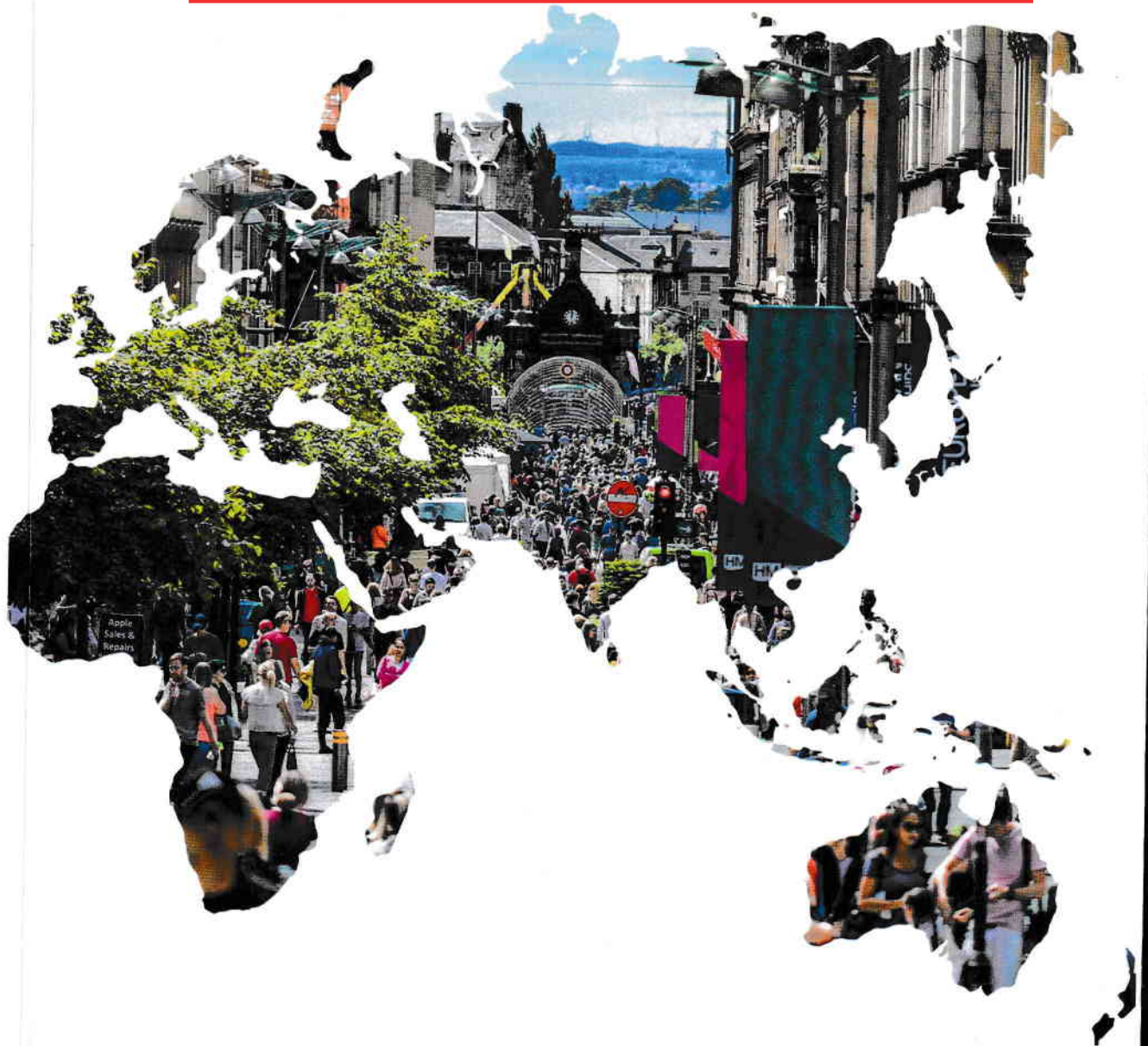




MEDLEY IN TOURISM



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PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN INDIA

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Abstract

Pilgrimage tourism is a type of travel that is mostly or entirely inspired by religious sentiments and intentions. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, and Sufism are among the various religions practiced in India, each has its own main pilgrimage destinations located around the country. The importance of pilgrimage tourism in India is extremely high because the people of India are highly religious and cultural in nature. The growth of domestic tourism in India is heavily reliant on pilgrimage tourism. Due to substantial deliverables, such as employment, national integration, and foreign exchange earnings, pilgrimage tourism has earned great popularity and attention in India. The aim of this article is to examine the concept of pilgrimage tourism, as well as its economic implications and future possibilities of pilgrimage tourism in India, as well as the significant obstacles that it faces.

