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Indian Tourism - Emerging Opportunities, Challenges and Future Trends

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Abstract: ***Travel and tour have always been part and parcel of everyone's life. The need for recuperation from the tensions of modern life forced people to take up tours for leisure and medical purposes. This increase in general awareness among people for travelling has created a favourable condition for the growth of the tourism sector in India. India is divinely blessed with nature, diverse geographical attractions, and destinations. The tourism sector has always been a bright spot in India, due to its growth potential and its impact on the economy. But, as every sector has its strengths, so have its weaknesses and threats. Therefore, this study takes an in-depth analysis based on secondary data about the strengths, weaknesses, threats, opportunities, and future trends of Indian Tourism. The study also tries to provide suggestions that can be considered by authorities, stakeholders, and tourism departments for the improvement of the sector.***

Keywords: ***Indian Tourism, Indian Tourism Industry, Swot Analysis.***

1. INTRODUCTION

Habit of people travelling within the country and abroad for leisure, work, and medical purposes has led to the emergence of the Tourism sector as an industry around the world. Tourism is a leisure activity where people travel to destinations to break away from their regular monotonous lives (WTO, 2009).

Tourism is an activity of an individual travelling to a place outside his or her environment for at least one night and not more than a year. Tourism is a multi-layered sector that boosts consumption, employment opportunities and revenue, and enables cultural exchange. The tourism sector approximately generates 1 in every 12 jobs worldwide, so the impact of tourism on people's lives and countries' development is huge. Realizing this fact, every

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country has started to emphasize on the development and promotion of their tourism sector (Kotler, 2021).
India has a huge influence on tourism industry, as it has a vast diversity of geographical landscapes, coastlines, beautiful flora and fauna, and vast natural resources. Due to this, India has emerged as an ideal tourist destination for both summer and winter holidays. Foreign tourists especially from developed economies are visiting emerging economies more than before (Tiwari, 2024).

Even though Indian tourism industry has bright prospects and strengths, it does face certain pertinent weaknesses and threats. Hence, this study is an attempt to analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and future trends of Indian tourism industry which would help stakeholders of this sector utilize the findings to increase the tourism footfalls and development of this sector.

2. RELATED WORKS

Tourism

Theobald (1998) stated that Tourism is like a bridge, as it connects countries and people. The world has transformed now into a 'global village and close neighbourhood' where one can reach any place in a matter of hours. Tourism sector is a unique amalgamation of various areas like transportation, catering, accommodation, recreation, and travel-related services. Hence, this service-based industry has immense potential for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

The healthcare sector has benefited from the progress of health tourism and rural tourism helps in the development of remote backward rural areas. Tourism sector directly helps in the development of basic infrastructure and living standards of people in the host country (Tanrisever et al., 2024). India, China, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bali, and Thailand have received global recognition for their traditional healthcare which has been attracting tourists from all over the world (Crisford, 2022). Middle Eastern countries like Dubai, Oman, and Abu Dhabi have already made their mark on the world tourism map with a good number of international tourist arrivals and foreign currency generation every year. Saudi Arabia is well acclaimed for Hajj Tourism, but in recent times they have started to concentrate on other tourism avenues as well (UNWTO, 2017). Oman mainly concentrates on nature tourism, cultural tourism, anthropological tourism and halal tourism (Dileep and Mathew, 2017). Turkey is emerging as an ideal summer destination for tourists due to its natural beauty, quality services, and geographical advantage (Kahveci and Okutmuş, 2017).

According to the 2022 Indian tourism statistics, the United States of America tops the list of International Tourism Receipts during the year 2022. The top ten countries that contributed to international Tourism Receipts during the year 2022 are summarized in Table 1.

