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## GROWTH OF TOURISM IN INDIA

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### INTRODUCTION:

Tourism can be recognized as long as people have travelled; the narrative of Marco Polo in the 13th century; the "grand tour" of the British aristocracy to Europe in the 18th century; and the journeys of David Livingstone through Africa in the 19th century are all examples of early tourism. Thomas Cook is popularly regarded as the founder of inclusive tours with his use of a chartered train in 1841 to transport tourists from Loughborough to Leicester.

The World Tourism Organization defines tourism, in terms which go "beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only", as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes". In the early days, pilgrimage or pilgrim travel assumed great importance. Ashoka the great, travelled a great deal in his eagerness to spread the doctrines of Buddha. Throughout his travels, from Pataliputra to Lumbini on to Kapilavastu and Sarnath and finally to Gaya, Emperor Ashoka had special memorials set up at each spot and also rest houses where travellers could rest. Trees were planted along the road sides so that the traveller would be protected from the harsh sun shine.

During the rule of the Mughals, the emperors travelled extensively and contributed towards resort development. Even today the remains of the past like the mile stones, sarais and a network of roads and paths that make all corners of this vast country accessible.

The Rail network in India placed the needs for recreation within the reach of an increasingly large number of people who had leisure time and the means to enjoy it. Air India came into existence with the enactment of Air Corporations Act on 1st August 1963, when the entire air transport industry in India was nationalized.

In the early 1960's The ITDC (India Tourism Development Corporation) was started to provide western comforts to International visitors. The ITDC played a major role as a catalyst in developing a modern superstructure (eg. The Ashoka group of hotels) for International tourists.

Since the Eighth Five Year Plan, some of the new forms of tourism were introduced which were over and above the usual cultural tourism, religious tourism or leisure Tourism. These were briefly as under and during the Ninth Five Year Plan lot of work initiated to have focused promotions on all these special interest holidays.

### ADVENTURE TOURISM:

Adventure tourism has recently grown in India. This involves exploration of remote areas and exotic locales and engaging in various activities. For adventure tourism in India, tourists prefer to go for trekking to places like Ladakh, Sikkim, and Himalaya. Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir are popular for the skiing facilities they offer. Whitewater rafting is also catching on in India and tourists flock to places such as Uttarakhand, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh for this activity.

### MEDICAL TOURISM:

Tourists from all over the world have been visiting India to avail themselves of cost-effective but superior quality healthcare in terms of surgical procedures and general medical attention. There are several medical institutes in the country that cater to foreign patients and impart top-quality healthcare at a fraction of what it would have cost in developed nations such as USA and UK.

### **BUSINESS TOURISM:**

Business executives and technicians travel to different places for business activities. Such visits can be for installation of equipment, inspection of goods, attending business meetings and conferences, participation in travel fairs and exhibitions, marketing of products. Since the opening of the Indian Economy for overseas investments, this became a growing segment in India since 1991.

### **HERITAGE TOURISM:**

India with vast cultural and religious heritage and varied natural attractions has immense potential of growth in the tourism sector. 25 travel circuits and destinations have already been identified for development through joint efforts of the Central government, the State governments, and the private sector.

### **SPORTS TOURISM:**

A number of countries and destinations have high class facilities for certain kind of sports activities and they become destinations by virtue of those specific sports. People who are interested in such sport rush towards that destination.

### **TOURISM AS AN INDUSTRY:**

The Indian tourism and hospitality industry has emerged as one of the key drivers of growth among the services sector in India. The third-largest sub-segment of the services sector comprising trade, repair services, hotels and restaurants contributed nearly US\$ 187.9 billion or 12.5 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014-15<sup>(1)</sup>. Tourism is also potentially large employment generator besides being a significant source of foreign exchange for the country.

### **IMPACT OF TOURISM:**

Tourism in India has emerged as an instrument of income and employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. Tourism is an important source of foreign exchange earnings in India. This has favorable impact on the balance of payment of the country.

Tourism helps preserve several places which are of historical importance by declaring them as heritage sites. For instance, the Taj Mahal, the Qutab Minar, Ajanta and Ellora temples, etc, would have been decayed and destroyed had it not been for the efforts taken by Tourism Department to preserve them.

Tourism tends to encourage the development of multiple-use infrastructure that benefits the host community, including various means of transports, health care facilities, and sports centers, in addition to the hotels and high-end restaurants that cater to foreign visitors. The development of infrastructure has in turn induced the development of other directly productive activities.

Tourism has the potential to increase public appreciation of the environment and to spread awareness of environmental problems when it brings people into closer contact with nature and the environment.

### **INITIATIVES BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA:**

The Indian government has realized the country's potential in the tourism industry and has taken several steps to make India a global tourism hub.

Government of India plans to cover 150 countries under e-visa scheme by the end of the year besides opening an airport in the NCR region in order to ease the pressure on Delhi airport.

### **INCREDIBLE INDIA:**

Incredible India, an international marketing campaign, started by the government of India in 2002 was a major development towards the growth of brand India. The campaign projected India as an attractive tourist destination by showcasing different aspects of Indian culture and history like yoga, spirituality, etc. The campaign was conducted globally and received appreciation from tourism industry observers and travelers alike. The primary objective of this branding exercise was to create a distinctive identity for the country. This resulted in the iconic "Incredible India" logo, where the exclamation mark that

formed the "I" of India was used to great effect across all communications. The campaign successfully established India as a high-end tourist destination, generating a 16% increase in tourist traffic in the first year.<sup>(2)</sup>

#### CONCLUSION:

The demand for travel and tourism in India is expected to grow by 8.2 per cent between 2010 and 2019 and will place India at the third position in the world. India's travel and tourism sector is expected to be the second largest employer in the world, employing 40,037,000 by 2019.<sup>(3)</sup>

India's travel and tourism industry has huge growth potential. Tourism industry in India is growing and it has vast potential for generating employment and earning large amount of foreign exchange besides giving a fillip to the country's overall economic and social development. But much more remains to be done. Eco-tourism needs to be promoted so that tourism in India helps in preserving and sustaining the diversity of the India's natural and cultural environments. Tourism in India should be developed in such a way that it accommodates and entertains visitors in a way that is minimally intrusive or destructive to the environment and sustains & supports the native cultures in the locations it is operating in.

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