



## CURRENT PHASE OF TOURISM IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

India is known for its rich culture and heritage. It is this richness that attracts large number of foreign tourists from across the globe every year. India has become a global destination and tourism industry is flourishing. Growth in this sector has also fuelled growth in various other sectors and has provided ample employment opportunities to the people of the country. Tourism accounts for 6.8 per cent of GDP in India. This paper traces different types of tourism in India, the statistics and initiatives taken by Government for promoting tourism in India.

**KEYWORDS:** Foreign tourist arrivals, pilgrimage, foreign exchange earnings.

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism was defined by Hunziker and Krapf in 1941 as “the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, insofar as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity”. It is ranked as the fourth largest sector in the world economy. According to forecasts made by World Tourism Organisation, international tourism is expected to keep growing at an average rate of 4 per cent annually. Tourism has become one of the fastest growing industries in India.

In India, initial efforts for promoting tourism were made in 1945. It was recognised as an industry in 1982 by the Planning Commission of India. Later, National Committee on Tourism was

set up in 1986 by the Commission for formulating plans for the tourism sector. Planning is done for developing tourist destinations in India, preserving the heritage and encouraging international tourism. The Ministry of Tourism is responsible for developing and promoting tourism in India and it maintains the Incredible India campaign.

### FACETS OF TOURISM IN INDIA

☆ **PILGRIMAGE TOURISM:** India is a land of diversities. It supports various religions like Sikhism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and Buddhism. All religions have their own pilgrimage sites spread across the country's length and breadth. Thus, there are numerous pilgrimage sites in the country. These sites attract large number of tourists



from across the globe throughout the year.

Various pilgrimage places in India are Vaishno devi, Vrindavan, Golden temple, Varanasi, Tirupati, Shirdi, Haji Ali Dargah, Bodh Gaya to name a few.

☆ **CULTURAL TOURISM:** Cultural tourism is concerned with a country's culture, lifestyle of people in the country and the history of people, art, architecture and religion. So, it holds a special place in Indian context as the country has always been known for its heritage, culture and traditions. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture has been set up by the Government of India for boosting cultural tourism in the country. Few of the places which are best known for cultural tourism are Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

☆ **MEDICAL TOURISM:** People travel to other countries for medical treatments which may not be available in their own countries or because of cost considerations. In Asia, India is ranked at number three for medical tourism owing to lower cost of treatments, world-class healthcare infrastructure and highly trained medical professionals. Chennai is called as the health capital of India as it accounts for around 45 per cent of the health tourists visiting the country.

☆ **ECOTOURISM:** Ecotourism deals with natural environments. It involves travel to such places where primary sources of attraction are the flora and fauna of such places. Such tourism creates awareness regarding environment and raises finance for its conservation. Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable. The topography of India offers a large number of such places where ecotourism can be catered such as the Himalayas and Andaman and Nicobar islands. Tourists can also visit various sanctuaries and parks such as Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary and Jim Corbett National Park. The first planned destination for ecotourism in India is Thenmala in Kerala.

☆ **ADVENTURE TOURISM:** It is rapidly gaining popularity in India. A set of guidelines has been formulated by the Ministry of Tourism for the safety norms known as Basic Minimum Standards for Adventure Tourism Activities. Financial assistance is also provided to the State Governments for developing and promoting adventure tourism. Various adventurous activities offered include paragliding, trekking, bungee jumping, rafting and mountaineering.

☆ **SPORTS TOURISM:** Sports tourism is a form of travel which is done to observe or participate in any sports event. In the global tourism industry, sports tourism has been gaining a lot of popularity lately. The Commonwealth Games held in 2010 served as a fodder for making India a destination for sports tourism. Indian Premier League, a twenty20 cricket tournament, has further made India a preferred destination for all the cricket lovers across the world. Indian Grand Prix by Formula One held at Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida also made India the next big thing in the world of sports tourism.

☆ **RURAL TOURISM:** The stresses related to hectic urban lifestyle have given an impetus to rural tourism. Rural tourism offers an escape from the urban chaos and provides the tourists with an opportunity to experience serene and calm rural environment. The objective behind such tourism is to showcase the culture, heritage, life and art of rural areas. Various villages in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand serve as sites for rural tourism in India.

