
INDIA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

The Indian subcontinent is bounded by the majestic Himalayan ranges in the north and edged by a spectacular coastline surrounded by three seas – Arabian Sea in the west, Bay of Bengal in the east and Indian Ocean in the south. India is a vivid kaleidoscope of landscapes, magnificent historical sites and royal cities, golden beaches, misty mountain retreats, colourful people, rich cultures and festivities. The world's leading travel and tourism journal *Condé Nast Traveler* ranked India among the top four preferred holiday destinations in the world. There are a number of factors responsible for the growth of Indian tourism at the global level.

- India is a peaceful country without any political disturbance, with the **exception** of a few destinations where a tourist is required to get special permission from the local authority to enter those areas.
- The country has a federal structure with elected governments in states. There are 28 states and 7 union territories administered directly by the central government.
- There is a healthy competition among all the states to attract tourists from all over the world for speedy economic growth and employment generation.

Types of Indian Tourism

There are all types of tourism in India, projecting the country as the ultimate tourist spot. The reason why India has been doing well on this front is that it is a multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious country with tremendous geographical diversity, hospitality, uniqueness and charm. Different types of tourism in India are religious or pilgrimage, adventure, fun/leisure (coastal and beach), archaeological, heritage, ecological (wildlife), cultural, ayurvedha and meditation and ecotourism tourisms that are explained as followed.



Religious or Pilgrimage Tourism. India is famous for its temples and for this reason, among the different kinds of tourism in the country, pilgrimage tourism is increasing most rapidly.

Narayan Sarovar, Sudamas Porbandar, Kabirvad Shuklatirth, Kayavarohan, Bhadrakali, Haridwar, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Varanasi, Gangotri and Yamunotri, Rishikesh, Shamlaji, Bodh Gaya and Ajmer are important pilgrimage destinations, which have kept alive the religious sentiments of the people and have inspired millions of pilgrims to visit from all over the world.

Adventure Tourism. As a kind of tourism, adventure tourism in India is endless because the country has a rich diversity in terms of climate and topography. The various kinds of adventure tourism in India are rock climbing, skiing, camel safari, paragliding, mountaineering, rafting in white water and trekking. The various places in India where tourists can go for adventure tourism are Badami, Kanheri Caves, Manori Rocks and Kabbal for rock climbing. The places for skiing are Manali, Shimla, Nainital and Mussoorie. The rivers for white-water rafting are Ganga, Alaknanda and Bhagirathi.

Fun/Leisure (Coastal and Beach) Tourism. Beaches in India provide the most perfect destination for sun, sand, sea and surf, which are too hard to resist for a beach lover or a water-sports enthusiast. In almost every part of the subcontinent, one can enjoy beach holidays. Some of the famous beaches of India are Anjuna, Bogmalo, Benaulim, Calangute, Chapora, Colva and Cavelossim.



Archaeological Tourism. There are a number of places of archaeological importance, and can be broadly classified into Stone Age, Indus Valley, Neolithic-Chalcolithic, Megalithic-Early Historic and Late Historic periods. Famous archaeological sites of the Stone Age abound in peninsular India, more prominently at Pallavaram in Tamil Nadu, Hunsgi in Karnataka, Kulia in Orissa, Didwana in Rajasthan and Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. The sites of Neolithic-Chalcolithic age include Inamgaon, Walki, Navdatoli, Ahar, Balathal, Gilund, Budhihal, Sangankalur, Maski, Brahmagiri, Utnur, Golbai, Pandu-Rajar-Dhibi, Chirand and Burzoham. Famous sites from the Buddhist phase

are Sanchi, Saranath, Ajanta, Kaneheri, Amravati, Sanati and Lalitgiri. Sites from the Jainism phase are Khandagiri-Udayagiri and Mathura. Some Islamic archaeological sites are in Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Hyderabad, northern Karnataka, Aurangabad and Bhopal.

Heritage Tourism. Heritage tourism in India has always been famous for its ancient cultural diversity, which attracts millions of tourists each year. India's rich heritage is amply reflected in various temples, palaces, monuments and forts that can be found everywhere in the country. The most popular heritage tourism destinations in India include Taj Mahal in Agra, Mandawa castle in Rajasthan, Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu, Madurai in Tamil Nadu and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh. The most famous heritage sites in Delhi are Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Humayun's Tomb and Tughlaqabad Fort.

