



AN ANALYSIS OF INDIA'S TOURISM POLICIES

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ABSTRACT:

Tourism refers to travel away from our current environment for different purposes. This sector has grown exponentially in India and around the world in the recent few decades and continues to grow so in the future as well. This sector plays a vital role for any economy as it provides foreign exchange, employment opportunities for the people, promotes capital investment, develops infrastructure among other benefits. Hence, the governments around the world focus on systematically planning for the development of tourism so as to be able to capitalize on the potential of this sector. It is in this context that the researcher aimed to analyse the Tourism Policies in India. This study's objective is to analyse the tourism plans in India over the years with respect to their objectives and the strategies undertaken in order to achieve the same. Findings indicate that over the years, the tourism policies have been highlighting the importance of development of tourism infrastructure, human resource development, need for collaborations for the development of tourism. However, the recent plans seem to be broader in their approach in tourism planning as they focus on the need to diversify the tourism products / destinations, emphasize on effective marketing initiatives, promote sustainable and responsible tourism among others.

KEYWORDS: Tourism, Tourism Policy, Five Year Plan, India.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism refers to travel by an individual / group of individuals away from their existing setting which could be for holiday, business, medical or other motives. In the 20th century, tourism industry has seen a substantial growth around the world and is estimated to enjoy this growth even in the near future. Even in India, tourism sector has emerged as a very important service sector contributing to the growth of the economy. This is because India being a diverse country is able to attract people around the world to visit its beaches, hill stations, historical monuments, national parks among other attractions. Additionally, tourism products in India have evolved from individuals travelling for trade or pilgrimage to mass movement of people engaging in various tourism products namely adventure tourism, medical tourism, spiritual tourism, leisure tourism to name a few. Increasing role of tourism to help an economy earn foreign exchange, provide employment to the locals, cultural exchanges, development of infrastructure etc. has attracted the government's attention and in turn formalized Tourism Planning with the aim of tourism development ultimately leading to economic development.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research problem of this paper is to study the Tourism Policies in India over the years.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study's objective is to analyse the various tourism plans in India over the years with respect to their objectives and strategies undertaken in order to achieve the same. The researcher will also aim to highlight the changing trend in the tourism policies in India.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The source of data for this research is Secondary Data which refers to data taken from an existing source. The researcher has studied the tourism policies available and draws attention to the objectives of each of the policies, their area of focus, strategies suggested by the various plans in order to achieve the objectives and limitations if any.

5. GROWTH OF INDIA'S TOURISM POLICY

Dayananda & Leelavathi (2016) highlight that in India tourism planning started in 1945, when plans to promote tourism in India were formulated by a committee set up by the Government under the leadership of Sir John Sargent. Thereafter, tourism planning not only took place systematically in India but also evolved as tourism activity gained momentum and the government has taken several significant measures to promote tourism industry. The details of the objectives and the strategies adopted by various tourism plans are discussed below:

5.1 Tourism Policy, 1982

Government of India announced the first tourism policy in India in 1982. This policy highlighted the importance of partnership between public and private stakeholders for tourism development. The policy focussed on improving and expanding facilities for domestic tourism; developing international tourism especially in the area of Cultural Tourism and increasing attention regional tourism (tourism among countries in South Asian Region) to foster understanding among these countries. While this policy focussed on development, it also emphasized on the importance of preserving the culture and national heritage (Tourism Policy. Ministry of Tourism. Government of India (1982)).

The objectives of this policy stood to develop tourism such that:

- "To raise national and international appreciation through travel,
- To preserve India's values,
- To bring benefits to the economy,
- To provide the youth of the nation the opportunity to understand others viewpoints through travel,
- To allow the youth to participate in nation building activities" (Tourism Policy. Ministry of Tourism. Government of India (1982)).

Plans adopted by this policy in order to achieve its objectives were as follows:

- "Development of infrastructure through travel circuits, youth hostels etc.,
- Development of cheap accommodation facilities through Dharmashalas, Sarais etc to encourage more sections of the society to travel,
- Strengthen marketing strategies,
- Efforts for human resource training and development,
- To attract private sector investments through various financial and other incentives.
- Educate people about the heritage of the country and encourage them to preserve it" (Tourism Policy. Ministry of Tourism. Government of India (1982)).

5.2 National Tourism Policy, 1992

In 1990, approximately 1.72 million international tourists visited India and this sector provided India with foreign exchange earnings of INR 2440 crores and employment to 5.5 million people directly and about 8 million people indirectly. It was then that the National Tourism Policy was laid down in 1992. The focus of this policy was to boost India's part in total World Tourism to 1% in next five years

which then stood at 0.4% (National Action Plan for Tourism, Government of India, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism (1992)).

