Destination India : Application of Place Marketing Strategies

Manjula Chaudhary

Professor ,Department of Tourism & Hotel Management, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

Surender Pal Singh

Assistant Professor, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Government College, Kaithal

Abstract*: The less than seven million arrivals of inbound travellers to the country must set the stage for introspection, diagnosis and prognosis among destination managers. The frequently quoted explanations like volatile nature of demand, erratic international environment, etc. cannot be taken as perpetual excuses; rather these should be taken as constraints and worked around and not accepted as deterrents to stop the growth of tourism dead in its track. Plenty of literature and references are available on notion and place/destination marketing to get enough cues and stimulation. But this does not seem to find effective application in marketing destination India. This paper examines the application of place marketing strategies in positioning India as a global brand on the international tourism map. These strategies help in identifying potential markets with their characteristics and in selecting appropriate attributes to be used for positioning. If further analyzes the action taken to establish India as a destination and the future plans as inferred from the National Tourism Policy document 2002.*

Keywords: Place marketing, back-end integration, tourism-culture, officially induced image, potential market.

Introduction

Tourism has been established all over the world as a major economic activity and is valued for its multiplier effects and, in particular, for its employment generating capability. It assumes greater importance in countries like India whose huge population base needs to be provided with means of substance, growth and development. Tourism with other service sectors can prove to be very useful here as primary and secondary sectors offer limited employment opportunities.

Tourism development in the country has always been an integral part of the five-year plans with planned allocation of funds. (See Table 1) . But it received the necessary momentum only with the formulation of the National Tourism Policy in 1982. Further impetus to the Indian tourism industry was given by declaring the Year 1991 as the 'Visit India Year' and launching 'Incredible India campaign' after 2002 . In all the plans , Targets were set for tourism on both the demand and supply sides, but somehow these were not achieved either in absolute or relative terms. The number of tourists arriving in India and travelling within has been increasing continuously, but in achieving a reasonably satisfactory share in global market, the performance has been less than encouraging.

Table 1

Table 1: Government Allocation for Tourism Development in India under Five Year Plans

Five Year Plan	Time Period	Plan Allocation (in Rs.)
1st	1951-1956	0.00
2nd	1956-1961	336.38 Lakhs
3rd	1961-1966	800 Lakhs
	1966-1967*	58.50 Lakhs
	1967-1968*	87.65 Lakhs
	1968-1969*	183.81 Lakhs
4th	1969-1974	36 Crores
5th	1974-1979	133 Crores
6th	1980-1985	187.46 Crores
7th	1985-1990	326.16 Crores
	1990-1991	83 Crores
	1991-1992	90 Crores
8th	1992-1997	773.62 Crores
9th	1997-2002	793.75 Crores
10th	2002-2007**	2900 Crores
11th	2007-2012***	3112.71 Crores
	Revised****	5156 Crores

Source: Five Year Plans, Government of India; *Indian Tourism: Economic Planning & Statistics; **Annual Report, 2002-2003, Department of Tourism, Government of India; ***Annual Report, 2011-2012, Department of Tourism, Government of India; ****Report of the Working Group on Tourism, 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

Tourism in India

Compared with international and regional standards India has lagged far behind in reaping the benefits of tourism. The reasons can be traced back to the economic plans and policies of the Government of India. It was a late entrant on the tourism scene and after independence the country's natural priorities lay with other sectors. Consequently, the country never developed a tourism culture in its true scene despite its tradition of " *Atithi Devo Bhava*"(Guest is equal to God) and a large base of resource potential is under-utilized and under-achieved.

Table II

International Tourist Arrivals and Foreign Exchange Earnings

Year	Tourist Arrivals (in Millions)	Percentage Share	Earnings (in Rupees Crore)
2001	2.54	0.37	15083
2002	2.38	0.34	15064
2003	2.73	0.39	20729
2004	3.46	0.45	27944
2005	3.92	0.49	33123
2006	4.45	0.53	39025
2007	5.08	0.57	44360
2008	5.28	0.58	51294
2009	5.17	0.58	53700
2010	5.78	0.61	64889
2011	6.31	0.63	77591
2012	6.58	0.64	94487

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2013) New Delhi.

To establish India as a favoured destination an overall unified plan is required because of the integrated nature of tourism industry with other sectors. An essential pre-requisite to any developmental plan is the analysis of position of India on the world tourism map in terms of tourists perception alongwith market share. The market share of India in the global tourism market has been around 0.60 percent, though the size of the total market has continuously increased. It's perceived image in the tourist's mind can be understood through the dynamics of positioning and the operating forces therein. The major force in Indian context is the back-end-integration. Tourism is a highly visible phenomenon where tourists expect good infrastructure, better amenities and best services (Chaudhary,1996; Chaudhary 2000). A destination's attractiveness can get diminished by violence, political instability, natural catastrophe, adverse environmental factors and overcrowding. Thus a concerted effort is called for from the various players in the industry to make all the positive experiences happen. Any flaw at any contact point can mar the complete holiday experience of a visitor. The total holiday experience depends upon service delivery of a large number of people directly or indirectly employed in the industry as also the host population. Building a culture of tourism in the host population on and industry requires the best of the polices, plans and managerial skills(Echtner and Ritchie 1991 and Goodall 1990).

