Review paper (SS-II)

ROLE OF INFRASTRUCTURE FOR INCREASING TOURIST INFUX IN RAJASTHAN, INDIA: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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Received October 10, 2014 Accepted February 15, 2015

ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the most important economic activities in the world today because it directly generates services, products, foreign currency, employment and investments. Tourism, both foreign and domestic is a major source of income for India and the economy and employment of many states like Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttrakhand and Kerala, India are dependent upon tourism. To have a better, enjoyable and comfortable living and travelling experience for tourists at a place the provision of adequate tourism infrastructure which supports the peak tourist influx is become essential, so that there will be prolonged stays of tourists alongwith increase in tourist influx.

Key Words: Tourism, Economic activities, Tourism infrastructure, Tourist influx, Foreign currency

INTRODUCTION

In case of Rajasthan, It is one of the largest employment generated industry which accounts for 8% of the state's domestic product. In spite of being the largest state of the country and a lot of initiatives have been taken by the state government to attract tourists, the tourist influx is still less. This is due to absence or inadequacy of tourism infrastructure and public services required for any area, city or region to get recognition as a preferred tourist destination while available, have yet to be modernized.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To explore the significance of tourism infrastructure to improve the tourism influx in Rajasthan. Existing condition and related issues of tourism infrastructure in Rajasthan, India are also highlighted in this paper along with recommendations to mitigate the problem and to make the tourism infrastructure sustainable.

DISCUSSION

Tourism denotes the temporary, short-term movement of people to destinations outside the place where they normally live and work and their activities during their stay at their destinations. It is primarily a summation of movements of people to their activities at places and outside their normal beat area. The destinations may be within the nationality boundary of the country of the visitors or outside. Accordingly their movements result in Domestic and Foreign Tourism. Foreign tourism are playing an important role in creating opportunities like employem-ent, good infrastructure, accommodation (hot-els, resorts and guest houses), communication links, investment opportunities and also helps in the developing better cultural, social, infrastructural and behavior exchanges in between different countries. Likewise, domestic tourism is also crucial for development of a place by supporting economy, employment and infrastructure and also help in the developing better cultural, social and behavior exchanges in between different states/regions of same country.

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United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) state that tourism is directly responsible for 5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) 30% of the world’s service export and creation of one in the twelve jobs world wide. Tourism is one of the important sector of Indian economy and contributes substantially in the country’s Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) as it is evident in year 2013 tourism contributed Rs.107671 crore to countrys GDP which is 6.6% of the total. Tourism has also supported 39.5 million jobs in the same year which are approximately 7.7% of our total employment in India.

India is one of the important tourist destination due to its great potential to attract tourists to the diversity of its tourist sites spread all over the country. At world tourism, India as a tourist destination trails behind many countries, hasn't been cherish its capacity to the fullest as Indias rank is 42 in FTAs with share of only 0.64%, even Hong-kong and Singapore much smaller in area are ahead of us (Unwto statistics). Tourists for pilgrimage, seeing natural beauty and wild life seeing historical monuments, trade and commerce for availing health-care and educational facilities, study art, culture, social structure, religion and scriptures and experience rural/village life and culture at specific locations visited various preferred locations in the country. The number of tourists visited country is increasing every year but, the percentage increase is low and alarming for development and economy of the country. The foremost reasons for low rate of tourists in country are poor or inadequate tourism infrastructure and public services, lack of safety and security, inadequate information related to tourist destinations, improper transportation linkages etc. as lack of tourism infrastructure is one of the major issues which discourage tourism in a place/state/country, an attempt is made to understand the significance of tourism infrastructure for improve the tourism in next section.

Significance of tourism infrastructure in tourism development
Tourism Infrastructure includes various facilities that are required for the comfort and convenience of tourists at a place. It include goods and services for tourists, the establishments which provide such services as well as establishments whose products are mainly sold to visitors majorly. Several infrastructure sectors like power, telecommunication, water supply, roads and some production sectors like travel items, sports equipment, photographic materials, medicines and cosmetics are included in this category along with other tourism infrastructure like hotels, recreation and transportation facilities.

