



Exploring Sustainable Tourism Practices in India: A Critical Review

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism, as defined by the UN Environment Program and UN World Tourism Organization, emphasizes consideration for economic, social, and environmental impacts, catering to the needs of visitors, the industry, and host communities. India, renowned as a global travel destination, has seen its tourism industry become a significant driver of growth within the services sector. With tourism serving as a vital source of foreign exchange, akin to many nations, India recognized the need to integrate sustainability into its tourism sector. In 2017, the Ministry of Tourism formulated a National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism, aimed at fostering resilient, inclusive, carbon-neutral, and resource-efficient tourism while preserving natural and cultural assets. Projections indicating a potential increase to US\$ 512 billion by 2028. Notably, India's tourism industry is expected to maintain an annual GDP contribution growth rate of 7-9% between 2017 and 2030. This research paper aims to delve into these facets, utilizing secondary data to elucidate discussions surrounding sustainable tourism's economic, social, and environmental dimensions within the Indian context.

Keywords: Tourism Industry, GDP, Investments etc.

Spanning 3,287,263 sq. km, India boasts a diverse landscape stretching from the snow-clad peaks of the Himalayas to the lush tropical rainforests of the south. This geographical richness is complemented by India's profound cultural and historical heritage, offering a tapestry of experiences across its varied terrains and natural wonders. Such diversity presents a vast opportunity for the tourism sector to thrive and flourish. India's geographical diversity intertwines with its vibrant cultural tapestry, establishing it as a premier destination for international travelers seeking unique experiences. As a result, India ranks among the top countries in terms of international tourism expenditure.

The travel and tourism industries stand as pillars of India's economy, collectively contributing approximately US\$ 178 billion to the nation's GDP. Recognizing the sector's immense potential to generate employment and foster entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Tourism received an allocation of US\$ 2.1 billion in the 2017-24 budget.

Moreover, in a bid to enhance tourism infrastructure and promote heritage and pilgrimage tourism, the Union Budget 2017-24 earmarked US\$ 170.85 million for the Swadesh Darshan Scheme. As of March 31, 2017, the PRASHAD Scheme has identified 68 destinations/sites across 30 States/UTs for development, further amplifying India's allure as a tourism hotspot.

Objectives of the study

- To study the market size of the Tourism Industry.





- To know the major initiatives planned by the Government of India to boost the tourism sector in India.

Research Methodology

This study is descriptive in nature and secondary data has been taken to conduct this study.

Market Size of Tourism Industry

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), India ranked 10th among 185 countries in terms of the travel and tourism sector's total contribution to GDP in 2017. In 2017, WTTC reported that India's travel and tourism sector contributed approximately Rs. 15.9 trillion (US\$ 191.25 billion) to the country's economy.

WTTC forecasts indicate promising growth for India's Travel & Tourism GDP over the next decade, with an anticipated average annual growth rate of 7.8%. In 2017, the Indian tourism sector provided employment for 39 million individuals, accounting for 8% of the total employment in the country.

Projections suggest substantial expansion within the Indian travel market, with estimates indicating that it will reach US\$ 125 billion by fiscal year 2027, up from an estimated US\$ 75 billion in fiscal year 2017. The Indian airline travel market, valued at approximately US\$ 20 billion, is anticipated to double in size by fiscal year 2027, propelled by advancements in airport infrastructure and increased accessibility to passports. Similarly, the Indian hotel market, encompassing domestic, inbound, and outbound segments, stood at around US\$ 32 billion in fiscal year 2017. This market is poised to surge to approximately US\$ 52 billion by fiscal year 2027, driven by rising demand from travelers and concerted efforts by travel agents to bolster the market.

In 2017, the travel and tourism industry made a significant contribution of US\$ 178 billion to the GDP, with projections indicating a potential surge to US\$ 512 billion by 2028. By 2029, it is anticipated that the industry will provide employment for approximately 53 million individuals. Notably, in India, the industry's direct contribution to the GDP is poised to maintain a robust annual growth rate of 7-9% between 2017 and 2030.