The specific back-end problems in the industry are:

Absence of a Tourism culture

Tourism in India has not been a priority at macro-level and micro level. Only the people directly dependent on this industry may feel concerned about increasing/ decreasing business. Among them also a good percentage takes tourists foe granted and looks for short-term gains rather than long term

A Monthly Double-Blind Peer Reviewed Refereed Open Access International e-Journal - Included in the International Serial Directories

International Journal in Management and Social Science

http://www.ijmr.net.in email id- irjmss@gmail.com   Page 593

relationship. Places must invest in recruiting, training, licensing and monitoring of tourist-related business and its employees. Some places invest little in this area. Even though airport cabs and public transit system may be the first encounter visitors have with a place , such impressions can be critical to tourist satisfaction. Society in general may perceive tourism a nuisance with a number of unbearable impacts. An action plan to develop tourism on sustainable basis, coupled with a consistent awareness campaign, can provide a way out. The training programmes for people coming in contact with tourists is equally important.

Absence of Customer Friendly Product

The Tourism offering must satisfy the needs of visitors and a product- oriented approach can only work in the short run. The same problem seems to inflict Indian travel industry where sellers feel that have everything to offer, but forget that buyers have a plethora of tourism attractions from all over the world to choose from so unless they get what they really want, a regular flow of tourists cannot be expected.

Attractions alone do not attract visitors. Value addition in terms of friendly atmosphere makes the experience more rewarding. Kotler explains (Kotler 1993; Kotler 1995; Kotler 1996) the features of visitors friendly attraction as :

A Visitor Friendly Test for Places Caveat

> While no exact test exists to measure how visitor friendly a places is, the following 10 questions provide a rough approximation. With 10 points for each favorable answer, a passing score is 60. Anything less probably spells trouble.

- Are the central access points to your community/place (road, rail, plane) equipped with visitor information centers or do they provide instructions to easily accessible information?
- Should an airport be the primary access point, does it provide a full range of visitor information services(e.g., accommodations, tourist booth, visuals on sites, listing of events and what to do, specialized information for elderly , foreigners, families etc.)?
- Do visitor facilitators cabs, buses, airline personnel, security, airport operators , reservation personnel receive any formal training, and does a system exist to monitor quality of visitor facilitator services?
- Do hotels/motels offer in- house televisions access channels for visitors with information on events, attractions, restaurants, and things to do ?
- Is a single organisation /agency responsible for visitor business, and are public funds provided for its activities?
- Does that organisation /agency have a marketing profile of visitors, and is this profile used in marketing activities?
- Does the place's hospitality industry accommodate foreign visitors' needs(language, directions , special interests, do's and don'ts, etc.)?

- Does a range of accommodations exist to meet actual or expected visitor needs(by price range , size, facilities, access to sites, etc.|)?
- Is access to sites, attractions and amenities (events, recreational, central location) easily available at reasonable cost and frequency?
- Does the place welcome visitors and accommodate their needs (commercial hours, credit cards, language, signage, traffic, parking, public services, etc.)?

After considering these parameters to organise destination/place- marketing strategies can be applied to carve a niche. The important strategies to be used for place marketing as re identification of potential demand, inventing and creating induced image, and communicating this image effectively.

1.   Identify Potential Demand

The generic level travel demand may exist, but destination specific patterns and flows can be influenced through destination management and marketing strategies. For example, events can be organised to generate demand. A proper market research is very important to prepare a profile of the customers who will purchase the products. Identified potential customers are not a homogenous lot and need to be classified. These classified segments identify the degree of institutionalization of tourists and their impact on destinations. This basic requirement of identifying potential demand for destinations is often ignored while marketing India, as is evident from the available data that classifies foreign profiles are not available. This makes appropriate qualitative matching of demand and supply almost impossible. The status of data is same for the domestic market as well. The Government has now shifted its focus inward to domestic tourism on the proposition that the Infrastructure built for it can be used by inbound tourist and domestic tourism is relatively more stable when external environment fluctuates. The identification of proper potential demand for domestic market can pave the way for effectiveness of this strategy.

2. Invent a "Market Induced Image"

Destination image is the very important determinant of tourist buying behaviour. It is the job of destination marketing authorities to determine the image, to create awareness about destination and position it accurately in the market place. Places must market not only their destination but also their specific attractions(Talisman 1989; Kotler 1996). The Government has identified an official image (an image that is developed by conscious efforts) of India based on its cultural, spiritual heritage—aimed at giving if a different position in the international tourism market. the distinctiveness of the image is very important to give it a competitive advantage. Brochures and other promotional tools are used to establish this image. But a number of hurdles are faced in carrying this official image of India.