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Table: 1 Top 10 Countries of the world in terms of International Tourism Receipts during 2022

S. No	Source Country	International Tourism Receipts (in US$ billions)	Percentage Share
1.	UNITED STATES	135.2	13.11
2.	SPAIN	72.9	7.07
3.	UNITED KINGDOM	68.2	6.61
4.	FRANCE	59.7	5.79
5.	ITALY	44.3	4.30
6.	TURKEY	41.2	4.00
7.	GERMANY	31.5	3.06
8.	MEXICO	28.0	2.72
9.	CANADA	24.0	2.33
10.	INDIA	21.4	2.08
	TOTAL OF TOP 10 COUNTRIES	526.4	51.07
	OTHERS	504.6	48.93
	TOTAL	1031.0	100.0

(Source: India Tourism Statistics at a Glance –2023 (Ministry of Tourism, India))

Each country has its advantage over other countries in the area of tourism due to its unique offerings, landscape, and climate. Tourists can be broadly classified into - Domestic Tourists, International Tourists, and NRI Tourists (Archana, 2013). Various tourism avenues have been classified in Figure 1.

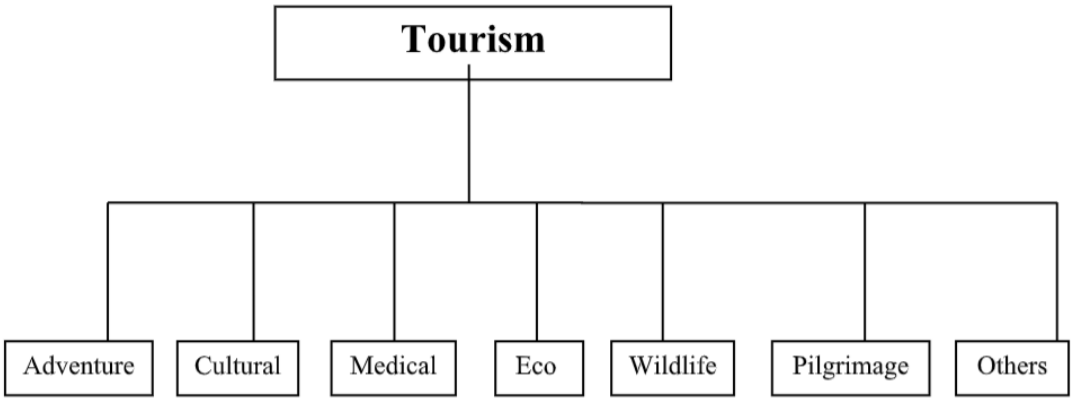


Figure 1: Classification of Tourism (Source: Researcher)

Political stability, efficient government mechanisms, good tourism policies, well-developed infrastructure facilities, a secure and safe environment, good hospitality services, and proper marketing and promotional activities can help tourism in a great way to gain competitiveness

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among countries. Even though COVID-19 pandemic has affected the tourism industry, the future of this sector remains robust. The Tourism sector will continue to prosper despite the emergence of several challenging headwinds if the host country provides a complete tourism experience to their tourists (Seal and Sahoo, 2024).

Indian Tourism

India is the land of rich cultural heritage, different beliefs, beautiful landscapes, and rare flora and fauna. It is the Home of Gautham Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi and the seat of Dalai Lama. India comprises of over 4000 miles of coastline, huge mountains like the Himalayas, the Satpura and Vindhya Range, the Western Ghats and the Eastern Ghats. India also has several metropolitan cities with excellent amenities. India's geological location is a culmination of forests, deserts, mountains and beaches. A wealth of archaeological sites, heritages, monuments and a mix of diverse civilizations and their traditions can cater to almost every type of traveller. Tourists can enjoy different kinds of tourism avenues like adventure, wildlife, culture, rural, wellness, cuisines, eco-tourism, etc. India is blessed with gracious natural beauty and a wide range of tourism opportunities which gives the country an edge over other countries. India is also considered to be the hub for Spiritual, Heritage, Traditional and Modern Healthcare tourism (Vedapradha et al., 2017).

