

TOURISM DIPLOMACY IN INDIA

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Abstract

This abstract discusses the concept of tourism diplomacy in India, highlighting the potential for leveraging the country's rich tourism resources for fostering global engagement and understanding. It provides a historical overview of tourism in India, from ancient times to post-independence, and explores the role of tourism in diplomacy. The study also examines the governmental organizations and policies relating to tourism, bilateral and multilateral agreements, and the challenges and opportunities in tourism diplomacy. It further delves into the promotion of tourism and soft power, sustainable tourism practices, and shares case studies and success stories from India's tourism diplomacy, including the 'Incredible India' campaign. The abstract concludes with insights into security concerns and the tremendous potential for tourism diplomacy to enhance India's global appeal and soft power.

Keywords: Tourism diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy, Soft Power, Eco-Tourism, Sustainable Tourism.

Understanding Tourism Diplomacy

India's vast tourism potential could be leveraged for building 'people to people contacts' for long term co-operation and mutual understanding among Nations. The innumerable commonalities among Indian tourism products and those of neighboring countries could emerge as a strong binding tie in enhancing cultural diplomatic relationships in the region and make South Asia one of the global tourism destinations. This discussion highlights the use of tourism as an

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instrument of state policy and a tool of diplomacy in the emerging phenomenon of 'tourism diplomacy' with modelling of Indian tourism diplomacy perspective. India's tourism diplomacy could be addressed to promote economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and fat-moving diplomacy, and enhance destination marketing (Dash & Sharma et al.2021) .

After making an exploratory inquiry of Indian tourism diplomacy, the discussion signifies the need of sowing the seeds of tourism diplomacy at intending level, multi-level articulation at national level, and co-ordination between tourism and diplomatic efforts. In the emerging globalized economy, the pervading changes in all walks of life are collectively termed as 'Globalisation', the term has broad meanings contextually. In the context of tourism, globalisation has given rise to 'tourism as an agent of development', where tourism is seen as a great economic driving force for growth and development of Nations. This development model premised on tourism as a leverage tool goes beyond economics into all areas of social development and change.

Definition and Concept

Currently, nations around the globe are vying for tourism to promote economic, cultural and social interactions, encouraging travel to their specific regions through the formulation and implementation of tourism developmental policies, and are trying hard to promote themselves as a brand for tourism. Some countries have resorted to sophisticated public relations endeavor's, laboring hard to project a specific image of themselves. Further, this predisposition had led to the emergence of an industry the size of which presently is at least 344 billion euro or approximately US dollars 445 billion. Globally, tourism industry supports more than 12 percent of all jobs. Many believe tourism to be the largest global industry with socio-economic benefits. In this context, with its rich spread of cultural and natural diversity, tourism rightly poses India's prime wealth-creating industry with greatest potentiality to provide employment, eradicate poverty and generate revenue. India during the last decade became one of the fastest-growing tourism economies in the

world. India expects to have tourist's inflow over 10 million annually generating foreign exchange of US dollars 25 billion. India has taken steps to evolve a strategy to boost the market share of foreign tourist arrivals, enhance employment generation in the tourism sector, simplify regulations and delineate roles of various tourism departments. India's most important tourism assets are its unique and varied cultural heritage and social kaleidoscope present in diverse forms in diverse places. This must be planned to capture tourism's pie in the global market, with a view to make it an instrument of sustainable development and for the welfare of the local communities. Tourists' visits to places where there is a great accumulation of buildings and artefacts from the past are a self-evident phenomenon, and this predilection is not a modern one. Every civilization has been beguiled by the concept of the past—the glories gone by (Godara et al.2020).