- Many other eastern countries too focus upon   their spiritual and cultural heritage that necessitates a differentiated positioning among oriental offerings.

- Spiritual dimension of India is not being properly packaged to suit the needs of modern travellers. The size of spiritual market has been steadily growing since 1980's . If this spiritual market is not tapped at its growth stage to establish brand India, an opportunity would be lost forever. Though the new tourism policy talks of *Yoga, Siddha,* mind-body healing, it is yet to be implemented. The official image of India is not corroborated by its 'organic image' (an image resulting from lifelong socialisation process) created through word of mouth and western media. This organic image is of backwardness, poverty, poor facilities, cheating, lack of safety, etc.(Ahmed and Krohan 1992). This is a big hurdle in image creation as information reaching potential visitors cannot be controlled and they are likely to be exposed to numerous international stimuli.

- Symbols, slogans, logos, designs, names or their combinations are used all over the world to build the required image. Symbols like Taj Mahal, Forts, Palaces, Temples have been used effectively in India but these do not catch the essence of induced image. India has a very vast Picture . Other countries effectively use slogans (catch-line) to differentiate their offerings, e.g. Austria: Feel the wonder; Malaysia: Truly Asia; Thailand: The Amazing Land, but an appropriate catch-line for its tourism proland is yet to be finalised by India.

3.   Communicating Benefits of Destination Marketing to Target Audiences

Images can be established through a long-term sustained use of promotional methods. A number of options are available to convey these images to the target market but finding the right mix is crucial to get the desired result. Government of India has organised several Festivals of India abroad and has participated in various travel marts/meets. The impact of such events is limited and slow and depends upon adequate filtration of information. Place images are heavily influenced by the pictorial creations of the destinations in movies/television, by music and, in some cases, by popular entertainers and celebrities. These methods are being extensively used by popular destination. India too can use international celebrities who have seen and experienced Indian culture and spiritualism. A few of them may act as spokespersons. Even Indians Popularizing Indian way of life abroad can be helpful.

Advertising can be used much more effectively for repeating the message and to get top-of –the-mind recall. Destinations world over have formed partnerships with travel, recreation and communication businesses for joint marketing efforts. Getting more publicity for positive experiences of vacations will prevent the reinforcement of negative aspects of image (Holloway and plant 1988; Goodall 1990). In the case of destinations, negative words and experiences are noticed more than positive ones. The plans of Indian Government to celebrate a 'Visit India Year' were undermined not only by sectarian and caste violence but also by plane crashes This news was given extensive coverage in the media and it overshadowed everything else conveyed officially. Such negative images need to be countered through proper public relations exercises. However, studies

in the past have indicated drawbacks of such exercises. Also the use of genuine methods can help to get over difficult times (Brahman 1996).

The meticulous application of all the place-marketing strategies could help the country position herself as BRAND INDIA. The new tourism policy document 2002 reiterates the objective of establishing India as a global brand on the world tourism map and gives the impression that tourism is to be given the desired focus and weightage.

References

- Ahmed U. Zafer and Krohan B. Franklin (1992) , Marketing India as a Tourist Destination In North America—Challenges and Opportunities. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 11(2).
- Brahman, John (1996), New Directions in Tourism for Third World Development. Auaals of Tourism Research, Vol.23 (1) :pp. 48-70.
- Chaudhary, Manjula (1996), India's Tourism: A Paradoxical Product, *Tourism Management,* Vol. 17(8): p. 616.
- Chaudhary Manjula (2000) India's Image as Tourist Destination: A perspective of foreign Tourists, *Tourism Management,* Vol. 21 (3) : pp. 293-297.
- Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2013), Tourism Statistics, New Delhi.
- Department of Tourism, Government of India (2002), *National Tourism Policy 2002,* New Delhi.
- Echtner, C.M. and Brent Ritchie, J.R. (1991), The Meaning and Measurement of Tourism Destination Image. *Journal of Tourism Studies,* Vol.2 (2): p. 2.
- Goodall (1990), The Dynamics of tourism place Marketing. In Ashmorth G.and Goodall B. (Ed), *Marketing Tourism Places,* Routledge, London, pp. 259-279.
- Halloway, J.C. and plant, R.V. (1988), *Marketing for Tourism,* Pitman Publishing. pp. 111-113.
- Jafferson, A. (1990), Marketing in National Tourist Offices. In C.P. Cooper (Ed), progress in Tourism, Recreation and Hospitality management, Vol. II: CBS, New Delhi, pp. 84-85.
- Kotler, Philip (1993), *Marketing Places,* Free Press, New Delhi.
- Kotler Philip (1995), *Marketing Management – Analysis, planning. Implementation and control,* Prentice Hall of India. pp. 445-456.
- Kotler, Philip et al (1996), *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism,* Prentice Hall, NJ p. 638.
- Telisman, Neda (1989), Tourist Destination Image. In Witt F. Stephen and Moutinho Luiz (Ed.) *Tourism Marketing and Management Handbook*, Prentice Hall International, p. 558.