INVESTMENTS/DEVELOPMENTS

In December 2017, IHCL expanded its footprint in Maharashtra with the signing of a hotel in Bandra, Mumbai. This Brownfield project will be branded as an IHCL-SeleQtions hotel.

- Also in December 2017, TAJ clinched the prestigious 'World's Finest Luxury Grand Palaces' award at the '101 Best Executive Summit' held in Germany.
- November 2017 saw the Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) unveiling Ginger Mumbai, Airport. This flagship Ginger hotel, boasting 371 keys and strategically situated near the domestic airport, embodies the brand's lean luxe design ethos and commitment to delivering a vibrant, contemporary, and seamless hospitality experience to its guests.
- September 2017 marked Mahindra Holidays & Resorts (MHRIL) signing an MOU with the Government of Uttarakhand (UK) to invest Rs. 1,000 crore (US\$ 120.16 million) in developing 4-5 large marquee resorts in Uttarakhand over the next few years.
- Recognizing the immense potential of the tourism sector in generating employment and fostering entrepreneurship for youth, the Ministry of Tourism received an investment infusion of Rs. 2,400 crore (US\$ 289.89 million).





GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The Indian Government recognizes the immense potential of the tourism industry and is actively pursuing initiatives to establish India as a premier global tourism destination. Here are some of the key strategies and projects undertaken:

- **Visa Reforms:** The government has implemented extensive visa reforms, including the expansion of the Golden Visa scheme, introduction of a five-year Green residency, and issuance of new entry permits, including those for job seekers. These reforms also offer added benefits for sponsoring family members.
- **Free Visa Scheme:** To encourage international tourism, the government has launched a scheme offering free visas to five lakh tourists, thereby facilitating smoother travel for visitors.
- **Infrastructure Development:** The Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned 76 projects under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, allocating Rs. 5,399.15 crore for the development of tourism infrastructure across the country.
- **Heritage Promotion:** Initiatives such as the 12-episode webinar series conducted in collaboration with the Associations of Indian Universities (AIU) under the 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' (AKAM) aim to educate and inspire the youth about India's rich heritage.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** The Ministry of Tourism has organized numerous 'Dekho Apna Desh' webinars to promote domestic tourism and showcase India's diverse attractions.
- **Sustainable Tourism Strategy:** The government launched the National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism and the Responsible Traveller Campaign to promote responsible tourism practices and environmental conservation.
- **Vaccinated Tourists:** Since November 15, 2017, fully vaccinated foreign tourists have been permitted to visit India, a move expected to revitalize the travel and hospitality sectors.
- **Industry Partnerships:** Partnerships with organizations such as the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation and leading travel portals like Easy My Trip, Cleartrip, Yatra.com, Make My Trip, and Goibibo aim to strengthen the hospitality and tourism industry.
- **Film Tourism:** Efforts to promote film tourism include planning conferences to highlight domestic filming locations, which is anticipated to generate employment opportunities and drive tourism growth.
- **NIDHI 2.0 Scheme:** Launched in September 2017, the NIDHI 2.0 scheme aims to digitalize the tourism sector by maintaining a comprehensive database of hospitality industry components such as accommodation units, travel agents, and tour operators.
- **Lighthouse Tourism:** The government plans to boost tourism by developing 71 lighthouses as tourist attractions, leveraging their unique cultural and historical significance.

These initiatives collectively demonstrate the government's commitment to enhancing India's tourism sector and positioning the country as a preferred destination for travellers worldwide.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, the tourism industry is emerging as a pivotal economic force and a catalyst for development. Beyond merely stimulating economic growth, it serves as a beacon of opportunity, elevating living standards through its vast array of employment prospects. Furthermore, it champions environmental





conservation, celebrates cultural diversity, and fosters global harmony. Projections suggest that by 2028, India's tourism and hospitality sector is poised to generate a staggering US\$ 50.9 billion in visitor exports, a substantial increase from the US\$ 28.9 billion recorded in 2017.

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