Temple bears on its walls several inscriptions which are of historical, cultural and linguistic importance. The number of inscriptions on the Hill Temple and in the temples of Lower Tirupati and Tiruchanur exceed one thousand and they furnish a continuous and authentic record of the transactions of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams for over seven or eight centuries. There is an evidence to suggest that many early inscriptions on the walls of the temples have disappeared beyond recovery due to restorations and renovations undertaken from time to time.
- To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria): When Lord Balaji was hit on his head by a shepherd, a small portion of his scalp became bald. This was noticed by Neela Devi, a Gandharva princess. She felt "such an attractive face should not have a flaw". Immediately, she cut a portion of her hair and, with her magical power, implanted it on his scalp. Lord Balaji noticed her sacrifice. As hair is a beautiful asset of the female form, he promised her that all his devotees who come to his abode would offer their hair to him, and she would be the recipient of all the hair received. Hence, it is believed that hair offered by the devotees is accepted by Neela Devi. ^[4]

3. HARMANDIR SAHIB, AMRITSAR

Amritsar is the home to the spiritual and cultural centre of the Sikh religion. The Sikh shrine is noted to attract more visitors than the Taj Mahal and is the most important destination for the non-resident Indians in the country. ^[3]

The temple was visited by about 50 million domestic tourists between 2009 and 2010. It occupies a position among the most popular heritage sites of the world. Golden Temple earns a revenue of about US \$460 million per year. ^[9]

The Golden Temple at Amritsar fulfills the following criteria in order to attain the status of a World Heritage Site:

- To represent a masterpiece of human creative genius: Unique artistic achievement with gold and exquisite

marble work were conducted under the patronage of Hukam Singh Chimni and Emperor Ranjit Singh, Maharaja of the Sikh Empire of Punjab. Guru Arjan conceived the idea of creating a central place of worship for the Sikhs and designed the architecture of Harmandir Sahib. The plan to establish a town settlement was also made and the construction work on the Sarovar (the tank) and the town started simultaneously in 1570. Projects were completed in 1577 A.D. During the leadership of the fifth Guru, Guru Arjan (1581–1606), the full-fledged gurdwara was built. In December 1588, Guru Arjan initiated the construction of the gurdwara.

- To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design: Guru Arjan conceived the idea of creating a central place of worship for the Sikhs and designed the architecture of Harmandir Sahib. Earlier the planning to excavate the holy tank (Amritsar or Amrit Sarovar) was chalked out by Guru Amar Das, the Third Sikh Guru, but it was executed by Guru Ram Das under the supervision of Baba Budha. The plan to establish a town settlement was also made and the construction work on the Sarovar (the tank) and the town started simultaneously in 1570.
- To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history: Instead of the normal custom of building a gurdwara on high land, it was built at a lower level than the surrounding land so that devotees would have to go down steps to enter it. In addition, instead of one entrance, Sri Harmandir Sahib has four entrances. The gurdwara is surrounded by a large lake or holy tank, known as the Sarovar, which consists of Amrit ("holy water" or "immortal nectar"). The temple's architecture draws on both Hindu and Muslim artistic styles yet represents a unique coevolution of the two. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839), Hari Mandir was richly ornamented with marble sculptures, golden gilding, and large quantities of precious stones. Within the sanctuary, on a jewel-studded platform, lies the Adi Grantha, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs. ^[4]

4. SUGGESTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Allowing of corporate sponsorship for heritage buildings: The maintenance and conservation of the tourist attractions should be handed over to the private entities partly as a number of sites exist in India.
- Improvement of the transportation systems: Although India has a great and dense network of roads and railways, transportation infrastructure is very poor. Hence in order to boost tourism, transportation sector first need to be targeted.

- Focusing upon the art and culture: Many of the Indian monuments and tourist sites are in a poor condition and on the verge of getting ruined, hence proper policy implementation in order to conserve them. ^[1] ^[5] ^[6]

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