Tourism Infrastructure of a place can be broadly categorized into tourist attractions, facilities for transport facilities for accommodation and supporting facilities and other Infrastructural facilities. Tourism attractions are generally classified under three heads as natural features, manmade objects and cultures of the people. The facilities for transport refer to aircraft, ships, steamers, cars, taxis, luxury coaches, buses and the railway trains. Taxies, cars, motor like auto rickshaws, mopeds, bicycles and trams are particularly important as items of local transport to carry people/tourists from airports, bus-stands or railway stations to hotels and tourist sites within a city etc. In addition to the basic requirements, several auxiliary services and facilities are need by tourists. These include accommodation facility in required number as per their need, variety of shops and other establishments, some of which are oriented especially to the tourist i.e. comprise shops (for goods), laundries and guides for services and festival areas and recreational facilities for activities. Other infrastructural facilities are facilities which predominantly serve the residential population but are also shared by tourists and are essential for tourism development. It comprises transportation terminals (railway lines, parking, air fields and harbors), communication networks and street highways and health care facilities, security systems, besides public utilities such as water system, power sources and sewage disposal.

Infrastructural development is necessary to stimulate the development of tourism. It predominantly serves the residential population but is also shared by tourists and is essential for tourism development.
Kaul is among the first to recognize the importance of transport infrastructure as an essential component of successful development in that it induces the creation of new attractions and the growth of existing ones. As natural attractions in particular do not become attractions for the purpose of tourism until a certain amount of development has occurred to make the natural resource accessible to and attractive for tourists. As per National Tourism Policy 2002 to attract more tourist, we need world class infrastructure by improving the network of national and state highways and rural roads by introducing more special tourist trains and railway hotels and conservation and enhancement of heritage buildings, hill railways and heritage railways is needed in tourism. Rajasthan is one such state of India, which is a favourite destination for domestic and foreign tourists and have numerous issues related to tourism infrastructure.

Tourism in Rajasthan, India

Rajasthan the largest state of the country (area wise) is located in the west part of the country and has an area of 342,239 square kilometers. It attracts tourists for its natural features historical city planning and design heritage forts, palaces and temples art, custom and culture wild life and rural livelihood and craft. As per the report Lonely Planet on Rajasthan tourism, every third foreign tourist visiting the country travels to Rajasthan India. On an average a foreign tourist spends Rs.1500 per day and domestic tourist Rs.1000 per day. It is further, estimated that the average stay of a foreign tourist in the state is 2.5 days, which is actually much less as compared to type and variety of tourist destinations available in the state. The total spending by all the tourists visiting the state is over Rs.1600 crore per annum. (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India). This lower stay duration of tourists in the state is a major area of concern and it is majorly due to inadequate information related to the all tourist destinations and inadequate tourism infrastructure. Many initiative have been taken by local authorities and state government to promote tourism in Rajasthan but, the number of tourists visited the place are still less. Though Rajasthan has a lot of potential for tourism, but presently tourism accounts for only 8% of the states domestic product. It ranked 7th and share shares 2.6% of domestic tourists and ranked 5th with 7.2% of total foreign tourist visit in India, in 2013. States like, Kerala, Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Madhya Pradesh, India have attracted more number of tourists than Rajasthan, India. The number of domestic and foreign tourist visited Rajasthan from year 2000 to 2012 are shown in Table 1 and Fig. 1.

Table 1 : Tourists in Rajasthan, India from the year 2000 to 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of tourists</th>
<th>Changes in % w.r.t. last year</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Foreign</td>
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<tr>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>28611831</td>
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Source: Tourism annual report 2012-2013 - Department of tourism, Rajasthan, India
Fig. 1: Trend of domestic and foreign tourists arrival in Rajasthan, India from the year 2000 to 2012

As above table shows that from the year 2000 to 2008 arrivals of domestic tourists are increasing from 77.57 lacs to 283.59 lacs and foreign tourists are fluctuating from 6.23 lacs in the year 2001 to 14.51 lacs in 2012. There is a high increase in number of domestic tourists in the state (approximately 4 times increase) as compared to the increase in the foreign tourists (approximately 2 times increase). This is due to increase in heritage and pilgrimage tourism in the state. But in the year 2009 and 2010, trends of domestic tourists are decreasing because of high infrastructure cost, lack of tourist’s facilities at tourist places and lack of governmental and local people support to enhance domestic tourism.