Ecological (Wildlife) Tourism. India has a rich forest cover that has some beautiful and exotic species of wildlife – some of which are even endangered and very rare. Among the famous wildlife tourism attractions are Bandhavgarh National Park, Corbett National Park, Pench National Park, Ranthambore National Park, Kanha National Park, Bandipur Wildlife Park, Gir Wildlife Park, Dudhwa Wildlife Park, Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary, Keoladeo Ghana National Park, Panna Wildlife Park, Sunderbans Wildlife Park and Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary.



Cultural Tourism. India is known for its rich cultural heritage and an element of mysticism, which is why tourists come to India to experience it themselves. One can see the influence of various cultures in dance, music, festivities, architecture, traditional customs, food and languages. This richness in culture goes a long way in projecting India as the ultimate cultural tourism destination. The various fairs and festivals to visit are the Pushkar Fair, Taj Mahotsav and Surajkund mela.

Ayurveda and Meditation Tourism. Ayurveda and meditation originated in India some 6,000 years ago and are a natural way of healing body, mind and soul. Today, ayurveda and meditation have become the first preference of every person all over the world not only because of their curing capacity, but also because they do not have any side effects, if taken under proper guidance. Tourists can visit both North and South India for meditation and ayurvedic treatment. North India's prestigious institutes of ayurveda and meditation are set amidst natural surroundings, giving visitors enough space to breathe in the natural atmosphere. Kerala in the South has innumerable ayurveda and meditation treatment centres.



Ecotourism. Ecotourism entails the sustainable preservation of a naturally endowed area or region while ensuring not to damage the ecological balance. Places such as Kerala and Lakshadweep, the Himalayan region, northeast India and Andaman and Nicobar Islands are among the destinations in India where tourists can participate in ecotourism-related activities. The major national parks in India for ecotourism are Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand, Bandhavgarh National Park and Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh, Gir National Park and Sanctuary in Gujarat and Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan.

Tourist Experience: Medical Tourism

Early this year, Rosemarie Lyntzberger — who is in the tourism business — encountered a leg ailment that curtailed her active life. She made extensive enquiries with the Turkish hospitals. She wanted to know what exactly was wrong with her leg, what are the corrective procedures available, what are the latest advances in the field, what is the success rate and how long will it take her to bounce back to her active life. Unfortunately, she could not find a satisfactory answer to her queries. Around this time, she happened to read *Stern*, a popular German magazine, which had a special feature on India. It featured India's advancement in the medical field. After corresponding with Wockhardt Hospital through mails and satisfied with the replies that she would have to undergo special hip-resurfacing surgery, she landed in Mumbai. Rosemarie during her

visit to Wockhardt Hospital, Mumbai, where she is undergoing post-surgery physiotherapy, told southasia.de that her entire medical experience in India was wonderful. Dr. Kaushal Malhan of Wockhardt, who performed the surgery, told southasia.de that the cost of the operation in India is only around Euro 5,000, whereas it would cost a patient somewhere around Euro 35,000 in the United States or Europe.

Lyntzberger is highly impressed by the dedication of the medical team, which was headed by Dr Malhan, and the medical standards at the Wockhardt Hospital. She would recommend other patients like her in Europe and elsewhere to come to India for such surgeries. She would be more than happy to be the "goodwill" ambassador for India.

The 4 P's of Indian Tourism

Product. In the context of tourism destination, the product is said to include the destination's attractions, its environment, facilities and services, accessibility and price, as perceived and paid by the consumer.

Price. Tourism has been identified as an important avenue for employment, income generation and foreign-exchange earnings, and at the same time, it has a multiplier effect on the economy. The expenditure of the tourist circulates at all the three levels of the economy, namely, national, regional and local.

This means that if the tourist expenditure circulates locally and the leakages are low, a significant improvement can be made in the income and living standards of the people of the region or locality. However, a developed region can often divert the benefits towards itself at the cost of the underdeveloped neighbouring regions. Such situations have been experienced in international as well as domestic tourism.

Further, intense competition exists within a country between different regions, destinations or leisure spots and among the various suppliers of services. As tourism is becoming an established economic activity, marketing strategies concentrate on increasing the volume of tourists. This, at times, creates a host of unforeseen consequences. Thus, it is necessary that the objectives of tourism development in relation to a region, city or (a rural area) leisure spot be clearly stated. In fact, the developmental role of marketing has to be kept in mind while marketing regions, cities or leisure spots (rural area). This developmental role is to be further strengthened by socially responsible marketing.

