



DOI: 10.5575/nairjssh.2024.10.03.01

MARINE TOURISM IN INDIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Different segments of tourism around the globe Marine tourism or costal tourism is identified as one of the popular disciplines. Marine tourism which covers largely water-based rather than land-based like boating, yachting, cruising, nautical sports, but includes the operation of landside facilities, manufacturing of equipment, and services necessary for this segment of tourism.³ Coastal tourism covers beach-based recreation and tourism like swimming, surfing, sun bathing activities that take place in the coastal area for which the proximity of the sea is a condition.⁴ In general, the terms “Marine” and “coastal” are interchangeably used when describing tourism. In this article an attempt is made to determine the Marine tourism resources which are available in India and the Marine tourism resources development of new avenues like cruise tourism, Marinas, Biodiversity parks and Light house destinations with adequate tourism infrastructure facilities. This article also seeks to the opportunities and challenges in economic, environmental and social spheres.

KEYWORDS: Marina, Costal, Cruise, Lighthouse, Biodiversity

INTRODUCTION

In modern times, tourism is playing a key role in the economic development of the country, providing employment and helping in the eradication of poverty. Nearly 10.7% of the total workforce in the world is being absorbed by the tourism industry. It currently provided employment to 212 million and generating an income of

US \$ 655 billion dollars at present the size of the tourism industry is more than 7 trillion dollars.¹ In the 2020 Tourism continue to be one of the sectors hardest hit by the Corona pandemic. The pandemic continue to hit hard, with international tourism expected to decrease by around 80% in 2020.²

Different segments of tourism around the globe Marine tourism or costal tourism is identified as one of the popular disciplines. Marine tourism which covers largely water-based rather than land-based like boating, yachting, cruising, nautical sports, but includes the operation of landside facilities, manufacturing of equipment, and services necessary for this segment of tourism.³ Coastal tourism covers beach-based recreation and tourism like swimming, surfing, sun bathing activities that take place in the coastal area for which the proximity of the sea is a condition.⁴ In general, the terms “Marine” and “coastal” are interchangeably used when describing tourism.

Maritime tourism was identified as the most desired way of travel after introduction of Cruise ships for the world’s social elite in the 1920s. During the post Second World War, however, the shrinking cruise market resulted in decreasing trade due to passenger aircraft. In other words, the passengers have been clearly shifted from cruise to aircraft.⁵ With the effect of globalization from 1990, cruise tourism regenerated an annual growth rate of 7.2% annually. Researchers and Economic Advisors explained that demand for cruising transport worldwide has dramatically increased from 15.1 million passengers to 24.73 million (+64%) in the past 10 years period. Therefore, maritime tourism generated \$125.96 billion total output and 1,021,681 full-time equivalent jobs during 2016.⁶ In this article an attempt is made to determine the Marine tourism resources which are available in India and the Marine tourism resources development of new avenues like cruise tourism, Marinas, Biodiversity parks and Light house destinations with adequate tourism infrastructure facilities. This article also seeks to the opportunities and challenges in economic, environmental and social spheres.

Cruise Industry Outlook reported (2018) that the cruise passengers mainly originate from 10 countries in the past five years. It accumulated a total of 22 million cruise passengers. Admittedly, the Asian region has experienced a tremendous growth in the cruise industry since 2000.⁷ Because the Marine tourism generates economic development and social mobility, India and the Southeast Asian countries are currently either setting up new cruise ports or upgrading existing cruise ports with world class facilities so as to increase the ports of call and strengthen the strategic position of a home port in the Indo Pacific region.⁸ In doing so, the cruise ports not only encounter stiff competition from neighbouring countries, but also deal with the dynamic business environment. The Southeast Asian Marine tourism markets show a huge potential to take the international Marine industry forward in the forthcoming years

The growing number of FTAs through cruise ships to India and the Southeast Asian countries clearly indicates that the Marine tourism is gaining momentum in the region. India and the South East Asian countries are

emerging as top cruise tourism destinations, because many frequent travellers are searching for exotic oriental cultures, rich tourism resources, attractive destinations, proximity to neighbouring countries, year-round warm weather which they would discover in Asian regions.⁹ Furthermore, the rise of new destinations in India, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and Singapore has provided a chance to explore new Marine itineraries.¹⁰ Consequently, numerous Asian Marine ports can entertain various cruise lines to arrive there. Cruise Lines International Association has recorded 5574 and 7196 Asian cruise calls in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Also, the passenger capacity almost tripled from 1.51 million passengers in 2013 to 4.24million passengers in 2017.¹¹ In order to catch up with the rising demand for the Marine tourism in the future, cruise lines are continuously enlarging their capacity in terms of the size and number of Cruise ships. The number of ships deployed in Asia increased by 53% since 2013.