In essence, the phenomenon of tourism is embedded in the ruins of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and even in the more literate sections of the Aegean and Indus Valley civilizations. While the marvels of pyramids, palaces, cathedrals and temples attested to the greatness of the respective monarchs, such interest inevitably extended to the less palatial construction—forts, dams, step wells and water reservoirs. Ultimately, these edifices were constructed at a great cost not only in terms of mates-labour and money, but equally in pain and joy, passions and aspirations; the charters reflecting a people's past. However, much before this, the mere deep-rootedness of the old, held by the universal consciousness as all that transcends the immediate present became a fertile grounds-planting by poets, artists and savants; a tenacious quest leading intellectuals and romantics through India, Greece, Persia, Rome, Egypt etc. The monuments of men continued to survive as a means of recreation, reflection and an occasion for remembrance. Thus, in one way or the other, the love for travel and place thus visited may be traced in all sections of the society, attesting to the integrity of both the venerated past and present.

Historical Overview of Tourism in India

Tourism has become a key economic driver globally, particularly in developing nations, given its significant contribution to employment, growth, and foreign exchange earnings. The burgeoning Indian tourism sector continues to rise steadily, significantly benefiting the Indian economy. Recognized as one of the 20 emerging countries in 1991 by the United Nations World Tourism Organization, India ranks 36th in the world in 2017, tourism globally. India's tourism industry contributed 7.7% of India's GDP and 42.67 million jobs in India. Between 2016-2027, tourism in India is expected to grow significantly (Mahler et al., 2022).

Historical Overview of Tourism in India presents an in-depth analysis of the evolution of tourism in India, beginning with early historical references. Residences of the Harappan civilization (3200 BC), established at the confluence of rivers, attracted people. Public bathing was common to maintain hygiene as the Indus Valley people lived in brick houses and wells, making it necessary for common people to bathe in the river rather than in costly wells. In early days, the most important and attractive river for bathing was the Ganges, primarily due to the prevalence of the river. Tourism in a broad sense existed prior to the early 16th century. The earliest group of domestic travelers in India was devotees and pilgrims. Jain and Buddhist monks and followers traveled widely. Buddhist sculpture, gospel, and art spread through the countries, promoting tourism. Parsa para, pilgrims, settlers, traders, and monks established elements of tourism.

Pre-Independence Era

In ancient times, India was an attractive point for tourists. Sea cruise was a popular way of transport in those days. Maldives and Mauricius were then called 'Malahar' or 'Malhar' and 'Mahalakshmi' during the time of the Maurya dynasty, and later Chaulukyias, who were called 'Mahalakshmi Dham' or 'Valouh' as renowned tourist ports. Charaka and Susruta, the founders of Indian medicine were called the first medical tourist physicians. The ashtaseshvara

lingas installed in eight different places in Gujarat were believed to have been created by a single artist. The Mahabharata was a tourist guide for the Kuru princes, who visited each of the sacred places mentioned in it, which stretched from Gujarat in the West to Himalaya, Indus, and further away (Peručić et al.2020).

The foreign tourist arrivals were 16,592 in 1947, which increased to 329,376 in 1960. The tourist arrivals from Europe were the highest at 13,326 or 80.3 percent, which necessitated the establishment of the Ministry of Tourism on 1st March, 1967 to promote tourism. The government policies put up blocks for the growth of tourism. However, the tourism sector has gained momentum since liberalisation in the early 1990s and has been considered the second engine of economic growth.

Post-Independence Development

Building upon the historical foundations laid out in the previous section, the following discusses the post-independence development of tourism in India, highlighting the key shifts, developments, and policies that have influenced the industry. At the outset, it broadly addresses the state tourism policies across various five-year plans and articulates key milestones and agencies addressing Indian tourism at the grassroots. It also describes The Incredible India concept, highlighting the key elements of the campaign. The section concludes focusing on the important landmarks in Indian tourism development and articulates the significance of understanding this evolution of Indian tourism over time (Amore & Roy et al.2020).