Keywords: Pilgrimage tourism, Indian domestic tourism

Introduction

Pilgrimage is a journey or search of moral or spiritual significance. Many religions attach spiritual importance to particular places. For pilgrims, the holy land serves as a destination. India is a land of pilgrimage. India is one of the world's oldest civilizations, and India has been in contact with almost all the major religions of the world. For the majority of domestic tourists in India, pilgrimage has always been the main motivation. A study by the Delhi-based National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAR) shows that of the 230 million tourist trips undertaken in India, the largest proportion is made up of religious pilgrimages. In our country, all major temples,

shrines, and sacred spots are found scattered all along major riverbanks and hills. The confluence of holy rivers, called "Sangam," attracts millions of tourists every year when pilgrims assemble there to take holy dips in these rivers. For example, on the day of "Sankranti", a bath in holy Ganga water is believed to relieve a person of their sins. Launched in 2014-15 by the Union Ministry of Tourism, PRASAD aims at the integrated development of pilgrimage destinations in a planned, prioritized and sustainable manner to provide a complete religious tourism experience. The pilgrimage sector has immense potential for development due to the availability of religious tourism sites all over the country.

Definition

Pilgrimage tourism is a type of travel that is largely or wholly inspired by religious sentiments and aspirations. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, and Christianity are among the various religions and sects practiced in India, each with its own set of pilgrimage centers located all around the nation. Pilgrimage tourism has evolved as a strategy for making jobs, alleviating poverty, and promoting long-term human development. Pilgrimage tourism enhances universal understanding and helps local languages and cultural activities thrive. A pilgrimage is a journey undertaken by a person in pursuit of a new or enlarged understanding about oneself, others, nature, or a higher cause through experience, often in an unknown or foreign location.

Market Over view of Pilgrimage tourism

Pilgrimage tourism, often known as spiritual tourism, is a type of tourism where individuals travel alone and in groups to pilgrim destinations or for leisure. Pilgrimages have been important economic drivers in India throughout ancient times, affecting not just people's spirits but also the pockets of the economy. When it comes to the pilgrimage sector, there is a certain amount of low risk involved. The economic up and downs in the marketplace have a lesser impact on pilgrimage travel. Faith-based travelers tend to save for religious experiences and travel irrespective of the economic conditions because they are committed travelers. In many ways, the pilgrimage sector reflects and complements other types of event tourism. When the number of visitors to a pilgrimage site increases, it aids in the development and growth of a number of related and ancillary sectors, such as the souvenir and hotel industries. This promotes the development of the local area as well as the expansion of local markets and economic growth. The introduction of the e-visa for international tourists upon arrival in the country has also had a significant impact on the increase in tourist numbers. The pilgrim sector operates under the same policy framework as India's general tourism industry.

Aspects of Pilgrim Tourism in India

Many natural sectors provide a signal to reversing climate change when global warming threatens lives and property around the world. Over time, pilgrimage has established itself as one of the most flourishing natural economic sectors. Christian pilgrim tourism is a major industry in Western and European countries. There are approximately 117 Marian shrines in Canada, 181 Roman Catholic shrines in the United States and thousands of sites associated with various Protestant denominations and some American ancient religions. The bulk of these locations has become important pilgrimage destinations around the world. It occurs as a result of such countries' usual approach to the pilgrim sector. There are hundreds of pilgrim locations in India associated with Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, and Muslim religions that have the potential to produce long-term employment. Over 15 crore Indians travel to pilgrimage sites across the country. Hundreds of pilgrim centers have sprouted up across the country as a result of the country's ancient history and mythological heritage. Many pilgrims can be traced back to legendary sources. Pilgrim tourism serves the most important goal of bringing people from different regions together, as pilgrims from the farthest east travel to the southern corner and pilgrims from the west travel to the north, enjoying one another's hospitality. Badrinath, Kedarnath, Mount Kailash, Shirdi Sai Baba, Rishikesh, Haridwar, Amritsar, Sabarimal, Rameswaram, Madurai, and Tirumala in the south, Puri Jagannath temple in the east, Shirdi Sai Baba temples, the significant churches of Goa in the western part, Ujjain, Omkareswar, Sanchi, and Ajanta in central India, and a host of other famous pilgrim spots keep more than 15 per cent of the Indian population moving.