Destination marketing in the international markets includes a variety of aspects ranging from information gathering to planning and image building.

Pricing decisions are becoming more critical than ever due to increasing complexity of the markets. The various factors that influence the price of tourism product are

- Organizational marketing policy and objectives
- High price elasticity of demand in segments such as leisure, recreation and vacation travel markets

- Relationship between pricing and customer perception, and perceived quality and status of products and services
- Degree of competition
- Seasonal demand that leads to peak and low-season periods, which require demand-management pricing to cope with short-run capacity problems
- High vulnerability to demand changes due to volatility of the external macroeconomic environment and currency exchange-rate fluctuation
- Extent to which tourism is considered to be a luxury or a necessity and the number of trips taken in a year

A number of options exist when it comes to determining the pricing strategy to be adopted. Key approaches followed are

- **Cost plus pricing:** Involves a fixed percentage markup on fixed and variable costs
- **Marginal pricing:** The high fixed cost and low variable cost of operating airlines, hotels and visitors' attractions often serve as a rationale for the adoption of marginal-pricing technique and yield-management strategies
- **Differential pricing based on demand:** Different market segments will pay different prices for a similar bundle of core benefits
- **Price skimming:** When market innovators are being targeted, price skimming is frequently adopted as a strategic imperative. Initially, the highest possible price is set for a niche segment, and, when saturation price is achieved, the price is reduced to accommodate the next segment of the market
- **Penetration pricing:** A frequent strategy when imitation is a key objective. In the absence of unique product features, a low initial price can be used to encourage people who show little brand loyalty to switch service supplies
- **Price bundling:** A typical approach adopted in tour operations sector wherein a holiday package includes a bundle of products, and a consolidated price is charged to the customer

Case Study: Lakshadweep — Untapped Potential

With its clean and untouched beaches, lush green canopy and corals, Lakshadweep looks like an ecotourist's dream come true. The place also provides facilities for scuba diving and other adventure sports. One would guess that such a place should have a thriving tourism industry, but statistics reveal a sad picture, with just 3,259 Indian and 539 foreign visitors in 2002. The inadequate exploitation of the potential of this place can be attributed to the same factors that had led to the successful emergence of Hong Kong as a tourist destination. There has hardly been any planned marketing effort to promote Lakshadweep, and most of the tourists are not even aware of its existence. Connectivity has improved only recently with a single flight operating between Cochin and Lakshadweep. Ship as a mode of transport is available, but it takes 14–20



hours. Also, the place lacks infrastructure to support a bigger influx of tourists. Lakshadweep was showcased in Discovery Channel's *Lonely Planet* show as one of the best places to connect with the nature. Still, it has not realized its potential because of a lack of efforts towards developing it.

- **Tactical pricing:** It includes a multitude of techniques such as periodic price reductions, early-booking discounts and group discounts to secure high volume and loyalty packages
- **Business-to-business pricing:** Here, tour operators purchase blocks of seats on aircraft and blocks of rooms in hotels in advance

Place. It is defined as routes of exchange through which a tourist accesses, books, confirms and pays for a tourism product. Tourism is special because no ownership exists and no actual product is being distributed. The tourist relies on distribution channels that fulfil the following functions:

- Present a wide range of travel opportunities to customers
- Provide information on crucial aspects at the pre-purchase stage such as price, availability and other dimensions
- Offer feedback to the supplier of tourism products which would not otherwise be feasible from distant markets

The most common forms of intermediaries in tourism industry are the tour operator and the travel agent. They bring together essential components of a holiday and make holiday products available through various outlets of distribution. In tourism, two main strategic choices exist. One is to adopt an intensive, selective or exclusive distribution strategy regarding outlet types and numbers, while another is to adopt a push or pull strategy.

The push or pull strategy is fundamental to all tourism-related organizations. A push strategy focuses on distribution outlets, urging them to sell to a tourist, while a pull strategy is directed at generating tourism demands, which is then addressed by the appropriate distribution outlets. A traditional push channel of distribution involves a service principal aggressively promoting its service to intermediaries by means of personal selling, trade advertising and use of trade incentives. The onus is then on the intermediary to push the service through the system to the final consumer, generating a balance between "maximizing the customer's benefit" and "maximizing the incentives offered to intermediary by the service principal." For a pull strategy, the intermediary's role is reduced to one of dispensing pre-sold branded services.