Though India gained independence in 1947, the Varma Committee constituted with the task of examining the problem and hardships felt by, pilgrims in the country was appointed prior to independence. With its recommendations implemented by the then state governments, attention also started being diverted towards development tourism in states, with the appointment of state level Tourism Committees. Gradually, attention was diverted towards development of tourism by the Centre and thereafter gradual widespread developments took place. The sectional addresses such developments,

covering key socio, political, and economic shifts influencing tourism in the country after independence. The major landmarks in Indian tourism development between the mid-1940s (post-independence period) and the fall of the perceived ‘age of innocence’ towards liberalization in the early 1990s are identified and articulated – as it needs to be understood in order to appreciate the subsequent developments in Indian tourism post liberalization. Thus, many a land mark in the development of tourism in India post-independence, distinguished by various autonomous agencies being formed making way for a plethora of tourism policies, plans and projects at national, state and district levels, is presented (Varma et al.2021).

The Role of Tourism in Diplomacy

Tourism and diplomacy are two complex social phenomena that are inextricably intertwined. Humans have had an innate drive to shift their habitat ever since they first stepped foot on earth, which has led to humans moving away from their birthplace. This social behavior of man has taken a lot of forms and shapes over a period of time. Tourism has been formally approached by some international organizations such as the United Nations, Tourism International Organization, World Bank, etc. and has been defined in various ways. However, there is no universally accepted single definition of tourism as it is a dynamic concept and has different connotations in different cultures and countries (Herrero et al.2022).

Tourism refers to the business of providing information, accommodation, transport, and other services to people visiting a place for pleasure. Diplomacy comes from the Greek word “diploma” and refers to a passport or important document issued by the State or a gift on the successful completion of a task. Diplomacy is a term describing the international relations of sovereign states, though it is sometimes used in a wider sense. In its broader meaning, diplomacy includes representation, negotiation, protection, and promotion of interests, spending, and other activities conducted by countries at international, governmental, and intergovernmental levels. Diplomacy in its narrower sense usually refers to a negotiating process conducted by officials of foreign

ministries and diplomatic missions. Tourism is not a pre-planned action rather an incident which is the manifestation of certain socio-economic parameters and development in the society. However, the second phase of modern tourism is attributed to those activities which have socio-political background. The modern mass tourism is therefore a by-product of war and fought by nations in their pursuit for 'peace' through mutual understanding, cultural exchanges, goodwill, and habit of cooperation. The sponsoring nations in this regard played a 'noble role' while the tourist countries were 'innocent victims' (Bennett et al.2020).

Cultural Diplomacy Through Tourism

Various systemic inquiries focus on the political and economic dimensions of tourism diplomacy. Uche (2018) in this regard investigates the politics of tourism development in Africa's international relations with expansive focus on Africa's dealings with East-Asia and the Arab World, but more especially China and Middle-East, for development assistance through tourism. Along similar lines, Saari (2019) elaborates on the epistemic policy networks of tourism diplomacy from the perspective of small and innovative states focusing on Finland and its biometric technology innovation promoting tourism to Meso-American nations. Fojo (2019) investigates nation branding in Portugal through the case of World Surfing Reserves. Although these inquiries combined are able to furnish a systemic understanding into how nation-states use tourism for political and economic ends, the cultural dimensions of tourism diplomacy are largely ignored. This paper informing how tourism in the present spatial exceptionalism becomes a cultural means for diplomacy amongst nation-states. The focus is thus centred on how tourism as a cultural means serves blurring thunder of exchanges amongst the tradition, values, and heritage of countries under the purview of tourism diplomacy across the globe. By doing so it provides a missing and valuable perspective on the cultural subjection of tourism diplomacy. Additionally, focusing on tourism popularly termed experiential economy with its consequent participation by agents and marketplaces for interdependent impacts, this section furthers the understanding of the twenty first century revisit to cultural

diplomacy taken by nation-states (Seyfi et al., 2022 and Prantl & Goh et al.2022).