India has over 30 World Heritage sites spread across the country. Taj Mahal, Kutub Minar, Charminar and Salarjung Museum are some of the attractive destinations (Jaswal, 2014). Other attractions are Chennai – The city of fine arts, Bangalore – the Garden City of India, Kerala – God's own country and Kolkata – the cultural capital of India. Darjeeling, Goa, Shimla, Kashmir, Kulu-Manali also attract a good number of tourists every year (Singh and Goel, 2021). India has different circuits like, "Sangam – Kashi, Vindyachal – Allahabad, Vrindavan – Mathura, Sufi trail – Deva Sharif – Lucknow, the trail of Ayodhya, etc. India possesses a lot of diversity in its ecology, mythology, history, festivals and medicinal diversity such as Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, and Naturopathy. The country has varied historical monuments, beaches, landscapes, hill stations, etc, making India an ideal tourist destination for both summer and winter holidays (Sneha and Ajai, 2015). "Incredible India!" and "Athiti Devo Bhava," are the taglines of Indian Tourism (Vijayaragavan, 2014).
World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) report (2020) stated that Indian tourism is growing at a rapid pace and is emerging as the largest tourism destination in Asia. The top ten countries from where foreign tourists came to India during the year 2022 are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Top 10 Source Countries for Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) to India in 2022

S. No	Source Country	FTAs	Percentage Share
1.	UNITED STATES	13,73,817	22.19
2.	BANGLADESH	12,55,960	20.29
3.	UNITED KINGDOM	6,17,768	9.98
4.	AUSTRALIA	3,69,023	5.96
5.	CANADA	2,77,291	4.48
6.	SRI LANKA	1,77,652	2.87

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7.	NEPAL	1,35,347	2.19
8.	GERMANY	1,24,496	2.01
9.	SINGAPORE	1,17,195	1.89
10.	MALAYSIA	1,16,523	1.88

(Source: India Tourism Statistics at a Glance –2023 (Ministry of Tourism, India))

To cater to the flow of national and international tourists and travellers many hotel chains are operating across the country such as Indian Hotels Company Ltd, Welcome Group of Hotels, Hotel Leela Venture, the Ashoka chain of hotels, owned and operated by the Indian Tourism Development Corporation and other International and Private Hotel Chains. Government has taken new initiatives like Clean India, Digital India, and Visa on Arrival (VOA) which has resulted in a positive change in the field of tourism.

Government of India has permitted 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the tourism sector, which is a good initiative. However, more tax incentives for the tourism sector, adequate safety for foreign tourists need to be looked into. Kerala was the first state in India that announced industry status for Tourism in 1986. Industry status would help in taking proactive initiatives to stimulate investment, fast-track clearance of tourism projects, technical and marketing support, subsidies and support in availing loans (Tourism News Live, 2018). As per the Indian Tourism Ministry, Uttar Pradesh tops the list of states in the number of domestic tourist visits in 2022 and Gujarat tops the list of Foreign Tourist Visits (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Share of Top 10 States/UTs of India in Number of Domestic Tourist Visits in 2022

S. No	State/UT	Domestic Tourist Visits in Million	Percentage Share
1.	Uttar Pradesh	317.91	18.37
2.	Tamil Nadu	218.58	12.63
3.	Andhra Pradesh	192.72	11.13
4.	Karnataka	182.41	10.54
5.	Gujarat	135.81	7.85
6.	Maharashtra	111.30	6.43
7.	Rajasthan	108.33	6.26
8.	West Bengal	84.54	4.88
9.	Telangana	60.75	3.51
10.	Uttarakhand	54.64	3.16
	Total of Top 10 States	1467.0	84.75
	OTHERS	264.01	15.25
	TOTAL	1731.01	100.0

(Source: India Tourism Statistics at a Glance –2023 (Ministry of Tourism, India))

Table 4. Share of Top 10 States/UTs of India in Number of Foreign Tourist Visits in 2022

