

Prospects for Recovery of India's Tourism Industry

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Abstract: India is one of the exotic countries in the world. For many millennia, traditions, culture and customs have been passed down from generation to generation. Tourists are attracted by unusual cultural monuments, places of religious pilgrimage, golden beaches and upscale resorts. The state contributes to the development of the tourism sector in the country, since with the development of this sphere in the country, the level of terrorism and the degree of environmental pollution have decreased. The authorities purposefully invest their efforts and finances in the development of this area, and as a result they receive high profits.

Keywords: India, tourism, development, driver, industry, country, covid, pandemic.

The tourism and hospitality industry is one of the largest service industries in India. It is an integral part of the "Make in India" program. It also plays a significant role as an economic multiplier for the rapid growth of the economy and a springboard for creating additional jobs.

Thanks to the constant dynamics of development and the constant stimulation of the industry by the authorities, India is very popular among Asian tourists. Due to its unusual location, India can offer a full range of tourist services. The Great Himalayan Range is located in the north of the country, on the other three sides the state is surrounded by the Arabian, Indian Oceans and the Bay of Bengal. Tourists in India are attracted by the geographical diversity of the states, world cultural heritage sites, as well as niche tourism products: sea cruises, adventure, environmental and medical tourism. India is distinguished by harmony in everything. As a truly oriental country, India combines numerous religions and their offshoots. Thus, here you can meet adherents of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, as well as other religions that are found only in specific regions. The charm of India comes at the first glance at the boundless beauties of the country.

India is divided into separate regions, each with its own traditions and customs. Especially for tourists, fairs are organized here with the presentation of folk traditions and music. In addition to local entertainment, tourists are given the opportunity to get acquainted with world cultural values: architectural monuments, sanctuaries, fortresses, places of religious worship, where entry is allowed only with a guide, and much more.

At the same time, tourism helps the country to develop transport infrastructure (aviation, railway, roads, shipping), multi-purpose infrastructure (resorts, hotels, restaurants) and medical facilities.

Growth drivers are the consumption of the country to visit, the introduction of the E-Tourist Visa (e-Tourist, Business and Medical Visa), the establishment of special private zones, high-quality and cost-

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effective healthcare, attractive conditions for foreign investment, construction projects, including the development of hotels, resorts and holiday destinations, new tourism products, high service standards.

Over the past few years, the Government of India has taken initiatives to give enough momentum to the development of the sector by running the border on the territory of cleanliness, improving air communication, digital communication in a wide range and circles of them, creating infrastructure and generally improving the hotel sector. Whether it is religious-educational, health-improving, historical-cultural, youth or business-related tourism, India is gradually becoming the most interesting in the world.

India ranks 34th in the world tourism rankings. The Indian economy has become not only the 7th largest global economy in terms of tourism in general, but also significantly the largest in terms of medical tourism.[1]

For the economy, tourism is a means of obtaining foreign exchange. Every year, billions of dollars earned from standard services enter the state treasury. In addition, tourism helps create jobs in India. A huge number of people are involved in this area - as working hosts, private operators and transport companies. Tourism helps India to position itself in the international arena.[2]

A special Tourism Department has been established in the country, which holds all meetings to attract visitors to the country and their great comfort of living in it. Permanent promotions for domestic and international transport, information and programs about them are found on the Internet and transmitted by conventional means of telecommunications. The Department employs only highly professional personnel who graduated from the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel.

With the development of international and domestic tourism, some states began to specialize in specific areas:

- So, in Goa, water sports are highly developed, such as diving, sailing, rafting and numerous water attractions.
- Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh promote winter tourism. There are common ski resorts and guesthouses near the mountains, where you can go mountain climbing.
- Kerala is a unique place where houses are afloat.

In 2005, the Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) decided to divide the general concept of tourism into its subspecies, thus forming five independent industries and forming a national classification of tourism:

1. Spiritual tourism, including tours to the holy places of India.
2. Resort tourism - includes an offer to relax on the best beaches in the country or on the northern slopes of the mountains.
3. Ecotourism - visiting temples and unusual places.
4. Adventure tourism - active tourism, rock climbing and exploration of uncharted territories.
5. Medical tourism is gaining the most popularity among visitors from the Middle East and West.

India has the highest concentration of highly qualified specialists in the field of medicine, which contributes to increasing interest in local sanatoriums. The Ministry of Health is happy to support all initiatives in the field of maintaining international standards in medical institutions, seeing that medical tourism is gaining popularity, Delhi is the medical center of India, where help comes instantly in critical situations. With all this, the prices for services are very optimal and much lower than in other countries.

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Tour operators in many countries offer trips to India, where you can relax and improve your health. India is a great holiday destination, it is called the "land of nirvana" for a reason, as it easily confirms its title.