Governmental Organizations and Policies

This section examines the governmental organizations and policies relating to tourism in India. Some main aspects with details are presented below. The central ministry is the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) that formulates policies for the development and promotion of tourism in the country. In 1958, the erstwhile Department of Tourism was elevated to the status of a full-fledged ministry. With the growth of tourism, the department was bifurcated into two departments - one for development of tourism and the other for promotion of tourism. Later, in 2004, these two departments were merged into one Tourism Department with two wings; the planning finance and administration wing, and the tourist promotion and socio-re-economic wing. Though there are different policies formulated, there is no specific policy for Buddhist tourism. Unlike other ministries and services, the Buddhist tourist destinations and tourists are the responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism. Decisions regarding these issues are taken in the Central Government and all the funds allocated through the Ministry of finance are either spent or controlled by the Ministry of Tourism. As Buddhism is a living religion and followed by many countries, central government decides to invite foreign delegates for seminars, conferences, etc., arrange buses and train journeys to Indian Buddhist shrines, guide and conduct them with the help of trained personnel (Shinde et al. 2021 and 2022).

Tourism is a priority area of economic and social development with a view to enhancing productivity and attracting investment in tourism industry, the new tourism policy was adopted in 2004. Development of tourism infrastructure has been made compulsory under the provisions of public interest under which projects adhered to the tourism policy and complying the instruction or rules prescribed by the tourism and local authorities will not be subject too further scrutiny under laws of state. Under this policy, the tourism development authorities will be established at state, district, and panchayat level to oversee the tourism projects. With an aim of protecting archaeological properties and

preserving cultural heritage, Architectural Survey of India (ASI), an apex body of the Union Government was formed under the Ancient Monument and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958. Efforts are made to design policies and plans that are socially equitable, economically viable, environmentally friendly, and sustainable.

Ministry of Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism is the nodal agency of the Government of India, responsible for formulating and implementing policies for the development and promotion of tourism. The subject of tourism was included in the Concurrent List of the Constitution of India in 1986, and tourism was declared as an industry in 1988, giving tourism more importance than before. For the formulation of a proper tourism policy, the National Committee on Tourism under the chairmanship of K. Satyamurthy recommended a comprehensive approach to the development of the tourism sector in the country. A full-fledged Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation was constituted in May 1987, which was bifurcated in 1995 into the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The Ministry of Tourism is responsible for the implementation of the “Incredible India” campaign aimed at promoting India as a tourist destination (Elliott et al.2020).

Over the years, the Ministry of Tourism has adopted various strategies and initiatives to promote tourism in India. These include financial assistance for infrastructure development, capacity building and skill development of various service providers to cater to the tourism industry, and research and surveys for policy formulation. The Ministry of Tourism has been implementing the Swadesh Darshan Scheme since 2014 to develop theme-based tourist circuits. The Ministry of Tourism has also been implementing the PRASAD scheme, which provides assistance for the development of infrastructure facilities for pilgrimage tourism. The Ministry of Tourism has been providing financial assistance for the promotion and publicity of tourism products in India through events like fairs, exhibitions, and film festivals.

Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements

The Indian government has entered into bilateral and multilateral agreements to enhance cooperation in tourism with various countries. This framework facilitates the implementation of cooperation through specific projects and contributes towards the promotion of tourism in India. Bilateral agreements have been signed with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Mauritius, Nepal, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the Maldives. Efforts are on to identify new areas of collaboration in the tourism sector, including the exchange of information, publicity, and participation at various fairs and exhibitions (Baruah et al.2022).

Multilateral agreements have been signed with 5 countries from the SAARC region. The first meeting of the Working Group on SAARC Food Safety Network was held at New Delhi on September 13-14, 2006 with the participation of food safety experts from the SAARC member states. The final report of the working group was adopted by the SAARC minister at Bhaktapur, Nepal on January 4, 2007. Subsequently cooperation agreements were formalized with Maldives on April 20, 2005; Bhutan on March 31, 2006; and Sri Lanka on September 27, 2006. Meetings of SAARC Food Safety Network were subsequently held at Maldives, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The first meeting of the Working Group on Biological Diversity was held at New Delhi on November 1-3, 2006. This was attended by experts from member states. The report of the working group was considered by senior environment officials at Agra on February 27-28, 2008, and was subsequently adopted by the SAARC minister at Colombo on August 2, 2008 (Bishwakarma & Hu et al.2022).