When individuals leave their homes to go on pilgrimage, it sparks a flurry of economic activity right on their doorsteps. Trip agencies, hotel chains, restaurants, religious handicrafts, floriculture, the health sector, and businesses offering travel kits, among other things, become active. During peak season, the Tirupathi Devasthanam at Tirumala requires more than 20 tons of flowers every day. Every day, Bangalore delivers flowers worth Rs 30 lakh to Tirumala. Faith is the most powerful stimulant of economic activity that can generate revenue on a long-term basis without putting pressure on the environment.

The Maharashtra government recently decided to spend a large amount of money to build 261 kilometers of roads. This is unneeded, as it risks destroying the route's natural habitat. Without the snowcapped mountains, forests, streams, and valleys, the Kailash yatra would not interest lakhs of tourists. A well-considered pilgrim policy will surely assist millions of Indians in escaping poverty. People should be made

more aware of the pilgrim sector in order to build a cleaner and greener environment at pilgrim destinations. The first step toward creating a robust pilgrim sector is to document the myths, mysteries, history, and folklore of pilgrim sites.

Economic impact on Pilgrimage Tourism

Pilgrimage Tourism is an economic activity that is imposed, or at least grafted on a pre-existing set of economic activities and traditional ways of life (Price & Williams, 1996: 1). Pilgrimage Tourism is a product of three main elements; destination, the pilgrims, and the tourists. Pilgrimage Tourism is a process which obviously affects various aspects of society and culture. Primarily its impact is of economic nature. Sharma (2009) states that the contribution of pilgrimage tourism in gross foreign exchange is 15 to 17 percent and the influence of tourism is also centered in some specific regions only not throughout the whole nation but it does not mean to underestimate the impact of pilgrimage tourism because we know a very little about the multiplier effect of pilgrimage tourism; we must take account of the foods, vegetables and fruits that pilgrims take as well as the employment plus the crafts that the tourists purchase. According to Godfrey and Clarke (2000), socio-cultural change relates to local quality of life and sense of place. Positive change in the quality of life could be as follows: personal income increases, helps to improve living standards for those more directly involved in industry, supports the diversity of restaurants and other cultural amenities, influence the assortment of goods for sale in many local shops that would not be available in the same amount if pilgrimage tourism did not exist. In some cases, park areas are often improved, street furniture and design criteria improved, greater care and attention placed on overall environmental quality, new opportunities etc. And in contrary negative changes in the quality of life could be as follows: shops overcharging, petty theft from cars and accommodation, more serious personal assault. Regarding the sense of place, positive changes could be as follows:

Major Challenges of Pilgrimage tourism

Unexplored and un identified spots: There are many sites and places which are unknown to local people. Those who are living in nearby places visit these areas and find them almost like undiscovered spot.

Lack of transportation and communication: Transportation and communication convenience is improper in remote areas. Regular transportation is not easy to get all-the-day around. Same is the condition of communication. In this era of high-speed internet connectivity there are many places where no internet service is there and service is there internet speed is very slow.

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Lack of other infrastructural facilities : Other infrastructural facilities like electric-
supply, fresh drinking water supply, local transport, housing, boarding, lodging,
restaurants, etc. are not available.

Lack of effective marketing both inland & overseas : Advertising and marketing are
necessary for sale of products and services. Same is applicable for tourist spots. Effec-
tive and appealing marketing is not done at domestic and overseas market.

Lack of help desk : There are no helpdesks found in railway stations, bus terminals
or any specific office of tourism department to guide the visitors and provide them
necessary information.

Solution to the Problem

Revival of religious trusts

Revitalization of Pilgrimage tourism destinations

**Developing appropriate Institutional Framework to stimulate the growth of Pilgrim-
age Tourism in India**

Improving connectivity to specific pilgrimage tourism circuits to promote them.

Pilgrimage Circuit

Conclusion

Pilgrimage tourism is now widely acknowledged as a source of economic diversifica-
tion for the country. It would be unrealistic to expect, however, that the industry will
continue to stimulate the economy in the absence of constructive measures geared
towards regularizing the dynamics it faces. The research has revealed number of issues
that must be addressed for pilgrimage tourism to continue to grow. The information
generated in this study demonstrates that pilgrimage tourism has the potential to
grow. Despite the fact that development has so far been limited to a few main sites,
the research reveals that it should be possible to expand pilgrimage tourism to more
areas of the region. In India, pilgrimage tourism has a tremendous negative impact
on the ecology and natural habitat. It has been determined that pilgrimage tourism
contributes to a country's economic growth and revenue, but its negative influence on
the environment requires stakeholders to investigate and rectify. Due to its substantial
possibilities, such as employment, national integration, and foreign exchange reve-
nue, pilgrimage tourism has earned great popularity and attention in India.

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