This policy had the following objectives:

- “Development of tourist spots,
- Enhance employment opportunities,
- Developing domestic tourism sector,
- Protect the national heritage and surrounding environment,
- Diversifying tourism products to include leisure tourism, adventure tourism, convention tourism etc. while keeping the cultural tourism sector intact” (National Action Plan for Tourism, Government of India, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism (1992)).

To achieve the above mandates, a strategic plan was put in place which focused on the following:

- “State and private investments in this sector to increase to provide employment opportunities and also provide feedback,
- Incentives to develop new hotels/camping sites / paying guest accommodations facilities,
- Renovate dilapidated properties around tourist areas,
- Pilgrim locations to be identified and renovated/redeveloped in order to promote Pilgrim Tourism,
- Promotion of village fairs and festivals etc. to attract tourists,
- Investment in road transportation by buying AC coaches,
- Measures to recognize travel agents / tour operators to boost the tourism,
- Measures to develop the human resources required for this industry,
- Development of various campaigns (nationally and internationally) to promote the tourism sector of India” (National Action Plan for Tourism, Government of India, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism (1992)).

5.3 Tourism Policy, 2002

The overall vision of this policy was to promote tourism as a driver for economic growth and harnesses benefits of tourism (domestic and international) while emphasizing on collaborations with public – private partnerships. This policy highlights seven key areas essential to tourism development which are Swagat (welcome), Soochana (information), Suvidha (facilitation), Suraksha (safety), Sahyog (cooperation), Safai (cleanliness) and Samrachana (infrastructure development) (National Tourism Policy 2002. Department of Tourism. Ministry of Tourism and Culture. Government of India. (2002)).

To achieve this vision, five key objectives of tourism were set which were:

- “Tourism development emphasized as national priority,
- Competitive advantage of India as a tourist destination to be enhanced and maintained,
- Improve and expand India’s tourism products,
- Development of tourism infrastructure,
- Development of effective marketing programmes to promote tourism in India” (National Tourism Policy 2002. Department of Tourism. Ministry of Tourism and Culture. Government of India. (2002)).

Some measures taken in order to achieve these objectives included:

- “Enhance India’s competitiveness as tourist destination with initiatives such as computerization of visa application, visa on arrival, improving the tourist facilities etc.,
- Promotion of tourism products such as cultural tourism, coastal tourism, cruise tourism, adventure tourism, wildlife tourism, village tourism, eco-tourism and leisure tourism among others,

- Development of infrastructure such as integrated circuits, roads, railways etc. to support tourism development,
- Use an array of marketing tools such as conducting market research, creating a unique image to differential India from other markets, undertake promotional activities etc.,
- Encourage market research and relevant tourism related data collection for the purpose of policy formulation”(National Tourism Policy 2002. Department of Tourism. Ministry of Tourism and Culture. Government of India. (2002)).

5.4 Tourism Policy under Tenth 5 Year Plan (2002 – 2007)

This plan identifies tourism as a tool for achieving socio-economic development, encourages investment by the private sector and provides necessary support (regulatory) for tourism done in a sustainable manner. This policy encouraged involvement of rural sector in developing and promoting competitive tourism products. However, this plan also highlighted various barriers due to which tourism was not able to capitalize to its potential namely, un-competitiveness as a tourist destination, lack of priority given to tourism, low levels of investment, unprofessional ad hoc approach towards tourism to name a few

(http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/10th/volume2/v2_ch7_5.pdf).

Consumer trends during this period saw a shift with tourists engaging more in neighbouring country tourism, rural, wellness, cultural, adventure, eco and spiritual tourism.

Keeping this in mind, the Tenth Five Year Plan focussed on the following objectives: (i) Tourism to be considered as a nationwide priority, (ii) Improve competitiveness of India as a tourist destination, (iii) Improve as well as expand tourism products, (iv) Create tourism infrastructure and (v) Undertake effective marketing strategies

(http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/10th/volume2/v2_ch7_5.pdf).

Major strategies to achieve these objectives were:

- “Develop a clarity on the role of tourism in the development of the nation through the National Development Council,
 - Boost public sector investment in tourism related infrastructure,
 - Enhance private sector investment in this sector,
 - Provide support (legislative and regulatory) to protect the tourism industry,
 - Encourage the rural sector to participate in tourism related activities,
 - Provide necessary training to build the manpower capacity in tourism sector”
- (http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/10th/volume2/v2_ch7_5.pdf).