Bilateral Tourism Agreements

Focusing on the specific domain of bilateral agreements, this subsection explores the nuanced dimensions of tourism diplomacy within the context of specific bilateral agreements involving India. Three different bilateral tourism agreements of India with other countries are presented here, considering the

various dimensions. India-Sweden Bilateral Tourism Agreement (2006) focuses on cooperation, exchange of information and expertise, and the planning and implementation of mutually beneficial marketing and promotional activities.

India's Tourism Diplomacy with Sweden: The government of the Republic of India and the government of the Kingdom of Sweden have signed a protocol on tourism cooperation. This agreement aims to strengthen cooperation and mutually beneficial exchanges in the field of tourism. It focuses on the exchange of information and expertise, regular meetings between competition authorities, and the planning and implementation of mutually beneficial marketing and promotional activities, including jointly organized workshop programs. The establishments of official tourist offices in both countries are encouraged (Grech et al.2020).

The two Governments welcome the cooperation between Indian and Swedish associations and the planning of cooperative tourism market research studies to help different stakeholders in travelling and tourism. This agreement also states that arrivals of both countries in each other's country would be encouraged through the promotion of group tours by travel agents recognized by the respective Governments. They also agree to promote cooperation in the field of Education and Human Resource Development, particularly in Risk Analysis, and in the training of tourism professionals. For the implementation of the agreement, an implementation procedure is set up, which provides for the exchange of visits of small delegations to encourage and promote tourism between the two countries through arrangements for the establishment of direct air links with India and Sweden.

Promotion of Tourism and Soft Power

One of the ways a nation exercises soft power is through its tourism. National tourism marketing can greatly contribute to a favorable perception of the nation abroad. This, in turn, can enhance the nation's soft power. Since the last decade, there have been major efforts to promote India as a tourism destination

as a part of enhancing India's image. The "Incredible India" campaign launched in 2002 is a case in point. In the past few years, the assessment of this campaign's impact has provided important insight into the role of tourism in either enhancing/hindering the national image abroad (Sharma et al.2022).

Today's tourists from around the world flock to India to admire its architectural wonders, enjoy its beautiful beaches, engage in adventure sports and thrill to wildlife, experience yoga and Ayurveda – health/meditation for a healthy body/mind, visit varied fairs, festivals, and folk art, and explore its multicultural fabric. Travellers also take back fond memories of the warm hospitality and friendliness of the Indian people. People-focused tourism and services have also kept India in the forefront of medical tourism. These factors contribute greatly to the image of India: 'the Land of Spirituality and Philosophy.' This positive image has been harnessed further to focus on assertive development initiatives.

Marketing Strategies

Even as it conforms to dominant representations and desires in the Western construction of 'the East', India's narrative resonates with the anxieties and aspirations of other similar post-colonial nations. India is crafted with an image that is curiously homogenising, essentialising, and binary - it juxtaposes the hiking, travelling, enjoying middle-class Europeans/whites and the dark-complexioned, sensual people/elements of India. The narrative of India's tourism is not only about the grandeur of its monuments, sites, cultures, and truths, or the beauty and value of its natural elements but about how they serve, gratify, and accommodate desires, goals, and interests. Further, India's marketing of tourism does not convince individuals to travel to India but turns them into spirits that desire and dream of India and its offerings. It further polarises the 'naive tourists' who believe in the imagery of the tourism industry and uses their 'mis-readings' to create other images such as a 'country of snake charmers', 'mystic country', 'exotica', etc (Singh et al.2021).

