

GLOBALISATION OF TOURISM INDUSTRY: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS IN INDIA.

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Introduction

Indian tourism industry as compared to other developed tourism industries in the world, is comparatively in its nascent stages. Post independence Indian tourism industry was nowhere near the development horizon. The situation did not change much even after independence. The government had much more urgent and critical issues like:

1. Total displacement of population due to partition.
2. Poverty and illiteracy.
3. Establishing a strong government in Republic of India.
4. Protecting the newly established state.

to handle than development of tourism.

Social and cultural scenario at that time in Indian society was also not very favorable for the growth and development of tourism. Few hill stations established by former British and Portuguese rulers in India were the only resort for the rich and wealthy in the society. Visiting Religious places or VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) was the only way to look at the tourism for a common man.

As compared to Western society Indian society was not yet in a mindset to take tourism seriously.

Factors Contributing to Expansion and Growth of Tourism Industry in India

1. Indian Independence : When India was under British rule she never had a chance to think of her own potential to contribute to the tourism. Her rich cultural heritage, traditions, customs, festivals and fairs was all suppressed by 150 years of exploitative British rule. From her identity of Golden nation she was reduced to a status poor and third world country.

After independence India had a chance to tell the world about her past glory and attract tourists from all over the world to see the marvels she has to offer to them. India had a chance to rise above the master-servant status imposed by British rulers.

2. Opportunity to earn Foreign Exchange (FX): The FX earnings of India after independence were very limited. There were no big industries initially which could really contribute to foreign trade. Indian economy was largely depending on agricultural as its major GDP contributor. Service sector was yet to develop. India needed to earn revenue without investing much in the infrastructure as resources were limited.

The backwardness of the Indian economy was reflected in its unbalanced occupational structure. About 68 % of the working population was engaged in agriculture, about 14 per cent in industry (large and small scale), some 8 per cent in trade and transport and the remaining 10 per cent in professions and services including domestic service. Even with this large proportion of the population engaged in agriculture, the country was not self-sufficient in food and raw materials for industry. Productivity per worker in organised industry, commerce and transport was about three times that in agriculture, but this sector of the economy has not been expanding rapidly enough to absorb the surplus population on the land. The large-scale underemployment in the rural areas which these conditions had given rise to constitutes a big economic and social problem. A change in the occupational pattern in the direction of greater employment in the industrial sector and in services was clearly necessary if the associated phenomena of mass poverty and unemployment are to be tackled effectively.⁽¹⁾first five year plan 1951-56.

Tourism was one such avenue which could provide revenue without much of investment initially. India had it all to offer to the tourists. Natural attractions, cultural and heritage sites, fairs and festivals, historical sites to name a few.

3. Establishment of Planning Commission of India: In any economy resources are limited and thus they need to be allocated wisely. In the post independence era India was also going through lot of economic constraints. Resources were limited and the challenges in the fields of industry, education, society were unlimited. It was also understood that all sectors would have to progress hand in hand if the nation has to achieve a balanced development.

Though initially tourism was not exactly on the priority list of Planning Commission of India (in the first Five Year Plan 1951-56 tourism was 269th on the list), the planning at least gave it a chance to feature on the budget allocation.

4. Social awareness in Indian society: Education, employment, interaction with other cultural and societies has certainly broaden the views of Indian society at large. Where travelling overseas was once considered a religious taboo, now one would see students going abroad for education. Travelling large distances was not only for VFR but also for leisure and pleasure. Domestic tourism was also on the rise and it was promising growth contributing to major chunk of revenue.

5. Infrastcture development: In early days after independence road, railways and airways network was limited. Easy transport was restricted to certain areas and travelling short distances used to take lot of time. With advent of modes of transport and new motor and rail roads built (though their primary aim was not to develop tourism but for industrial development), it helped to some extent in the growth of tourism.

Also food, accommodation and way side amenities slowly started developing which are must for tourists.

These were some of the basic factors contributing to the growth and expansion of tourism industry. But still India was lagging far behind in competing with international markets

catering to global tourists. For any sector to develop, it must have a status of industry, a budget allocation of resources and a ministry or an authority in the government to regulate and channelize the growth. Unfortunately Indian tourism industry was denied the status of industry till 2002 (“Tenth Five Year Plan” tenure 2002-2007). It did not have an authority to regulate and direct. The growth in the initial phases was unplanned and one sided. Private sector was not involved and encouraged to participate. There were no concert marketing strategies, no policies. Services provided to the tourists were substandard and overpriced. The charges for any services were designed keeping in mind foreign tourists. Cheating at tourist places was common. Such an important revenue generating sector was ruined due to lack of political will. But things were changing slowly.