TOURISM TREND IN THE REGION

Tourism in the Southeast Asian region is growing rapid speed according to the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) tourism sector contributed US\$119.7 billion in 2016 to the region. The reasons for the fast rate of tourism growth in the Asian sector of the region is due both to a rise in the domestic regional market that has been made possible by strong economic growth with a corresponding increase in disposable income and leisure time, and the general easing of travel restrictions and liberalization of air transport (i.e. open skies policies) and development of low cost carriers. Many of these countries have also strongly marketed tourism with themed campaigns (India – “Incredible India” Malaysia - “Truly Asia”, Indonesia – “Ultimate in diversity”, “WOW” Philippines).¹²

Tourism in India is important for the country's economy which is growing rapidly. The WTTC calculated that tourism generated ₹16.91crore (US\$240 billion) or 9.2% of India's GDP in 2018 and supported 42.673 million jobs, 8.1% of its total employment. The sector is predicted to grow at an annual rate of 6.9% to ₹32.05crore (US\$450 billion) by 2028 (9.9% of GDP). Over 10.93 million foreign tourists arrived in India in 2019 compared to 10.56 million in 2018, representing a growth of 3.5%. The *Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019* ranked India 34th out of 140 countries overall.¹³ India improved its ranking from 40th to 34th the greatest improvement over 2017among the top 25% of countries ranked. The report ranks the price competitiveness of India's tourism sector 13th out of 140 countries.

MARINE TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES IN INDIA

Government of India recognizes coastal and marine tourism as one of its focus sectors for promoting economic activities in coastal states and union territories. India boasts of rich Marine heritage. Ranked 16th among maritime

countries, it has one of the largest merchant shipping fleets in the world. It is endowed with a vast coastline of 7500 Km and navigable waterways of over 14,000 kms. Approximately 90% of the country's trade by volume and 70% by value moves through Marine transport, highlighting the importance of ports and their contribution in sustaining the growth and development of the Indian economy.¹⁴ The Government of India has been taking several initiatives to harness its natural advantages and to tap the vast potential for growth in maritime sector. One of the flagship programmes of the Government is the "Sagarmala"¹⁵ to promote coastal and port led development in a comprehensive and holistic manner.

CRUISE TOURISM

Indian Cruise tourism is gaining momentum in recent times, Sea arrivals constitute about 0.4%¹ of country's total foreign arrivals in 2014. It is estimated that by 2030-31, the Indian cruise tourism market is expected to attract 1.2 million tourists. Cruise shipping offers potential new employment opportunities to the habitants of the coastal regions. Consequently, Government of India has taken various steps to promote cruise and coastal tourism in the country that include financial assistance to ports for development of cruise tourism infrastructure. Additionally, Government of India on 26 June 2008 has approved a dedicated policy on Cruise Shipping.¹⁶ Ministry of Shipping has devised a vision plan for promotion of cruise tourism in India. Following are four key areas, where specific interventions have been proposed:

- Infrastructure and facilities development: Development of international as well as domestic cruise terminals across Indian coastline
- Process simplification: improvement of procedures related to immigration, Customs and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) as well as adopting passenger friendly standard operating procedures, which should be common across all the ports
- Technology enablement: use of technology and systems such as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), Advance Passenger Information Systems (APIS)¹⁷ and Personal Communication Service (PCS) to facilitate information management and reduce time required for approvals
- Fiscal Incentives: fiscal incentives and government support in the form of rationalization of taxes and duties

The Ministry of Shipping has identified four ports namely, Goa, Cochin, Mumbai and Chennai for development of cruise terminals. Also a Task Force was formed under co-Chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Shipping to facilitate promotion of cruise tourism in the country. The Task Force is working towards development of Standard

Operating Procedures (SoPs) for cruise terminal operations and has identified Cochin port for implementation of these SoPs on pilot basis.

The Government of India approved the Cruise Shipping Policy in June 2008. Salient features of this policy include:

- Development of cruise facilities at ports and provide necessary transport connectivity through Rail, Road, Air, Inland Water Transport (IWT) and metro.
- Quick completion of immigration formalities and hassle free custom clearance.
- Proper waste disposal system ensuring cleaner oceans.

LIGHTHOUSE TOURISM

India has as many as 189 lighthouses dotting its vast coast line including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian Sea. Steeped in rich Marine heritage, each lighthouse has a tremendous tourism potential.