Sustainable Tourism Practices

Sustainable tourism is ethically concerned with the need for tourism to take place within the earth's ecological capacity. It is viewed as a guideline for tourism development and management that comprehensively addresses the whole of the tourism process. Sustainability cannot only be measured by the 'environmental sustainability' dimension, which encompasses vital issues such as 'global warming', 'bio-diversity loss', and 'destruction of the ozone layer' as these are the very global issues the sustainability issue seeks to address. On the other hand, the question of ethical sustainability seeks to address the moral perspective; the basic question is whether tourism development is ethically acceptable, fair, and just for both the host society and the tourist, i.e., it focuses on the right and wrong aspects of tourism development (Garg & Pandey et al. 2021, Mathew et al.2022, Koščak & O'Rourke et al.2023).

Few countries possess the wealth of history and cultural legacy that India possesses. The pyramids, Rome, and the Taj Mahal can take a tourist back in time to one of the great cultures that existed many thousands of years ago. They can wander among ruined palaces and temples, tread the pavement worn smooth by many feet, gaze in wonder at the great skills of craftsmen and artists long since dead, and witness the hopes and aspirations captured in stone on a grand scale. India is a country of masses and of many more tourists. This expectation is based on its hospitality. That is why India is perhaps the best tourist destination in the world. India possesses a rich variety of natural resources such as sandy beaches, lush green hill stations, desert sands, snow-capped mountains, fertile lands, etc.

Eco-Tourism

Eco-tourism is a quickly expanding sector of the tourism industry that is committed to being eco-friendly. It's distinguished from tourism by its unique practices and emphasis on eco-friendly initiatives and actions. Eco-tourism does include government initiatives, but a significant amount of development is rooted in civil society's reactions to failed sustainable development models.

The term eco-tourism broadly encompasses two categories of initiatives (Sharma and Sarmah et al. 2021).

The first category includes initiatives that specifically target the favelas with the aim of bringing increased investment and consumption to Brazil's poorest communities. Examples include a public-private partnership by the Brazilian government and private business to develop several favela areas into tourist and entertainment zones. The second category includes eco-friendly initiatives that do not target the favelas and instead focus on Brazil's natural ecosystems, with an emphasis on the preservation of these ecosystems with a guarantee of benefits for local populations. Many of Brazil's natural parks were established during the early twentieth century. Indigenous populations were generally banned from these areas, creating tensions and protests that continue till this day (Garrett et al. 2021).

In the case of India, the term eco-tourism is often used to criticize other forms of tourism (e.g., mass tourism, pilgrimage tourism) as well as tourism development generally. Environmental groups frequently use the concept of eco-tourism in their resistance to the state's development plans. Beginning in the 1990s, after damage done to the temples surrounding the nature parks of Ranthambore and Sariska, eco-tourism was promoted in the country as a mechanism to mitigate the overgrazing of parks by surrounding populations. Based on these initial concerns, eco-tourism development has been promoted in the country's many nature parks in order to generate additional income, reduce poverty levels, fund the anti-poaching unit, and promote economic development. Clearly, in these examples, eco-tourism is framed as a Local Benefit-System.

Challenges and Opportunities in Tourism Diplomacy

The tourism diplomacy narrative is a multi-faceted approach that encompasses a broad spectrum of interlinked processes. It presents a more informative understanding of tourism diplomacy rather than a fixed diplomatic paradigm envisaged in a broader development and foreign policy strategy, which may

underpin other emerging concepts in the disciplinary development discourse. It is also worth mentioning that by comparison, tourism diplomacy could further be unpacked into performance-driven aspects, offering greater explanation to delineate its challenges and opportunities in the Indian context. The lessons drawn from the process-trend perspective might also be similar to other rapidly developing economies with robust tourism footprints and aspirations on a broader diplomatic canvas (Yousaf et al. 2021).

The archival and interpretative approach based on in-depth secondary sources does impose its own limitations in terms of in-depth personal interviews or focus-group discussions to grasp the migrants' experiences more holistically. Nonetheless, such a broad-spectrum understanding does hold genuinely relevant outcomes on various aspects of tourism diplomacy in general, while focusing on the Indian contours relative to its peer nations, which could provide a significant groundwork for further studies on the evolving macro-discourse on tourism diplomacy.