Changing Scenario of Tourism Industry in India .

Looking at the changing global scenario of world tourism the government has to take the cognizance of growing importance of tourism as a GDP contributor. It was noticed that the contribution of the service sector to economy was ever increasing. Tourism being a peculiar industry with its cross linkages in service as well as production sector has a greater role to play in the economic development of the country.

Tourism Linkages.

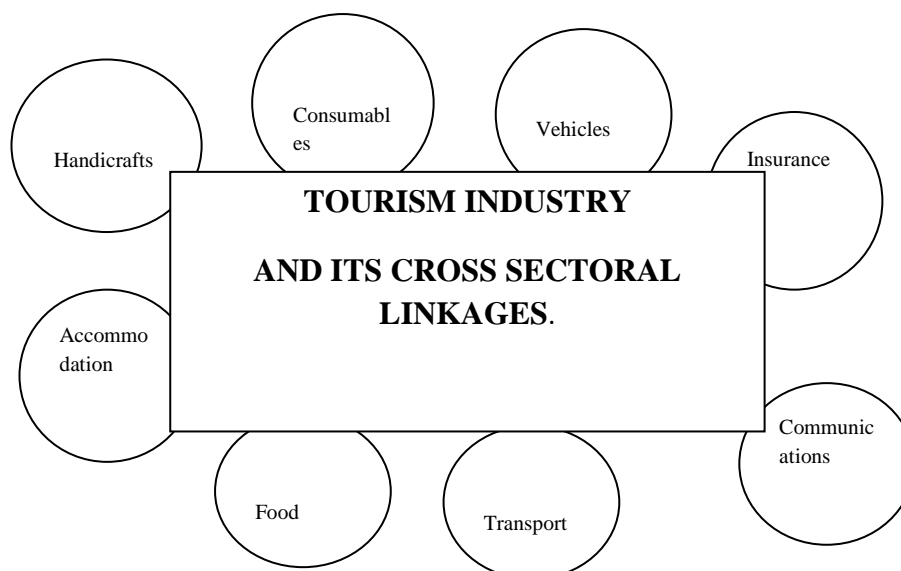


Figure 1.1 (Tourism cross sectoral linkages.)

It is a fact that tourism generates more job per million rupees invested than any other economic sector. Also the jobs that are generated are at various levels. Considering that tourism has many cross sectoral linkages at various levels the employment generation ranges from an entry level worker to a manager or director of a company. The range and scope of jobs is varied touching various levels and segments of society. So the tourism development also has a positive effect on economic status of the society. It brings prosperity to the local people and may help in upgrading life style of the people at the destination. In India where some regions like Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir are totally depending on tourism, tourism income becomes life line for the residents. People can acquire new skills to fulfill the demands arising from the tourists. Learning foreign language or any other regional Indian dialect to communicate with the tourists, making handicrafts, making and serving local food in small kiosks.

As the tourism is a widespread industry all over the world, it gives an employment opportunity over the globe. It gives exposure of different cultural by getting an opportunity to either work or travel abroad. Any socio-cultural interaction brings about the changes in the life style and culture of the people. A classic example is tourism development in Goa. Being a Portuguese colony Goa always had a different western culture than rest of the India. Further as tourism became a backbone, the habitation and social pattern changed drastically. Now many Russian nationals have purchased properties in Goa, have settled there and are running tourism related businesses in Goa. Casino culture, night life, drug peddling are some more socio-cultural impacts seen in Goa. A calm and relaxed lifestyle for which Goa was known once is lost. Safety issues for ladies tourists is becoming crucial. So one has to understand that the tourism development has to be concurrent with the local culture; else it can prove to be a disaster for local culture.

Same can be said about the tourism development in Uttarakhand. The recent mishap, which looks like a natural calamity is in fact a manmade disaster occurred due to over tourism. Number of tourists visiting the state annually has exceeded the total population of the state. It has put a tremendous pressure on the fragile ecosystem which showed its rage by killing hundreds of people. Rescue was immediately offered to the tourists and compensation was given to the victims, but it has devastated the local population. There were huge losses of property, villages were displaced and their ancestral homes were turned into heaps of ruins. Unplanned growth, copying blindly western models of tourism for revenue generation could kill the social and cultural life at a destination.