S. No	State/UT	FTVs in Million	Percentage Share

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1.	Gujarat	1.78	20.70
2.	Maharashtra	1.51	17.60
3.	West Bengal	1.04	12.08
4.	Delhi	0.82	9.50
5.	Uttar Pradesh	0.65	7.56
6.	Tamil Nadu	0.41	4.74
7.	Rajasthan	0.40	4.62
8.	Kerala	0.35	4.02
9.	Punjab	0.33	3.84
10.	Madhya Pradesh	0.20	2.38
	Total of Top 10 States	7.47	87.03
	OTHERS	1.11	12.97
	TOTAL	8.59	100.0

(Source: India Tourism Statistics at a Glance –2023 (Ministry of Tourism, India))

Tourism is not seasonal in India compared to other countries due to its geographical diversity and weather and so tourists can visit the country throughout the year. Ministry of Tourism has recently launched “Incredible India” mobile application which intends to demonstrate India as a holistic destination, help international and domestic tourists with information about recognized service operators, travel agents, classified hotels, etc. The Ministry of Tourism introduced the 'Six S' framework of India's National Policy: Swagat (Welcome), Soochana (Information), Suvidha (Facilitation), Suraksha (Safety), Sahyyog (Cooperation), Samrachana (Infrastructure Development). India's air transport is good with low-cost carriers and good connectivity with all major countries in the world. Other tourism infrastructure aspects like conditions of roads, overcrowded railways and less availability of affordable hotel rooms near tourist spots, are some of the areas of concern. Even though steps have been taken by authorities, the cleanliness and sanitation level of the country needs to be improved. Adequate hygienic toilets and bathrooms at tourist sites are lacking. Foreign tourists are charged more entry fees at tourist spots, which needs change (Goutam, 2018).

Indian tourism sector was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic like all other countries but, due to proper vaccination drive and precautions, the sector is showing signs of revival. The need of the hour is to take effective steps to overcome the slowdown in the tourism industry. Proper and aggressive marketing plans, capitalizing on India’s natural strengths in the tourism segment and providing tailor-made tourism packages are some of the initiatives required (Subbaraju and Venkateswarlu, 2023). Creating and promoting new combinations of tourism products, providing informative online and offline materials to the potential customers are the needs of the hour. Proper utilization of online platforms to disseminate the right information about the countries’ tourist spots at the global level is required. There is a shift in global trends as tourists from developed countries are visiting emerging countries, and India being an important part of the latter should be ready to grab this opportunity (Surjit, 2021).

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Indian Tourism Marketing

Tourism departments are taking steps to participate in key international travel fairs in Europe, America, and Asia with their pavilions and also by conducting travel marts and road shows in international and national markets. Authorities need to provide financial support to travel and tour operators to participate in international fairs and workshops to showcase various tourism products to potential audiences. There is also a need to take initiatives to give ads in reputed international travel magazines regarding Indian tour destinations (Shunali and Manik, 2014).

The government of India has recently introduced luxury trains like "Vande Bharat" and "Thejus" which is a right step forward to boost tourism. Proper information booths at bus stations, shopping malls, railway stations, airports and crowded locations are to be opened by the tourism department to provide proper information about the tour destinations. Tourist offices need to be kept open 24 hours to help the tourists. About 80% of the population has access to the internet and smartphones and 70% of the population are active on multiple social media platforms (Anoop and Lakshmi 2023). Authorities can run online and social media platforms ad campaigns to promote Indian tourism. Mobile and travel apps have become the major booking channels for tourists in recent times. Tourism can act as a sustainable economic development option and the possibilities of destination marketing for the promotion of the tourism sector in the country are bright (Prakash et al., 2024).

The Official Website of the Ministry of Tourism, India - www.incredibleindia.org has been translated into various languages - Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Korean to further position India as a leading tourist destination (India Tourism Statistics, 2013). The possibility of celebrity endorsements for the promotion of tourism avenues can also be looked into. India is facing heavy competition from other countries, but, by adopting new creative tourism marketing strategies, and offering diversified tourism products India can stay competitive in the sector (Chakravarty, 2024).