But the coronavirus pandemic has caused serious damage to the tourism and hospitality industry in India. To combat the spread of the coronavirus in India, a nationwide lockdown has been declared. The work of all enterprises and services, whose activities were not recognized as vital, was stopped, the period was repeatedly extended. 95% of hotels and guesthouses across the country were closed, 60% of tour operators completely stopped work. In some hotels there were guests who could not leave the country due to the announced isolation. Chain hotels were used by the state to house medical staff during the pandemic, as were large chain restaurants that provided meals to medical staff.

Thus, the state provided support to large chain hotels and restaurants, while small hotels and restaurants were the most affected and many left the market. According to the forecasts of the consulting company HVS ANAROCK South Asia, made in November 2020, the total loss of the Indian hospitality industry this year will amount to 900 billion rupees. According to experts, the industry will return to previous levels in 2022-2023.

In order to get through difficult times, hotel owners have their premises and staff new uses. Among the proposed ideas for staff are food delivery, household help (taking into account local features), as well as the conversion of part of the hotel space into offices and co-working spaces, the use of premises for warehousing.

Today, the hotel sector in India is seeing a positive trend, with Indian hotel occupancy rising from 10% as of April 20, 2020 to 26% as of September 20. The main flow of guests that provides this growth is formed by domestic tourism - those who went on a trip after several months of quarantine and work from home.[3]

The number of foreign tourists in India fell to 498,243. (0.498 million people) in August 2022. The maximum number was 1225672 people in 2019. 2021 - 0.641 million people.

According to the Times of India, 10 million tourists visited India in 2019, spending about \$30 billion in the country. The outbreak of the pandemic brought international tourism to a halt. According to the Federation of Indian Tourism and Hospitality Associations (FAITH), almost 70% of the country's tourism industry employees were left without work, most of the tourism companies existing in the country went bankrupt, and almost half of all hotels and restaurants in India closed permanently.

The country's tourism business is now operating at a "below average" level. The total occupancy of accommodation facilities is 50%. At the same time, hotels in popular holiday destinations such as Goa, Rajasthan and Kerala are filled by 65-70% due to the active travel of the Indian population. And city hotels in the country are loaded by 30-35% due to a sharp decrease in the number of business trips.

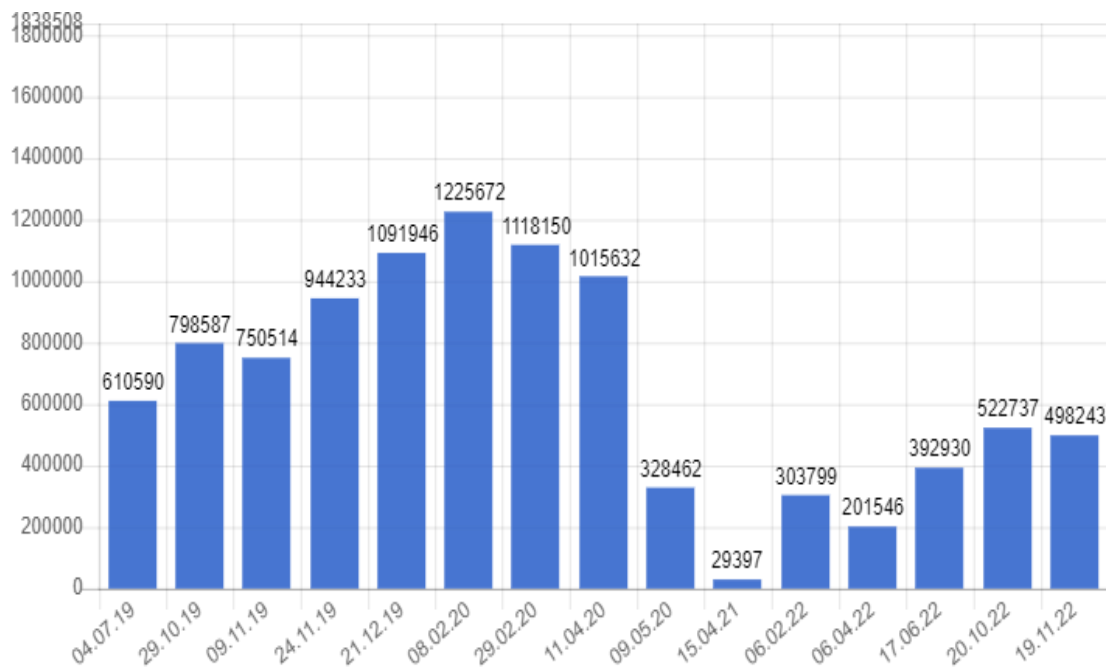


Figure 1. The number of foreign tourists visiting India in the period from 2019-2022 (million people) [4]

To keep the tourism business afloat in the short term, Indian tour operators will have to focus on domestic tourism.

