

TOURISM IN INDIA AND GENDER CONCERNS

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries. In many countries it acts as an engine for development through foreign exchange earnings and the creation of direct and indirect employment. Tourism in India is a large industry. The World Travel and Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated \$121 billion or 6.4% of the nation's GDP in 2011. It was responsible for 39,3 million jobs, 7.9% of its total employment. The GDP of the tourism sector has expanded 229% between 1990 and 2011. The tourism sector definitely provides various entry points for women's employment and opportunities for creating self-employment in small and medium sized income generating activities, thus creating paths towards the elimination of poverty of women and local communities in developing countries. Women's potential to succeed in tourism often goes unrealized, not due to the lack of potential, but rather due to the lack of opportunities. In any country safety of women has a great impact on prosperity of tourism industry. In this regard the paper tries to discuss the impact of Nirbhya incident followed by brutal attacks on foreign female travelers on tourism industry.

Key Words: Tourism – Indian Economy - Empowerment of Women – Violence against women

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Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries. In many countries it acts as an engine for development through foreign exchange earnings and the creation of direct and indirect employment. Tourism contributes 5% of the world's GDP and 7% of jobs worldwide. The World Travel & Tourism Council Global Summit in Tokyo in April, WTTC's research revealed that Travel & Tourism's direct contribution to world GDP at US\$2 trillion or 2.8% is more than double the GDP of automotive manufacturing and one-third larger than the global chemicals industry. Travel & Tourism generates roughly the same GDP as the global education and communications sectors, and about half that of the global banking and financial services industry. In 2011 Travel and Tourism accounted for 255 million jobs globally. One million people travelled around the world in 2012. UNWTO predicts that this figure will touch 1.6 billion by 2012.

Tourism jobs are often flexible and can be carried out at various different locations such as the workplace, community, and household. The industry represents a huge economic factor and its environmental and social impacts are obvious. In addition, integrating gender perspectives into the discussion of tourism is particularly important as the tourism industry is one major employer of women, offers various opportunities for independent income generating activities, and at the same time affects women's lives in destination communities. The area of tourism is particularly suitable to stress the integrated approach to environmental, social and economic aspects of the concept of sustainable development.

The tourism sector definitely provides various entry points for women's employment and opportunities for creating self-employment in small and medium sized income generating activities, thus creating paths towards the elimination of poverty of women and local communities in developing countries. As women constitute 50 percent of the population, actively entering, involving and contributing significantly in each and every field, it is essential to understand how the status of women and prosperity of the industry is interrelated. Hence this paper tries to discuss how best the industry extending its support for the empowerment of women and what is the effect of violence against women over the industry in a gender lens.

Tourism Sector in India

Tourism is recognized as a powerful engine for economic growth and employment generation. The tourism sector is the largest service industry in the country, its importance lies in being an instrument for economic development and employment generation, particularly in the remote parts of the country.

The number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India during 2011 increased to 6.31 million as compared to 5.78 million in 2010. The growth rate in FTAs during 2011 over 2010 was 9.2% as compared to 11.8% during 2010 over 2009. The growth rate of 9.2% in 2011 for India was better than growth rate of 5% for the International Tourist Arrivals in 2011.

The share of India in international tourist arrivals in 2011 was 0.64%, while being 0.61% in 2010. However, India's rank in the world improved to 38 in 2011 from 42 in 2010

The *Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2011* ranked the price competitiveness of India's tourism sector 28th out of 139 countries. It mentions that India has quite good air transport (ranked 39th), particularly given the country's stage of development, and reasonable ground transport infrastructure (ranked 43rd).

Challenges in terms of either increasing the current growth in the tourism sector or even sustaining it during the 12th Plan period include creation of additional tourism infrastructure facilities such as hotels, roads, transport vehicles, way side amenities facilitation centres, etc. The other challenges may be shortage of trained manpower, guides, better connectivity from important source markets for India as well as between important tourist places in India, vis-a-vis facilitation, etc.

Tourism and Indian Economy

Tourism in India is a large industry. The World Travel and Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated \$121 billion or 6.4% of the Nation's GDP in 2011. It was responsible for 39,3 million jobs, 7.9% of its total employment. The GDP of the tourism sector has expanded 229% between 1990 and 2011. The sector is predicted to grow at an average annual rate of 7.7% in the next decade. In a 2011 forecast the World Travel and Tourism Council predicted the annual growth to be 8.8% between 2011 and 2021. This gave India the fifth rank among countries with the fastest growing tourism industry. As per 12th Five Year Plan approach paper,

India's travel and tourism sector is estimated to create 78 jobs per million rupees of investment compared to 45 jobs per million rupees in the manufacturing sector.

The Foreign Exchange Earnings from Tourism (FEE) is likely to increase from Rs. 64889 crore (US\$ 14.19 Billion) in 2010 to Rs. 134383 crore (US \$ 30.3 Billion) in 2016. Additional FEE from Tourism during 2010-16 is estimated to be Rs. 69494 crore (US \$ 15.7 Billion). According to India's Tourism Ministry, 6.6 million foreign tourists visited India in 2012, earning the country \$17.74 billion in foreign exchange.