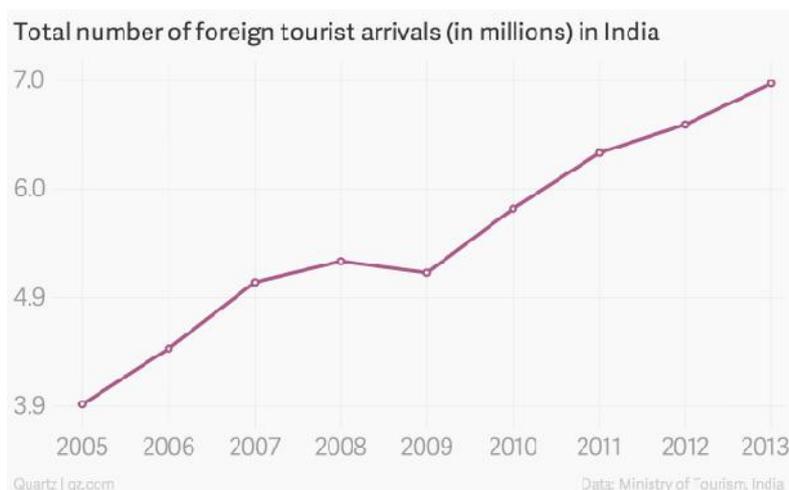
## THE NUMBER GAME

Amongst the service industry of India, tourism sector is one of the largest contributors. It has become an important source of foreign exchange earnings. It is the third largest earner of

foreign exchange after gems, jewellery and readymade garments. There has been a noted growth in the hospitality sector of India at a cumulative growth rate of 14 per cent annually. This adds significantly to the amount of foreign exchange. The contribution made by the tourism sector towards the GDP is expected to grow at a rate of 7.8 per cent annually during the period of ten years (2013-2023). India's tourism and hospitality market is estimated to reach US\$ 418.9 billion by the year 2022.

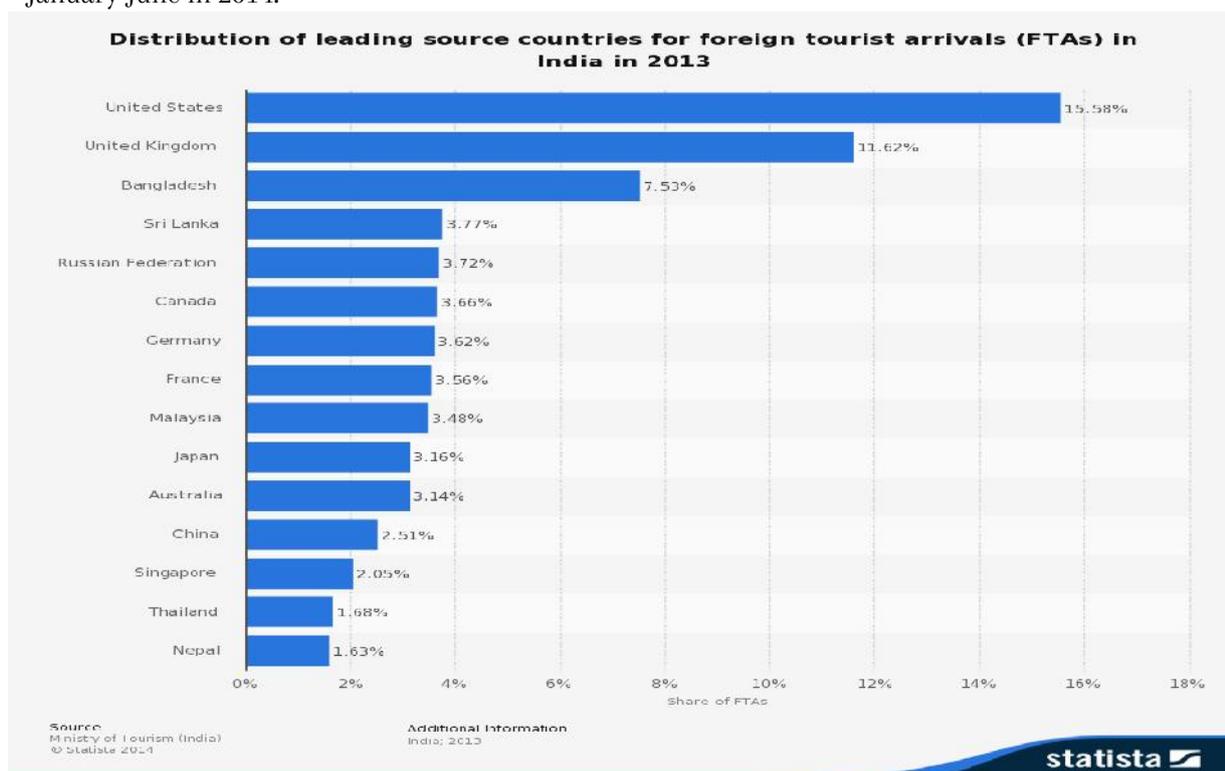
In the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's rankings for foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs), India stands at number 42. India witnessed a growth of 9 per cent in its foreign tourist arrivals in the month of June, 2014 as compared to corresponding month in 2013. In June 2014, FTAs were 4.92 lakh as compared to 4.51 lakh in June 2013.

