



Opportunities and challenges in cultural tourism in India

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66856/ijcmr.2020.6.6.12202>

Abstract

India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Today tourism in India is one the largest potential and emerging industry. The history of Indian civilisation of nearly 4000 years has many links from the rich heritage and past. International tourists are often attracted in search of the rich and glorious heritage of the country. In fact, one can say that all other forms of tourism in India have been off shoots of cultural tourism. Cultural tourism deals with the commitment of a traveller to the culture of a nation or region, in particular the lifestyle and tradition and manner of life of the individuals in those geographical areas, the history of those people, their art, architecture, religion(s), and other elements that assisted remodelling their way of life. The present paper will try to dwell on how cultural tourism can help in creating employment opportunities in India and the existing challenges impeding its growth in the country.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, heritage, attractions, globalization, modern tourism industry

Introduction

Cultural tourism is the subset of tourism concerned with a traveler's engagement with a country or region's culture, specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas, the history of those people, their arts, architectures, religions, and other elements that helped shape their way of life. It includes tourism in urban areas, particularly historic or large cities and their cultural facilities such as museums and theatres. It can also include tourism in rural areas showcasing the traditions of indigenous cultural communities (i.e. festivals, rituals), and their values and lifestyle, as well as niches like industrial tourism and creative tourism. Cultural tourism has been defined as 'the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs. This form of tourism is also becoming generally more popular throughout the world, policymakers, tourist boards and cultural attraction managers around the world continue to view cultural tourism as an important potential source of tourism growth.

Tourism and culture share a mutually beneficial relationship that enhances the competitiveness and attractiveness of countries and regions. Culture plays a vital role in tourism by creating distinctiveness in the busy global market. In turn, tourism supports culture by generating income that helps sustain and strengthen cultural production, heritage, and creativity. Building a strong connection between culture and tourism can make destinations more competitive and appealing as places to visit, live, invest, and work. Cultural resources are an essential part of a destination's heritage and serve as valuable assets that attract tourists by differentiating them from other locations. Cultural tourism in India presents significant employment opportunities, particularly in regions rich in heritage and traditions. These opportunities encompass direct roles like tour guides, hospitality staff, and cultural performers, as well as indirect jobs in related sectors such as transportation, handicrafts, and local businesses.

Opportunities in cultural tourism in India

The major growth of the Indian tourism sector is contributed by domestic tourism which tends to be more focused on cultural destinations. Travel and tourism for fun, pleasure and recreation is still considered an elite 'five star' activity by a majority of the Indians. At the same time, travel and tourism for cultural purposes forms an integral part of the Indian population, where people from all ages, religions and income groups often manage time and resources for cultural tourism. Tourism has a huge potential for poverty alleviation by increasing job opportunities and spending by tourists. India's diverse cultural landscape, encompassing historical sites, festivals, and traditional arts, attracts a large number of tourists, both domestic and international. This influx of visitors fuels the demand for various services, creating a wide range of employment possibilities:

Direct Employment Opportunities

Tour Guides

Services of Skilled professionals who lead tours and provide insights into cultural and historical sites comes more in demand.

Hospitality Sector

Hotels, resorts, restaurants, and guesthouses require a workforce for various roles, including management, housekeeping, food and beverage service, and more and thereby generate employment for workforce.

Cultural Performers

Artists, musicians, dancers, and storytellers who showcase India's rich cultural heritage also benefited with the growth of the sector.

Craftspeople and Artisans

Those involved in creating and selling traditional handicrafts, souvenirs, and local products get employment this way.

Indirect Employment Opportunities**Transportation**

Travel agencies, airlines, bus operators, and taxi services benefit from increased tourism gets more boost by the rise in tourism.

Local Businesses

Small shops, markets, and eateries near tourist attractions thrive on visitor spending. It generates local employment and business both directly and indirectly in the tourism sector and in various support and resource management sectors.

Infrastructure Development

Construction and maintenance of tourism-related infrastructure creates employment in related industries.

Support Services

Accountants, electricians, plumbers, and other service providers are needed to support the tourism sector.

Government Initiatives

The Indian government recognizes the potential of cultural tourism and has implemented various initiatives to promote it, including:

Skill Development Programs

Allocating funds for training programs to enhance the skills of individuals in tourism-related professions are driven by Government agencies.

Infrastructure Development

Investing in the development of roads, transportation, and other amenities to improve accessibility and attract more tourists leads to infrastructure development.

Promotional Activities

Launching campaigns to showcase India's cultural attractions works in the direction to attract both domestic and international tourists.

Challenges and Considerations

While cultural tourism offers significant employment potential, there are also challenges to address, such as:

Infrastructure Deficiencies:

Inadequate transportation, accommodation, and other basic facilities in some regions can hinder tourism growth.

Seasonality

Tourism activity may fluctuate depending on the time of year, leading to potential job losses during off-peak seasons.

Sustainability

Balancing tourism development with the preservation of cultural heritage and the environment is crucial.

Skill Gaps

Ensuring that the workforce possesses the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the tourism industry. By addressing these challenges and leveraging the opportunities, India can further develop its cultural tourism sector and create more employment opportunities for its citizens.

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