As foreign tourists are attracted by culture, tradition, customs and traditions, fairs and festivals, handicrafts, art and music of Rajasthan, India but there are disparities or unevenness in the foreign tourists’ arrival rate in the state. This is due to increase in shopping mal practices, lack of safety at tourist places, poor infrastructure and lack of publicity gives adverse effects to tourists arrival which result in decreasing rate of employability for local tourists guide and tour operators, decrease in foreign exchange earnings from tourism and less development of local traditional handicrafts and business.

The major issues responsible for less tourist influx in state are inadequate tourism infrastructure which leads to poor visitor experience, inappropriate service delivery and hospitality, poor hygienic conditions, incidents of touting and harassment of tourists in some places, lack of safety and security, professional and business malpractices.

Existing scenario of tourism infrastructure in Rajasthan, India

As per the paper name refining state level comparisons in India of planning commission of India related to state level comparison of health index and infrastructure index, Rajasthan is place in third tier state and ranked 15th in health index and infrastructure index rating amongst all states. There is a large gap between the existing level of infrastructure facilities and living and hygienic conditions provided in the state as compared to other tier one and two states 13,14

Rajasthan is facing problems related to tourism infrastructure such as inadequacy transport (intercity and intra-city) insufficient water supply, inadequate and inappropriate accommodation (hotels, guest, houses) lodging facilities, insufficient infrastructure at attractions and lack of public conveniences. Along with these there is a limited availability of tourist information centres and lack or inadequate information at these tourist centers related to package tours, fairs and festivals, accommodation etc. there are also issues of inadequate service delivery and hospitality, poor hygienic conditions, issues of safety and security and incidents of touting and harassment of tourists in some parts of the state 15.
Moreover, there are very few considerations related to development of tourism infrastructure given by the government and funding available for promotion of tourism and development of tourism infrastructure is less as compared to other neighboring states like Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, India. In the year 2013, the tourism budget of Rajasthan is Rs. 42 crore which is low as compared to the tourism budget of Gujarat, India. Which is Rs. 350 crore and tourism budget of Madhya Pradesh Rs. 250 crore.

**Issues related to tourist infrastructure**

Along with the above discusses issues and problems related to tourism in the state various issues of tourism infrastructure in the state are classified into five categories as issues related to accessibility, issues related to planning and design of tourism destinations, issues related to inadequate facilities at tourist destinations, issues related to safety, security and legibility to tourists, issues related to operation and maintenance of tourist destinations and issues related to management and governance of tourist destinations.16-18

**Issues relate to accessibility**

Rajasthan has many tourist destinations which attracts variety of tourists and to provide comfortable, convenient and economical transport facilities to these tourist destinations is a tremendous task. Presently unavailability of suitable transport is one of the major problem faced by the tourists visited the state. Moreover, there are issues related to accessibility of information related to these tourist destinations as no website or information counter is providing complete information required by the tourists. 19-23

**Issues related to planning and design of tourist destinations**

Different tourist destinations are not planned to cater the need and requirements of the tourists visited these destinations. There is a lack of tourist information centre and tourist reception centre in many cities, which can provide information about the place, facilitates accommodation and reservations to tour packages with maps and printed guide books. Trained guides with multilingual approach are not available to many tourist locations. Moreover there are problems related to provisions of basic infrastructural facilities, public amenities, variety of restaurants, solid water disposal and cleanliness, parking facilities and public/street furniture.

**Issues related to inadequate facilities at tourist destinations**

In tourist destinations where infrastructural facilities are provided there are inadequate to cater the number of visitors coming to these places as a result the tourist will suffer and waste the precious time to search for suitable facilities to meet their requirements.

**Issues related to safety and legibility to tourists**

There are issues of safety of tourist in some tourist destinations in the state as some of the cases related to theft, looting and misbehaving with the tourist have been reported. Also due to improper signage and location maps it is not possible for tourist to explore various locations in a town/city by their own.

**Issues related to operation and maintenance of tourist destinations**

There is a need of providing bilingual informative as well as directional signages to various tourist points within the cities tourist locations. Mouth publicity and local people helps as the best sources of destinations promotion. The problems of required parking available in the peak seasons in October to March are common at tourist spots. The local bodies are not able to cater the problems of sewage disposal at tourist spots affecting its hygiene and environment.