Security Concerns

Focusing on the specific dimension of security concerns, the challenges and considerations pertaining to ensuring the safety and security of tourists are addressed. Tourist safety and security is a major concern for tourist destinations. Ensuring a safe and secure environment for tourists and protecting their rights is vital. Damage to tourists' health, safety, and property will ruin the reputation of a destination in international tourism. Destination management bodies in most countries are becoming increasingly aware of the need to take conscious actions to ensure the safety, health, and security of tourists.

During the last few decades, tourism has undergone tremendous changes, which have implications for travel safety and security. Travel safety refers to the degree to which people feel secure while traveling. It encompasses personal safety, transportation safety, health safety, and various other aspects. While health safety is mainly concerned with accidents of a medical nature, personal

safety pertains to accidents of a criminal nature, including threats to life and property. Many healthy cities worldwide have illusions about health safety.

Case Studies and Success Stories

The emergence of new players in international tourism has compelled destinations to take to marketing their incentive offerings and gathering the expected benefits of the results. In other words, tourism diplomacy is about the promotion of tourist interests abroad in key potential markets through the foreign missions of a country (wherever applicable), foreign diplomats based locally, foreign-related dignitaries visiting the countries, fairs, exhibitions, conferences, foreign exposure visits, and promotional campaigns. It can also encompass the compilation of databases and information on relevant countries related to tourists and the sale of the destination packages to the tourist's industry abroad. In essence, building the image of the destinations, creating interest about them, and inspiring people to visit the destinations internationally is tourism diplomacy (Xu et al. 2020).

Like other players, countries are not only focused on attracting higher foreign inbound arrivals of tourists but also on developing new generating markets. Missed due attention to these markets may result in a loss of a big opportunity. Tourism diplomacy can also prospectively prove beneficial in attracting a foreign institutional setup for investment in rejuvenating and revitalizing the travel and tourism trade industry, which has been informed about developmental provisions for tourism incentivizing. In fact, countries, irrespective of their size and status, have resorted to it. All major tourist places have their foreign missions stationed, endorsed by the need of a bonus intervention. Under such a scenario, it becomes obligatory for destinations, conspicuously a developing one, to take the lead in promoting works and yielding benefits. This is especially important for newer destinations with an endowed comparative advantage in tourism such as cities or states. Events like the upcoming first SAARC Youth Carnival in Sikkim, attended by delegations from SAARC member nations, which is an occasion for home promotion would then be missed (Minardi et al. 2021).

Incredible India Campaign

Focusing on the unique 'Incredible India' Campaign, which marked the first of its kind effort by India to promote itself as a tourism destination abroad, this success story in India's tourism diplomacy is described. The details of the campaign, including its objectives, promotional strategies, evolution and implementation, strengths and shortcomings, and the impact on India's image abroad, are encapsulated. The ongoing challenges faced by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in sustaining the impact of the 'Incredible India' campaign are also included. The outreach of promotional strategies and their impact on winning the hearts of foreign tourists across the globe may enhance India's attractiveness as a tourism destination and may result in augmenting India's soft power and exclusive diplomacy. It may further augment India's global appeal as a nation in the domains of tourism, foreign direct investment, and migration, and thereby facilitate newer and larger undertakings in global governance and sustainable development (Nair et al. 2021).

Conclusion

The preliminary analysis indicates the momentum generated by this campaign in bolstering India's attractiveness as a tourism destination abroad, enhancing India's global image, and positioning it as a destination of choice for foreign tourists. It has significantly bolstered India's appeal by succeeding in branding India as 'Incredible.' The accuracy of the brand assertion lies in the diversity and profundity of India's cultural heritage, landscapes, places of pilgrimage, knowledge systems, and its original lifestyle that sustains the planet and human life. The promotion of 'Incredible India' weaving in the relevant cultural elements has made the outreach strategies successful. Within two years of the launch of the campaign, India's Foreign Tourist Arrival has shown a substantial rise of 25 percent, as such increase was only 11.2 percent in the period just prior to the launch (Jaipuria et al., 2021 and Khan et al. 2020).

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