Future Trends in Indian Tourism

The tourism sector witnessed a sharp decline due to COVID–19 pandemic. Effective COVID vaccination drive and safety steps taken by Government have helped the sector to slowly limp back on track. After the COVID-19 pandemic tourism industry had to redefine itself, as the tourists' interests, needs, and purposes have changed and it is also reflected in their selection of tourist destinations. The new growth areas in the tourism sector would be heritage tourism, medical and wellness tourism, eco-tourism, rural tourism, pilgrimage and spiritual tourism (Pandey et al., 2021).

Nowadays, tourists do not confine themselves to hotels, resorts, beaches and parks, but to rural areas, their culture and food through Rural, Culture and Cuisine Tourism, for health and well-being through Medical and Wellness Tourism, environment (Eco-Tourism), waterways (cruise tourism), etc. India has a long coastline and strong port presence that need to be utilized properly to position itself as a cruise destination in the international arena. The development of coastlines and management of water resources will ensure a new impetus for the Indian tourism sector (Akoijam et al., 2024).

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The cuisine tourism potential of India needs to be explored as tourists can discover and enjoy different tastes, flavors, local food and beverages. This also provides an opportunity for the tourist to understand the culture, traditions and beliefs of India. Indian movies and stars have a good number of fan followings across the world. Providing incentives for shooting movies in Indian locations can increase the popularity of the destinations (Radhika and Johnson, 2024). For sustainable growth of the tourism sector, there is a need to blend it with other sectors like medical, wellness, health, spirituality, etc. This would attract tourists in the long run with higher spending capacity. Currently, the scope for sustainable tourism has become popular, thus providing an equal chance for future generations to enjoy tourism avenues just as the present generation does. Despite the ever-increasing and unpredictable shocks from terrorist attacks, political instability, health pandemics and natural disasters, travel and tourism continues to show their resilience (Hanna, 2022). Due to limited travel opportunities during the pandemic a new trend called "Revenge Tourism" has emerged among tourists in post Covid era. Hence, this is the right time for tourism stakeholders and policymakers to transform the tourism sector more aligned to sustainable development and look into the possibilities of community-based tourism activities, thus encouraging local tourism and cultural activities (Yen et al., 2021).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Type

The study is descriptive and is based on secondary data. The secondary data was collected by analysing existing academic works in the area of Indian Tourism, from the official website of Ministry of tourism, Government of India, Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) issued by World Economic Forum and different journals and books.

Research Problem

The tourism sector has been a strategically important industry in India, due to its growth potential and the employment opportunities, it is considered to provide a sustainable growth model. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the mindset of people and there is a growing shift in the selection of tour and travel avenues. Hence, this study would help in understanding the potentials, strengths, challenges, threats and future trends in the Indian tourism sector which would help the authorities to effectively boost the growth of this sector.

Research Question

What are the potentials, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and future trends of Indian tourism sector?

Objectives

1. To study the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Indian tourism sector,
2. To explore the future trends of Indian tourism sector, and
3. To suggest steps that can be taken by the Government, Stakeholders, and Tourism department to boost Indian Tourism sector.

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Systematic Selection of Articles for Review

The methodology for conducting in-depth literature review, involves scrutinizing previous studies in the Indian tourism sector. The survey of the articles on Indian Tourism was performed by selecting articles, from 3 databases namely, Google Scholar, Research Gate, and ProQuest. The articles were systematically selected, excluded and shortlisted for the study as mentioned below (Figure 1).

