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NATIONAL LEVEL SEMINAR

ON Globalization & Branding

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DESTINATION BRANDING IN INDIA – AN OVERVIEW

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Introduction:

Branding practices for tourism destinations worldwide gaining importance. In today's marketplace consumers have more choices but less time to make their decisions. Branding is the clear cut solution to simplify choices and their decisions. Recently, in tourism industry also the concept of destination branding has attracted considerable attention and interest from researchers, government and practicing marketers through worldwide. The successful destination branding rely on better images of a destination, thus researchers has linked it with destination. The governmental bodies, policymakers and the marketers are spending money, time and effort to build up a successful destination branding plan. Branding India in the given context is a huge challenge. Also, in the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (measures the power and quality of each country's 'brand image' by combining the following six dimensions: exports, governance, culture and heritage, people, tourism, investment and immigration), India has a very low rank of 27 (overall), and in tourism brand ranking, India ranks 24. The list was topped by Italy, followed by France and Spain in tourism dimension (The Anholt-GfK Roper, 2008). The importance of credibility under uncertainty has been established in several contexts (e.g., Xie and Shugan, 2001, Godes and Mayzlin, 2004). There is also a growing literature on the importance of brand credibility under consumer uncertainty.

Objective of the paper :-

- 1) To know the concept of Destination Branding.
- 2) To know the importance of Destination Branding.
- 3) To know the role of Destination Branding in India.

Destination Branding :

- a. A Destination Brand is a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience.”
- b. A Destination Brand “represents a unique combination of product characteristics and added values, both functional and non-functional, which have taken on a relevant meaning, which is inextricably linked to that brand, awareness of which might be conscious or intuitive.” “Destination branding conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience.”

c. "Destination branding is the process of developing a unique identity or personality for a tourist (or investment) destination, and communicating the same to visitors (or prospective investors) using a name, a tagline, a symbol, a design or a combination of these to create a positive image."

- **Importance of Destination Branding:-**

1. Branding helps in reducing the impact of intangibility.
2. Branding can reduce the risk factor attached to decision making about holidays.
3. Branding helps to provide a focus for the integration of producer effort, helping people to work towards the same outcome.
4. Branding can reduce the risk factor attached to decision making about holidays.
5. Branding facilitates precise segmentation.
6. Tourism is typically high involvement, branding helps to reduce the choice.
7. Destination branding provides destinations the unique selling proposition as they compete against many other similar destinations.
8. Positive image building of a destination reduces the search cost and destination choice becomes easier for the visitors.
9. Brings increased respect, recognition, loyalty, and celebrity.
10. Destinations attract FDI, Infrastructure investments and contribute in GDP of a nation.

- **Branding Components:-**

- 1) Vision and stakeholder management.
- 2) Target customer and product portfolio matching.
- 3) Positioning and differentiation strategies using branding components.
- 4) Communication strategies.
- 5) Feedback and response management strategies.

- **Destination Branding In India :-**

In today's scenario countries focusing on destination branding and building up their destination brands. Tourism for any country is a source of revenue generation, employment and image building for various other opportunities. This was realized in Indian perspective also in 2002 by Atal Bihari Bajpai "Tourism has great capacity to create large scale employment of diverse kind-from the most specialized to the unskilled and all of us know that generation of massive productive employment opportunities is what India needs most (Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, 2002). But after independence in 1947 it took so many years to draft any comprehensive tourism policy.

- **Below is the snapshot of the initiatives towards tourism policy making in the country.**

- The first comprehensive National Tourism Policy was drafted and discussed in the Parliament (1982)
- Indian Institute of Travel and Tourism Management - (1983)
- Tourism Finance Corporation - (1989)

- National Action Plan - (1992)
- First Initiative by the State govt. of Kerela - Gods own country (1995)
- National Tourism Policy of 2002
- Incredible India campaign - (2002)

The 1982 policy action plan was based on the development of the so called tourism circuits. The golden triangle "Delhi-Jaipur-Agra" got much attention in that time span. After this it was realized that the country is in need of such professionals who can provide an excellent standard of products and services and it resulted in the creation of IITTM in 1983 at New Delhi. Now, Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management is an autonomous organization of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

In 1989 Tourism Finance Corporation, India (TFCI) was formed to promote a separate All-India Financial Institution for providing financial assistance to tourism-related activities/projects. After this, National Action Plan of 1992 was focused on improving tourism infrastructure and to make suitable policy for increasing foreign tourist arrivals and foreign exchange earnings.

Later on, in 1990s the Kerela tourism went through the developmental phase and emerged as one of the prime tourism destinations on the national and international map and is considered as the tourism trendsetter in the country. Twelfth AIMS International Conference on Management 207 The effective action plan has been made by the Indian government in 2002 when National Tourism Policy 2002 was formed.

The focus of the Tourism Policy of India, in 2002 was to position India as a global brand to take advantage of the burgeoning global travel trade and the vast untapped potential of India as a destination Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India (2002). But, the major change has been seen in the year 2002 through the marketing campaign Incredible India. The first marketing initiative of its kind, Incredible India was conceptualized in 2002 by V Sunil (while he was Creative Director, O&M Delhi), and Amitabh Kant, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism.

The primary objective of this branding exercise was to create a distinctive identity for the country. This resulted in the iconic 'Incredible India' logo, where the exclamation mark that formed the "I" of India was used to great effect across all communications. The campaign successfully established India as a high-end tourist destination, generating a 16% increase in tourist traffic in the first year. It is evident that these efforts made by ministry of tourism benefitted Indian economy up to a level. After years also this campaign benefitted the tourism industry in getting more tourist traffic. But if we see it analytically the progress is very slow. After Incredible India campaign it has been so many years we are not able to get edge over the small countries like Malaysia, Dubai etc. "Incredible India campaign whether it on TV commercials or internet campaign has not properly explained about the states and the cities and the important tourism related information in it."

Thus, Incredible India campaign needs to be more properly informative, clear, and relevant to incorporate only relevant and practical information which a tourist would actually be interested in. Moreover, there has been no broad research aiming at infusing a sense of realism into the conceptualization of the role and potential of tourism, refining insights and bringing them in line with everyday reality.

● **Conclusion:-**

The Incredible India campaign by Ministry of Tourism has served its major function as a catalyst for boom in Indian tourism industry. But now there is a need for a more comprehensive strategy that can very well portray the core tourism products. The reason behind slow development of tourism in India is the mismatch between the portrayed image of India and the actual image perceived by the tourists. The well known fact is that the infrastructure facilities, safety security issues, hygiene etc. are the biggest problems that tourists face here. Destination branding in terms of various stakeholders' cooperation, role of DMO's or a clear brand architecture strategy, all these are equally important to get edge in today's competitive arena. It has to be very clearly understood that destination branding is more than developing a logo and tagline for a destination. As of now, India lacks brand architecture. Two types of brand architectures have been proposed; House of brand strategy and Endorsed brand strategy. Under House of brand strategy, India will brand herself on the basis of the factors identified and all the 29 states would have their own respective branding on the basis of their uniqueness's Under Endorsed brand architecture, all the states would brand themselves under the parent theme Incredible India but have their own sub theme to brand their respective states. Thus, it can be concluded that the brand Architecture of a country should be such, which suits the requirements of the country and conveys a clear and non confusing picture of a country to the outside world. Therefore, it is also important that all the important and unique attributes of the country should be reflected in the branding structure. In the case of India, India can start with Endorsed brand strategy first and once the international tourists get familiar with brand India and its states then India can move on to House of brand architecture.

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