5.5 Tourism Policy under Eleventh 5 Year Plan (2007 – 2012)

This plan focussed on attracting 10 million international tourist of and domestic tourist arrivals of 760 million through diversification of tourism products; increase their spending, length of stay and reduce seasonality; expand source markets to those countries that offer lot of potential but from where present level of inbound tourist is low; focus on cruise tourism and MICE sector which are high revenue generating sectors of tourism along with medical and leisure tourism and develop hotel/ budget accommodation facilities for the tourists

(http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/strgrp11/str11_tourism.pdf).

To achieve all these, the 11th five-year plan highlighted the following objectives:

- “Promote tourism as a national priority,
- Boost India’s attractiveness as a tourist destination,
- Grow India’s existing tourism products,
- Formation of world-class tourism infrastructure,
- Planning and executing effective marketing programmes,

- Invest in training Human Resources and capacity building of service providers” (http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/strgrp11/str11_tourism.pdf).

The strategies that this plan suggested for tourism development were as follows:

- “Improvement of infrastructure (such as hotels, convention centres, air services, roads etc.) and destination management (to maintain natural resources, local culture etc.),
- Promotional activities in events and festivals, through brochures/posters/ leaflets etc., by setting up offices in foreign markets and through various tourism related campaigns,
- Improve the hospitality services and provide premium services to tourists to improve their satisfaction and encourage them to revisit and spread positive word of mouth,
- Provide incentives for business travellers,
- Promote eco-tourism, wildlife tourism and adventure tourism in a sustainable fashion,
- Reduce barriers to tourism by reducing the airfares through low cost airlines, increasing capacity of these carriers and improving connectivity to tourism circuits, improving airport infrastructure, improving rail and road connectivity, reducing conditions for visa etc.,
- Taxation incentives and concessions for tourism and related industries,
- Development of human resources through formal education and training programmes,
- Focus on maintaining statistical records of inbound, outbound and domestic tourism” (http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/strgrp11/str11_tourism.pdf).

5.6 Tourism Policy under Twelfth 5 Year Plan (2012 - 2017)

This plan focussed on achieving a growth rate of 12% in the tourism sector higher than the forecasted rate at 8.1% so as to provide a cushion against any shortfall in other sectors (http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/12th/pdf/12fyp_vol3.pdf).

Strategies for development of tourism were as follows:

- “Develop tourism circuits in collaboration between agencies at the Local and State level,
- Promote Pro-Poor Tourism or Responsible Tourism,
- Encourage locals’ participation in tourism activities; develop partnerships between the private sector and local entrepreneurs and build a more supportive regulatory framework,
- Opportunities for women’s participation in the tourism sector,
- Develop tourism infrastructure,
- Expand institutes and courses related to tourism to train manpower in this sector,
- Focus on ‘Clean India Campaign’ in order to improve the image of India,
- Promote tourism in India by establishing overseas tourism offices, developing effective marketing and promotional materials, promoting travel festivals, developing a website for tourism products in India, promoting niche and new tourism products, undertaking social awareness programmes and by promoting private public partnership,
- Focus on sustainable tourism,
- Smooth and speedy issue of Visa (through online visa application, visa on emergency, visa on arrival),
- Focus on maintaining statistical records for the purpose of policy formulation and evaluation” (http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/12th/pdf/12fyp_vol3.pdf).

6. ANALYSIS & CONCLUSIONS

After understanding the major objectives of the various tourism policies over the years and the necessary strategies undertaken to achieve the same, the following observations can be made regarding the similarities and differences between them. Some of the observations are as follows:

- Over the years, the tourism policies have been highlighting the importance of development of necessary tourism infrastructure and believe that good infrastructure will help improve the

experience of tourists and hence boost the tourism sector. This includes infrastructure such as airways, roadways, railways, hotel and other accommodation facilities among others.

- Further, the plans over the years have emphasised on the important role of human resource in the tourism sector and hence have continuously suggested the need to develop the human resource capacity through various formal education and training programmes.
- Furthermore, the plans have proposed the need for collaborations for the development of tourism.

However, the recent plans seem to be broader in their approach in tourism planning in the following ways:

- The recent policies give more emphasis to prioritize the tourism sector for the purpose of national development.
- Further, recent plans also target to diversify the tourism products / destinations and promote various types of tourism products such as cultural, coastal, cruise, adventure, wildlife, village, eco and leisure tourism among others.
- Also, emphasize on marketing initiatives to be undertaken for the promotion of tourism products and destinations nationally as well as internationally has gained more momentum in the recent plans.
- The recent tourism plans have highlighted that India is now not only interested in developing the tourism sector but wants to develop the sector in a sustainable and responsible manner.
- Another major proposal in the recent plans is to reduce the barriers to tourism development that have emerged.
- Importance of research and data has emerged in the recent years to support policy formulation and evaluation of policies.
- Finally, technology is being adopted more for the various activities related to tourism in the recent tourism plans.

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