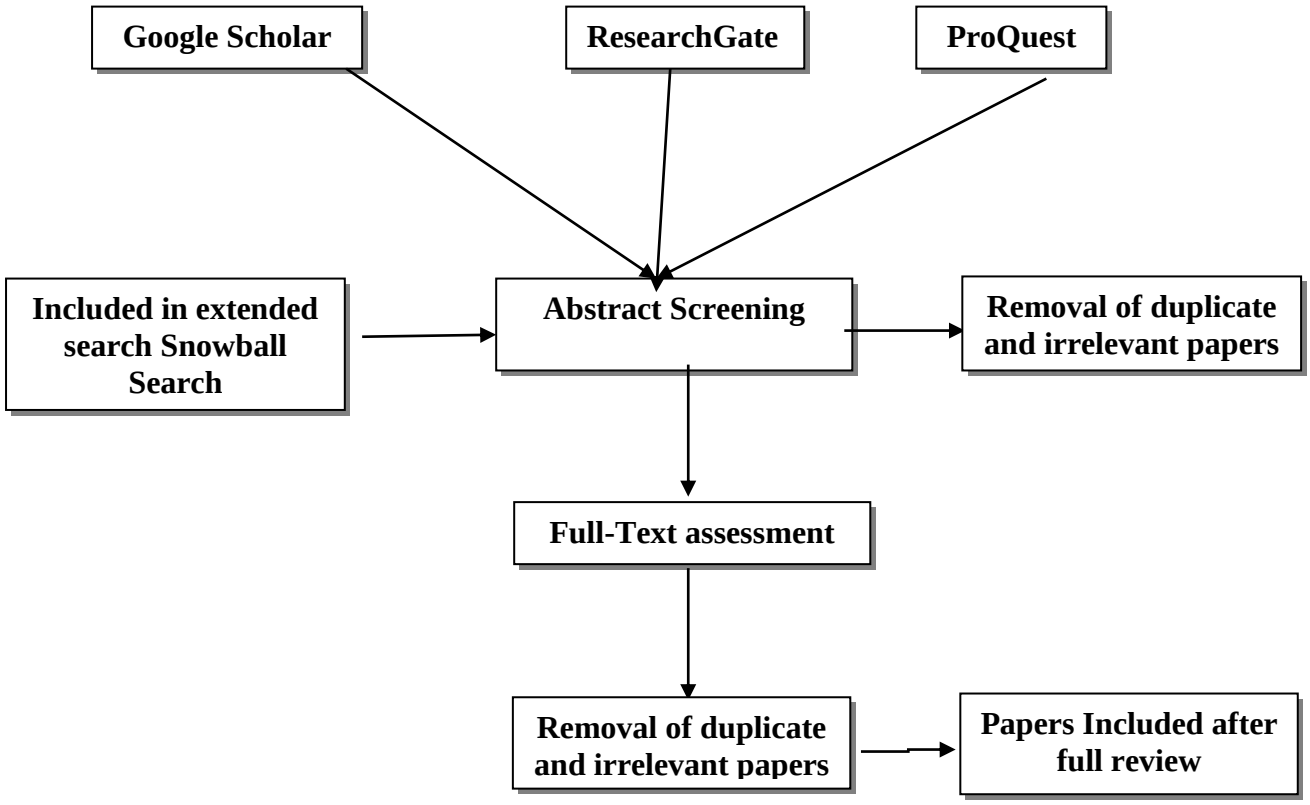


Figure 1: Systematic Selection of Articles for Review (Source: Researcher)

A total of 21 pertinent articles were included in the final study.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis helps to systematically identify the strengths and weaknesses of a business, product, industry, or sector and also the opportunities and threats facing the sector. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Indian tourism obtained from the literature review is presented in Table 5.

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Table 5. SWOT Analysis of Indian Tourism (Source: Researcher)

STRENGTHS	**WEAKNESS**
• Diverse tourist attractions, heritage, culture, climate and geography. • The air transport infrastructure is pretty good. • The medical facilities are among the best in the world. • Various types of tourism themes and packages can be offered to tourists • The sound banking system, Mobile phone network and Wi-Fi speed. • Less expensive and highly competitive prices compared to other nations • Good and pleasant association with all countries in the world. • Visa on Arrival is provided to many countries. • Presence of best medical doctors and para-medical staffs.	• Security and safety issues, especially for female tourists. • The general cleanliness and sanitation level of the country is poor. • Charging more entry fees from foreign tourists at tourist spots • Tourists face problems in communicating with the locals due to diverse regional languages. • No appropriate marketing of India's tourism in foreign countries. • The poor condition of the majority of roads and overcrowded public transport. • Lack of maintenance of tourism spots and lack of adequate and hygienic toilets, bathrooms and urinal facilities • Less availability of affordable hotel rooms near tourist spots
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
• A large pool of historical monuments and cultural heritage • A lot of unexplored terrains and tourism avenues such as pilgrimage centres, backwaters, lakes and hill stations. • An ideal tourist destination for both summer and winter holidays. • Presence of unique traditional healthcare facilities. • A shift of global tourist arrivals from developed countries to developing emerging countries. • Possibilities of tourism avenues in North Eastern states, Kashmir, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.	• The behaviour of country residents particularly at ground level. • Frequent depreciation of the Indian Rupee. • The continuous threat of general strikes, bandhs, terrorist attacks and Maoist activities. • Aggressive strategies adopted by other countries. • Escalating competition from other exotic countries. • Cheating and Fraudulent activities in tourist spots.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