The Ministry of Shipping through the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL) has drawn up a programme for developing tourism in the land adjacent to 78 lighthouses, in the first phase, under Public Private Partnership (PPP). The key objective of this initiative is to enhance development of the existing lighthouses and its surrounding areas into a unique Marine tourism landmark.¹⁸ This initiative also offers investment opportunities related to development of hotels, resorts, viewing galleries, adventure sports, thematic restaurant and allied tourism facilities at the proposed lighthouse locations.

Directorate General of Lighthouses has initiated the development process for 8 lighthouses at Aguada (Goa), Chandrabhaga (Odisha), Mahabalipuram, KanyaKumari and Muttom (Tamil Nadu), Kadalur Point (Kerala), Kanhoji Angre, Sunk Rock (Maharashtra) and Minicoy (Lakshadweep).

KEY INITIATIVES BY MINISTRY OF TOURISM

Ministry of Tourism under its scheme for assistance to central agencies Central Financial Assistance (CFA) extends financial assistance to various agencies, including Ports and Lighthouses for development of cruise related tourism infrastructure. The assistance is extended for smooth operation of cruise liners that call on Indian Ports and also for up-gradation of existing cruise passenger terminals

Ministry of Tourism has identified "theme based" circuits under recently launched 'Swadesh Darshan Scheme' to promote tourism in the country.¹⁹ One of the circuits identified is "Coastal Circuit" for development of coastal tourism infrastructure in the country.

To promote Lighthouses as unique tourism destinations, about 78 lighthouses (including island lighthouses) have been identified for development by the Ministry of Shipping. Foreign flag vessels carrying passengers have been allowed to call at Indian ports for a period of 10 years with effect from 6 February, 2009 without obtaining a licence from the Director General of Shipping.

The Ministry of Shipping has decided to establish a world-class Maritime Museum at Lothal, which is also known as the oldest known port in the country. Kannur Lighthouse Museum has been constructed at Kannur to attract tourists and pique their interests in the rich heritage of lighthouses in India.

Seaplane services in Mumbai: Mumbai Port Trust has awarded a license to Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation for the operation of seaplanes.²⁰ This would not only encourage tourism but also help connect remote areas.

Particularly in coastal states like Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, coastal tourism has contributed largely to both the state economies and livelihood creation. In Kerala, the total number of jobs created directly and indirectly by the sector between 2009 and 2012 turned out to be around 23% of the total employment. In 2016,²¹ the total share of tourism in Tamil Nadu's employment was more than 22% and 23% in Karnataka's. This sector has been among the worst hit because of the Covid 19 fallout, but now coastal states are re-strategizing to attract local and domestic tourists with focus on single or small groups interested in adventure and eco-tourism. In an example of appealing to newer interests, a campaign named 'Keralam Kanaam' was launched by the Tourism Department of Kerala that aimed to offer luxury stay cations at affordable rates to people from the state itself. Similar initiatives are being taken up in other coastal states to increase tourism.²³

CHALLENGES

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are an excellent tourism destination, but have been selectively opened for tourism due to environmental and security concerns. The islands are closer popular tourist destinations such as Phuket in Thailand and Langkawi in Malaysia, but have remained closed to international cruise liners. Likewise, the Lakshadweep Islands offer the finest underwater marine life for scuba divers, but have remained insulated to tourism primarily due to security and controlled development reasons.²⁴

Cruise tourism is a neglected and overlooked industry, and Indian ports have not been a popular cruise destination among the cruise line industry. Significantly, most cruise liners bypass India, either to Southeast Asia or the Middle East; and in 2014, the sea arrivals constituted about 0.4 per cent of country's total foreign arrivals. The Indian government is conscious of infrastructure inadequacies and has a vision and plan for promotion of cruise tourism and increase sea arrivals to 1.2 million tourists by 2030-31.²⁵ Cruise terminals are under development at Goa, Cochin, Mumbai and Chennai and these can potentially boost the domestic hospitality industry that is also developing infrastructure and services to support port city excursions and domestic tourism.

CONCLUSION

India Government recognizes coastal and marine tourism as one of its focus sectors for promoting economic activities in coastal states and union territories. India boasts of rich Marine heritage which is not properly projected around the globe. Lack of infrastructural facilities to promote Marine tourism like Surfing, Rafting, development of cruise terminals,, Marine Parks, Marinas are the basic facilities for marine tourists. Through the “Sagaramala” project government should develop of cruise terminals at ports and provide necessary transport connectivity. Development of hotels, resorts, viewing galleries, adventure sports, thematic restaurant and allied tourism facilities at the proposed lighthouse locations will boost up the lighthouse tourism in the country.

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