**Issues related to management and Governance**

Rajasthan is famous for its dance, songs, leather and woolen goods and various musical instruments. There is need of art, craft and cultural centre which serve not only to tourism but also local people who perform their art at roadside without shelter and give them approach to formal market, exhibitions and fairs and preserve its craft, culture and knowledge of art and etc. Many heritage sites and pilgrimage places are being damage and losing their architectural value without their proper maintenance and restoration.
CONCLUSION

Tourism is the third largest net earner of foreign exchange for the country. Tourism is an important sector of Indian economy and contributes substantially in the country’s foreign exchange earnings. Tourism in Rajasthan, India offers many unique products such as forts and palaces, heritage hotels, colorful fairs and festivals, local art and handicrafts. No doubt tourism industry in Rajasthan suffer some social and environmental problems such as poor infrastructure, damage to heritage and pilgrimage places, environment pollution, lack of connectivity and shopping malpractices. Though it is true that government of Rajasthan has made many efforts to increase tourism in the state and try to improve various tourist services to provide good tourist facilities. In order to develop infrastructure, the government should prepare an area-based master plan outlining the infrastructure necessary in each such area. The plan should be based on the potential, which each destination holds for development of tourism. An investment plan will be evolved from this master plan. The investment plan will further be translated into an annual action plan in order that the goals set in the master plan will be achieved in a time bound manner. Though it is true that government of Rajasthan has made many efforts to increase tourism in the state and try to improve various tourist services to provide good tourist facilities.

RECOMMENDATION

To improve accommodation
Heritage hotel movement should be encouraged in the state in order to provide quality accommodation for the tourist and also save precious historical heritage from Dilapidation. Organization of travel management and provision of hotels has to serve a large numbers with widely varying needs, cultural backgrounds and budgets. To facilitate the comfortable stay of the tourists the hotel industry should be given all possible encouragement. For building standard hotels and lodges the government should allocate the suitable lands, financial assistance and other such subsidies which can encourage the hotel business communities and agencies to build enough accommodation for tourists.

To improve accessibility and connectivity to tourist location
Rajasthan there is one international airport. There is a need to establish international air port at Udaipur and Jodhpur to cater other tourist destinations. Facilities consisting of good communication and transport connections should be available to nearest rail, road and air heads. The state should encourage air taxi service and helicopter service by air taxi operators within the state so the tourists visiting the state can see as many places as possible within the available time. Efforts would be made to launch an economy version of luxurious palace on wheels for budget tourists. Air conditioned tourist coac hes, tourist cars and specially designed non-air conditioned sightseeing coaches, as recognised and approved by the department of tourism should be encouraged and special intra-state and inter-state package tours should be encouraged through private tour operators and travel agents.

To improve local transportation
There is need to improve the quality of local transport at various tourist destinations. Car taxies for transportation of tourists should be encouraged. Three wheelers should be metered and point to point fixed fare with prepaid taxi/coach services should be introduced to reduce over-charging and harassment to tourists.

To improve tourism information offices
The tourist reception centre is the major source of help for tourist for accommodations, reservation, tickets, information about location with maps etc. The TRCs, especially during the tourist season should be operational for 24 hours in the important tourist places like Jaipur, Udaipur Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Mount Abu. Looking to the large tourist traffic of domestic and international tourists, it becomes increasingly necessary to have modern well equipped TRC at important entry points and destinations and further strengthened and linked by computer network with multimedia software to provide customised information to tour operators and tourists. Similarly to assist tourist,
literature pertaining to history, tradition, art, culture, artifacts and handicrafts should be prepared and try to give wide publicity.

**For betterment of people related to tourism industry**

To overcome the problem of malpractices, government should purchase the handicrafts and artifacts directly from the manufacturers and avoid the middle man profiteering. The tourist guides also play a big role in the development of tourist industry so proper education and training regarding the culture and develop their skills so that they commits the norms of their profession. Local people could be trained to serve as guides, it will help the tourists and will boost the local economy as well.

**For improving tourist safety measures**

The government should administer law and order should have vigilant tourism police, rectification of complaints on time, frame rules and regulations for tourism industry and steps should be taken to avoid any harassment by private operators and touts.

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