Promotion. The role played by promotion is instrumental to the growth of modern mass tourism. Promotion has often been misinterpreted and restricted in meaning. Marketing communications is a more generic term for communicating with producers, intermediaries and consumers.

Marketing communications can also be either push or pull in nature. The pull elements refer to instances of business-to-consumer marketing where close attention needs to be paid to patterns of buying behaviour, demonstrated by selected target markets and the marketing communication messages to which they are likely to be most responsive. In "push," the focus is more frequently on business-to-business (B2B) marketing situations, where suppliers are using the array of communication methods at their disposal to push the product through necessary channels of distribution to reach the desired targeted markets.

All aspects of communication need to be consistent with the overriding marketing objectives and be set with a realistic and achievable budget in mind. Objectives of communication include the following:

- Increasing awareness, interest, desire or action in the target audience
- Strengthening or changing destination image or positioning
- Generating prospects and new business opportunities
- Shifting buyer-behaviour patterns according to seasonality
- Developing word-of-mouth recommendation to increase referred business

The tourism marketers use the following techniques to convey the desired message and induce a response from target markets.

- **Public relations:** A planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization, its products and its public. Media relations, crisis

Case Study: From Cricket to Olympics

For the ICC Cricket World Cup West Indies 2007, nearly 3 million people visited that island – 1.68 million stopover passengers and 1.33 million cruise passengers. While a lot of people went there for the cricket, many of them also used the opportunity to tour the place for the party of their lifetime. The Caribbean expected the event to have a knock-on effect on its tourism industry for years to come.

For the Olympics too, more than 400,000 tourists visited Beijing in 2008. Many hotels and travel agencies in Beijing turned their focus to September and October in hopes of developing a tourism market that the Olympics helped kick-start for the traditional autumn travel season. Ctrip.com, China's leading online travel-service provider, had launched a brand-new English Web site to attract more overseas travellers and stepped

up its associations with various hotels in anticipation of a travel boom. Many tourists were getting increasingly interested in knowing the human side of Beijing, like finding out how locals' lives had been affected by the Olympics and what the traditional lifestyle of Beijing was like. To promote tourism before, during and after the Olympic Games, local travel authorities had rented airtime from CNN and BBC for Beijing TV shows, featuring the full spectrum of Beijing. The TV shows, directed by prominent Chinese filmmakers, were divided into four chapters, namely, scenery, culture, cuisine and shopping. The Beijing Olympic Economy Research Association estimated that by 2010 Beijing would receive between 5 million and 5.3 million overseas tourists, creating more than 5 billion U.S. dollars for China's economy.

management, product placement and sponsorship and attendance at exhibitions and travel fairs are public relations activities common to tourism

- **Advertising:** It acts as a highly effective, long-term image-building tool that legitimizes the brand and can be very economical
- **Sales promotion:** These are temporary, short-term incentives designed to stimulate action in the target audience
- **Direct marketing and database marketing:** Here, the organization promotes and deals directly in relation to the customer
- **Personal selling:** Verbal communication between prospective purchasers and salespersons for the purpose of making a sale

The complexity of the tourism industry, the fast pace of change, the rapid growth in volume of more experiences, demanding and sophisticated customers and growing role of information and communications technology underline the necessity of strategic marketing planning and the evaluation and exploitation of future trends for any tourism organization that wishes to compete in today's dynamic market environment.

The 4 C's of Tourism Marketing

Customer Solution. Customers receive thousands of offers on daily basis, trying to persuade them to buy one product or another. Then, what is it that actually makes them purchase something, parting with their hard-earned money? The answer lies with this C of marketing, that is, customer solution. It is only when the product solves a perceived customer problem or satisfies a desire that it will be bought. It can be further linked to the perceived utility or value of the product, which according to a simple economic theory, should be more than the cost of the product in order to make the customer buy the product. That is why most successful products that command a premium are those that are able to offer real value to the customer, either real or perceived. For instance, Nokia mobile phones provide real value in terms of reliable mobility solutions, while most of the value coming with a Mercedes car is perceived. The same