For Central and State Governments

- Proper safety and security measures, adequate maintenance and cleanliness of tourist spots.

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- Ease of visa formalities.
- Availability of clear information about destinations through websites.
- Formulating effective marketing and promotional strategies..
- Improvement of infrastructure facilities.
- Proper accessibility by improving roads to tourist spots.
- Accommodation quality.
- Conducting carnivals, sports and other cultural events to attract tourists to the country.
- Persons performing unclean acts can be fined.
- Provide loans with minimum interest rates.
- All state governments must encourage their employees to undertake journeys providing concessions and leave travel concessions on the Central Government pattern.
- Starting new institutes for Hotel management and tourism guidance in each state.
- Encourage more private investment in the tourism sector.
- An effective mechanism for coordination among the Central Government, State government, local self-government bodies and NGOs.

For Stakeholders

- The restaurants should try to serve a variety of global cuisines to suit all tastes and also give stress to local food.
- Adequate space for exhibiting Indian handicrafts, garments and traditional items
- Innovative and customized tour packages.
- Travel agents must transform into travel consultants.
- To expand into other tourism-related sectors such as green tourism, ecotourism, etc.
- Value-added tourism avenues need to be offered by hotels and resorts.
- Proper marketing and promotion personnel.
- Tours and travel packages that provide unexplored and hidden destinations in India.

For Tourism Departments

- Independent research to understand the tourist demand and tourism structure.
- Greater coordination among adjoining states
- Conducting inter-state tours
- Setting up a Tourism Planning Board
- An integrated approach to club all stakeholders under one umbrella.
- Proper information booths at bus stations, shopping malls, railway stations, airports and busy commercial complexes.
- Tourist offices need to be kept 24 hours open to help the tourists.

Future Implications, Limitations and Scope for Future Study

Although the Indian Tourism sector has gained substantial growth, it still has greater potential. This sector is facing lots of pitfalls and threats especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Indian tourism sector requires continuous monitoring and updation inf this competitive international environment. Effective and aggressive promotional activities need

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to be taken up in the existing tourist-generating markets as well as the need to explore new markets. There is a need to concentrate on domestic tourist flow as well. Hence, this study would help both governmental and non-governmental tourism players at both the national and state level to strategize and make necessary changes for the progress of the Indian Tourism Sector. Both qualitative and quantitative research surveys are to be conducted among tourists and stakeholders to get a broader overview of this sector, which is not done in this study.

5. CONCLUSION

Indian Tourism has a good growth prospect as it is blessed with vast natural resources and diverse attractions. But, this blessing has to be optimally utilized, with proper tourism infrastructure on the ground, supported by a proper tourism vision plan and promotional activities. The study reveals that tourism in India is in a good position due to its natural resources, tourism attractions, tradition, cultural heritage, medical facilities, good air connectivity and price competitiveness. However, Indian tourism sector is lacking on other fronts like hygiene, proper maintenance of tourist destinations and spots, safety and security of tourists, infrastructure and communication network, and also cases of cheating and fraud. There has been considerable progress in recent times, but, the need of the hour is to evolve better coordination between the multiple tourist structures prevalent in the country to get rid of negative issues and enhance the image of the country.

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