Following graph shows the FTAs during the period 2005-2013



During the period January-June in 2013, FTAs stood at 33.68 lakh. Witnessing a growth of 5.2 per cent, FTAs were recorded at 35.43 lakh during January-June in 2014.

Following graph depicts distribution of foreign tourist arrivals in India from different countries:



Foreign exchange earnings (FEE) accruing to tourism were Rs 51,587 crore over the period January-June in 2013. Growing at a rate of 10 per cent, the FEEs were recorded at Rs 56,760 crore during January-June in 2014.

### GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

**Incredible India** is a campaign launched by the Government of India to promote tourism in India. It was introduced in 2002. The aim behind the campaign was to showcase the culture and history of India so as to attract tourists.

In 2008, another campaign '**Atithidevo Bhava**' was launched for educating the public regarding etiquette while dealing with the tourists. The campaign endorsed by actor Aamir Khan sensitized the people about preserving their country's rich culture and heritage, hospitality and cleanliness.

Tripigator was launched by Ministry of Tourism in 2014. It is a personalised itinerary planner which reduces the efforts of travellers by providing all itineraries in one tab.

100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) has been allowed in tourism and hospitality under the automatic route. Similarly, 100 per cent FDI has also been allowed in tourism construction projects such as development of hotels and recreational facilities.

Under budget 2014-15, following provisions were made:

- ❖ Five billion rupees were allocated for creating five tourist circuits around specific themes.
- ❖ One billion rupees were allocated for National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation (PRASAD).
- ❖ One billion rupees were allocated for preserving archaeological sites.

State Governments also provide various incentives such as land at subsidised cost, loans at concessional rate of interest, subsidies for backward areas and power tariff and tax incentives.

### CONCLUSION

The tourism industry in India is currently experiencing growth. Increased foreign tourist arrivals as well as domestic tourists have led to such growth of tourism. Rapid growth of Indian economy, government initiatives, rising income levels of people and aggressive advertisements have furthered this growth. Tourism is not only a vital source of foreign exchange for India but it also provides employment to large number of people in the country. For every US\$ one million invested in tourism, 78 jobs are created. Around 8 per cent of the employment is contributed by tourism sector. Besides, tourism has also promoted country's culture and heritage across the world. Tourism has commendable potential for expansion and diversification. But the major hurdles faced in this endeavour have been poor hygienic conditions of our country and inadequate infrastructure. In the recent past, cases of tourist harassment have also led to poor tourist experience. For making India a preferred tourist destination, it is important that the Government, the private sector and the people diligently strive for achieving sustainable growth in tourism.

Medical, rural and eco tourism which are in their nascent stages have great potential for giving a boost to tourism in India. Availability of skilled medical professionals and world class hospitals has given a fillip to medical tourism. For promotion of ecotourism, efforts are made to preserve and protect natural environments. Also schemes have been implemented for promoting rural life, its history and culture. Thus, all these efforts will surely make India a global player in the tourism industry.

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