But, despite the large number of Indians traveling around the country, domestic tourism does not yet bring significant income. This is due to some features. As a rule, local tourists travel in large groups, with relatives or friends, which significantly saves the travel budget, but does not bring profit to hoteliers. So, a company of 10 people will book one room to stay. Sleeping on the floor for Indians is practically the norm. For comparison, a company of 10 conditional foreign tourists will book at least five rooms or more. The hotel will eventually sell, on average, 7-8 rooms. Foreign tourists will also have breakfast and lunch at the hotel restaurant. Local tourists prefer high-quality and cheap street food to restaurant food.

The average Indian tourist does not bring much income to the tourism industry, also because many establishments do not arouse any interest among the locals. So the tourist business in Goa, for the most part, is focused specifically on foreign tourists, in particular, shops selling Ayurvedic drugs. Exclusively for foreign tourists were opened restaurants with authentic continental cuisine - Italian, French, Greek, Japanese. Indian tourists are not interested in such food in principle.

From November 22, 2022, India is lifting all covid entry restrictions for foreign tourists. They will no longer need PCR tests, they will no longer need a certificate of vaccination, and the requirement to fill out an Air Suvidha online questionnaire is no longer relevant [5]

According to the document, all previously existing restrictions are moving from mandatory status to advisory status: “travelers should preferably be fully vaccinated, it is desirable to use masks.”

Thus, starting from the end of 2022, all tourists will need only a passport and a visa to enter India. References, tests and certificates, as well as filling out online forms are not required.

In 2021, the tourism industry brought in just 5.8% of GDP, in 2022 this figure is expected to rise to 7.2%, but it is unclear how long it will be before it returns to pre-Covid levels.[6]

According to the forecasts of Indian business analysts, a statistical analysis of tourism development indicators in India shows the following picture:

India's GDP by 2028 should be 512 billion dollar and 53 million jobs by 2029.

By 2030, India is expected to contribute 250 billion dollars in GDP from tourism, 137 million jobs in the tourism sector, 56 billion dollars in foreign exchange earnings and 25 million foreign tourists.

By 2028, Indian tourism and hospitality is projected to earn 50.9 billion dollars through visitor exports, up from 28.9 billion dollar in 2018, and international tourists will reach 30.5 million by 2028.

India's travel market is projected to reach 125 billion dollars by FY 2027, up from 75 billion dollar in FY 2020.

In fiscal year 2020, the tourism sector in India accounted for 39 million jobs, representing 8.0% of the total employment in the country. By 2029, about 53 million jobs are expected.

Outbound trips from India are projected to reach 29 million by 2025 and exceed 24 billion dollars by 2024. [7]

The ways to expand the international tourism business in India consist of the following directions:

- Electronic Tourist Visa. The e-Visa service is offered to 156 countries under 5 sub-categories, namely Tourist e-Visa, Business e-Visa, Medical e-Visa, Medical Worker e-Visa and Conference e-Visa. The India e-Visa service is now available to citizens of 165 countries, up from 44 countries in 2018. [8]
- Development of infrastructure. More than half of the budget of the Ministry of Tourism of India goes to finance the development of destinations, routes, mega-projects, as well as rural tourism infrastructure projects. Today people from all over the world are attracted to Indian yoga, philosophy, spirituality and culture. The new generation also realized the need to connect with their historical roots. That is why today there are national and international opportunities in the field of cultural and spiritual tourism. To realize these opportunities, India is not only creating a modern infrastructure, but also reviving its former glory.
- Medical tourism. Cost-effective treatment, high-quality medical infrastructure and highly qualified doctors. Today, India is one of the three largest countries in the world in terms of medical and health tourism. Its main purpose is the treatment of diseases and the promotion of health. Ayurveda and traditional medicine are its most important pillars. The expansion of the whole ecosystem related to Ayurveda also contributes to the development of the tourism sector.
- Coastal tourism. Facilitate intra-regional trade among the countries of the Indian Ocean basin (IOR).

The tourism and hospitality industry is one of the key industries in India, accounting for about 8.78% of the labor force and about 6.2% of the country's GDP.

Hotel projects that are important for the industry will be assigned infrastructure status, while others will be assigned industry status. All investors will be able to work on preferential tax schemes, and tourists will be refunded taxes at the time of departure from the country. (Tax free)[9]

It is expected that by 2028 the growth of the tourism and hospitality sector in India will be 6.9%, the contribution to the country's GDP will be up to 10% (500 billion dollars), and by 2030 India will enter the top five countries for business travel.

According to the Federation of Indian Tourism and Hospitality Associations (FAITH), the tourism sector will become the second largest growth driver for India, but this will require a recovery period after the

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pandemic. The goal is to get India into the top 20 in global tourism competitiveness 5 years after Covid-19, and into the top 10 in five years.

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