Women and Tourism Industry

Tourism has demonstrated its potential for creating jobs and encouraging income-generating activities to benefit local communities in destination areas. The tourism sector definitely provides various entry points for women's employment and opportunities for creating self-employment in small and medium sized income generation activities, thus it is creating paths towards the elimination of poverty of women and local communities in developing countries. However, there are number of conditions under which this potential can be used more effectively. This requires collaboration of all stakeholders - governments and intergovernmental bodies, local government, industry, trade unions, local communities and their different member groups, NGOs, community based tourism initiatives, etc. Increasing the use of tourism's potential, safeguarding the natural environment and cultural heritage and increasing social and economic justice should be the goal of further tourism development.

There are also known to be challenges facing women in tourism. Women are often concentrated in low status, low paid and precarious jobs in the tourism industry. Much tourism employment is seasonal and fluctuates according to the volatile nature of the industry. Gender stereotypes are prevalent in most cultures and rather resemble each other than being culturally specific. Gender stereotypes influence the way we perceive each other and how we see ourselves. Women are perceived as being particularly suited to fill certain positions in tourism. They tend to see themselves as suited and tend to be interested in stereotypical occupations. Thus, women are in fact particularly suited to take on certain jobs, for example involving caring and household-related work and service positions. On the one hand, this serves to perpetuate gender stereotyping and positioning of women accordingly. This is not generally desirable, particularly because most gender stereotypical occupations are lower paid and do not include key managerial

positions. On the other hand, the situation allows women to enter the tourism workforce based on their traditional roles and their own confidence to fulfil them. Addressing the issue of gender stereotypes and gender roles is not tourism-specific; rather it seems that the tourism sector is yet another example where traditional stereotypes and roles come into play. In some destinations links have been found between tourism and the sex industry which could make women more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. (Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010).

Women's potential to succeed in tourism often goes unrealized, not due to the lack of potential, but rather due to the lack of opportunities. Questioning restrictive traditional gender roles by male community members can support women's freedom to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives in the tourism sector.

Effect of Nirbhya Incident on Tourism Industry

Last year on December 16th a 23-year-old female paramedic student along with her male friend in Delhi was attacked by six young men after getting on a bus. The six attackers proceeded to rape the female victim, who later died in a Singapore hospital as a result of the attacks she sustained.

In the month of February a Swiss woman was gang raped in central India as she and her husband camped in a remote forest. In the second incident a young British woman says she was forced to jump out of the window of her hotel room to avoid a sexual attack in Agra, the city that is home to the Taj Mahal.

The tragic attack followed by two attacks on foreign female travelers has altered how tourists view India and led to a sharp fall in the numbers of foreign tourists, especially women. At the same time, the attention the rape received at home and abroad also led to greater news coverage on specific rapes in India, as well as the general issues of rape and women's rights inside the country

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India's (ASSOCHAM) report on 'Trends in Tourists Inflow in the Last Three Months' said that that tourism throughout India was down by 25 percent in the months January through March 2013 compared to last year, with a 35 percent decline among women as a result of the heinous rapes that received widespread international attention late last year. It goes on to say that many tourists have emailed the tour

operators directly citing the issue of women's safety as the reason they were cancelling their trips. Hence Tourism has great linkage with safety of women of the country.

According to the study, the three incidents have hurt tourism and nearly 72 percent of the tour operators said cancellations of holiday bookings came mostly from women tourists, most of them from Britain, the United States, Canada and Australia.

It's hard to say whether these events will rub off on the government's hyper successful Incredible India tourist campaign in any lasting way. But if tourism officials really want to help their industry, they should take stringent steps sustain their valued customers deserve the right to be well protected, and feel safe and comfortable, just like all the women in this country do. The trend is such a serious setback for India's tourism industry because the months from January to March are the second half of the peak season tourism there. In 2012, 6.6 million tourists travelled to India and spent around 13 million Euros.

Conclusion

Violence against women not only affects victim alone but also has serious consequences for the economies of the country. To stop this violence, Governments and Non Governmental organisation are initiating enormous programmes to curb this menace. Despite of all these efforts these kinds of incidences are occurring. Everyone should understand that that violence against women has no place in our province. Women have the right to feel safe and live free from violence and to know that they are not alone if they are a victim. The decline in tourism will be a big challenge for tourism ministry who has been talking big numbers for next couple of years. It would also put additional strain on Indian economy. Hence it is needless to say that where women are respected, there resides gods or that field sustain for a longer period with prosperity.

Hence, it is essential that the Dept. of Tourism, Government of India should make up strict measures to safeguard tourists safety, especially women travelers. Department should also think formation of women Police teams for night patrolling to instill confidence among women tourists and to intervene in any emergency situation. The police personnel, Hotel managers, Taxi drivers and porters must be sensitized and trained to deal with safety and security requirements especially of women travelers visiting the country. The Dept. must ensure that all taxis at the Airport Terminal will operate only through the pre-paid system and for easy identification all the taxi drivers must be instructed to wear uniform. Legal Cells must be constituted in order to get

immediate help without any delay if requires. It would be helpful if the female travelers be given sufficient information regarding their safety and facilities available to safeguard their security before visiting any place. If Govt. NGOs and civil society take safety of women travelers as a serious issue and extend their support, revival of tourism industry could be achieved with in no time.

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