Earlier that is in 1960s India was looked upon by the foreign tourists as a mystery land of magic, tigers and elephants ruled by kings. Indian culture and heritage was a treasure that one would look forward to explore. Even the domestic tourists would be charmed by the wonders offered by India. From snow clad mountains to vast sea shores, from wide spread desserts to thick forests, waterfalls, rivers, hills, wildlife, heritage, culture and the list is never ending, India has it all to offer. But with changing times and in the quest of never ending want of something new and exciting newer forms of tourism developed as a need.

Foreign and Indian tourists visiting other states would bring in new ideas. So keeping aside what we can really promote as our own, we started adopting to foreign concepts/ideas of tourism. Luxury cruise tourism, Yatch tourism, Golf tourism, Dark tourism, Sex tourism are a few to quote the trend. Question is how valid are such kind of tourism in our culture? How far it is going to alter the society and local culture? The infrastcture required for any tourism development is usually shared by the locals as well. Roads, electricity, water supply, civil amenities are all required by the locals as well. When sharing such amenities is at a reasonable level with the guests, there is no conflict. But when it exceeds the carrying capacity of the host population there is a conflict between the interests. Who should be using the facilities on the priority basis?

The investments made to built any infrastcture usually comes from government, at least the basic infrastcture like roads, water and electricity. Private sector may invest in revenue generating activities like food service outlets, accommodation facilities, wayside amenities and so on. But when time comes to reap the benefits of the infrastcture, it is always the guest who is given a preference over the host. Private investors who are obviously concerned about their profits draw maximum benefit of development for the tourists which in turn are going to pay for the facilities provided. It can also lead to a master-slave attitude in guests. This is harmful for the social life of the hosts. It gives rise to tension between guests and hosts. Hosts might enter into malpractices like overcharging the guests, fake authenticity, and hostility towards the guests. Many foreigners visiting India often experience such incidents and are turned off from visiting India again.

Today the world is coming close with the advance in technology. With the help of internet, social networking and other electronic media, news travels faster than ever. Any new development in one corner of the world is not a secret within few hours. So it is true with the tourism. Globalization of tourism industry was never more fast. Today's tourist can visit any destination through virtual tour even by sitting at home and decide about visiting a destination. Booking a hotel room, airline ticket, renting a car, booking entertainment anything can be done through internet in an instant. Travelling was never so easy and convenient. India still attracts tourists from all over the world. In 1951 the foreign tourists visiting India was 16829 and in 2012-13 the number has reached 6577745. Also the domestic tourist number in India has been 1036346657 during 2012-13. Certainly such large amount of population travelling in a state is bound to create impacts on social and cultural life of the people.

Today we are not surprised to see Maggie noodles being offered in a remote region of Himalayas, we easily find Mac Donald's in southern or eastern part of India. Rock music in South Indian cafes, Chinese food in Maharashtra, idly-dosa in Rajasthan, we have accepted it all. In fact we expect it that way and we do not find it odd. This is a kind of cultural invasion occurring due to demand. We rarely want to taste the authentic local food or want to see or hear local dance or music. Being in our own plastic bubble suits us fine. We try to recreate our own environment at a distant place to maintain our comfort level. Air-conditioned rooms and coaches, luxurious rooms with western amenities has become a need today for even a

common tourist. We have lost some of the Indian culture in the bargain of tourism development.

Conclusion

Sustainability has always been an issue with tourism industry. Once considered as a smokeless industry it is now showing its side effects of development. Tourism to a great extent can alter the social and cultural life of people at the destination. Environmental sustainability, economic sustainability are to some extent measurable; but social and cultural sustainability is difficult to measure and so are the impacts. In the long run one can see a lifestyle being altered to extreme, a tradition being lost over time, an art form being extinct or rituals being merely turning into show pieces all these are signs of a dying culture. Globalization is affecting every aspect of our life and tourism is no exception to it. But the major difference is tourism can alter the very essence of our life that is our culture. India stands tall in the world with its heritage dating back to thousands of years. Many cultures have contributed to heritage wealth of India. We should be proud of it and try to preserve our rich heritage.

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