

Strategies for Tourism Development in Karnataka- Challenges and Opportunities

Dr. G. H. Nagaraju

Asst. Professor & HOD, Dept. of Commerce, Govt. First Grade College Kanakapura- 562117

Abstract – *Tourism and its markets are facing unprecedented change caused by demographic shifts, changing lifestyle, values and rapidly evolving technologies across the world, Consumer trends in tourism are gradually changing and require an appropriate response in terms of both policy formulation and investment. Customer's attitudes are being shaped by education and experience with major strategic implications for tourism destinations as they demand increasingly higher standards. Karnataka being one of the most famous tourist destinations, it lags behind in terms of annual tourist arrivals and has to upgrade its facilities in order to get a bigger share of the tourist pie. The interest in cultural tourism, spiritualism, 'wellness' holidays, eco-tourism and rural tourism would tend to favor Karnataka's tourism, provided the state can avail of the opportunities offered to maximize its natural advantages in these areas but it is observed that regional linkages, connectivity, accommodation and lack of financial resources were the main hindrances to develop tourism in Karnataka. The development of new tourism products and destinations must be based on market research and demand, keeping the source markets and the age groups of the tourists in mind. At the same time, the Government must develop new source markets nearer home and make Karnataka a safer destination for tourists and family holidays.*

Presently, Karnataka's tourism is truly at crossroads as such this paper highlights the responsibility of management of tourist destinations, tourist departments, experts and government to rethink and to redesign their marketing strategies, developmental priorities to fill the gap of demand and supply and other problems of regional linkages, connectivity, accommodation and lack of financial resources for the proper development of tourism in Karnataka.

Key Words: *Strategies, Tourism development, strength and weaknesses of tourism*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a major engine of economic growth in most parts of the world, several countries have transformed their economics using the tourism potential the fullest. The tourism has great capacity to create large scale employment of diverse kind from the most specialized to the unskilled and generation of massive productive employment opportunities is what India needs the most. Tourism industry in Karnataka employed around 1.56 lakh people directly 3.59 lakh indirectly, generating revenue of Rs.195.24 crore in 2011.

Karnataka rich with topography and scenic beauty is located at the southern part of India. The state has been ruled and shaped under the reigns of many dynasties including the Mayuras, Satavahanas, Gangas, Chalukyas and the Vijayanagar Kings. The individual dynasties and the rulers have uniquely offered distinctive arts, architecture, history and culture to the state. This land of fragrance has all the ingredients of a great holiday and

tourist attractions. The western part has Arabian sea and then the range of Western ghats follows. This is the eighth largest state in India both in area and population. This state is famous for its natural beauty, a rich culture and heritage, pleasant climate, an incredible variety of rare species of flora and fauna, forts, Palaces, ruins, ornate temples and pilgrim centers, Hill resorts and what not!. The state has some of the magnificent monuments, Temples, Palaces, world heritage centers and the beaches in the country. Holidays in Karnataka with colorful folk dances, art forms, the age old traditions and rituals, the literature and the music is simply culturally enriching and make one pleasantly surprised at every single step. This miniature Indian State has plenty to offer and rightly poised to be one of the best Global Tourist destinations of the world in the coming years.

In the state, the tourism industry is surviving mainly on heritage and leisure themes and the Karnataka state currently ranks as the 4th most popular destination in the country. The states which are ahead of Karnataka in terms

of foreign tourist arrivals are Delhi, Maharashtra, UP, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Goa and Kerala. Domestic tourists for the same period accounted for around 8% of the total domestic tourists visiting different destinations in India and ranked 4th among all other Indian states only after UP, AP and Tamil Nadu. Mysore accounts for the highest tourist arrivals in the state. The other major tourist destinations are Belur, Halebid, Jog falls, and Bijapur which together attract more than 75% of the total tourist arrivals in the state. Jog falls has shown the highest growth in the total tourist arrivals in the last few years. A negative growth rate in the recent past has been observed in tourist arrival in the destinations like Bijapur, Badami, Aihole Hospet, Hampi (world heritage center), Chitradurga, and Nandi Hills. Barring few places like Shravanabelagola, Bijapur, Aihole, Nandi Hills, in general, there has been an overall growth observed in the total tourist arrival during the period 2001-2011. The destinations like Mysore, Belur, Halebid attract maximum number of domestic tourists as well as foreigners visiting the State. As per the latest statistics revealed by the department of tourism, Karnataka ranks fourth nationally with 27 million domestic arrivals and 0.62 million international arrivals making it the seventh most-visited state in India. However, there still remain unsolved issues concerning infrastructure, connectivity, sanitation and conservation of both natural and historical heritage.

The domestic & foreign tourists visiting Karnataka have different needs. Their motivations for an experience are different from each other. An average domestic tourist seeks leisure-related activities followed by cultural-heritage in Karnataka. The major items of attractions, as mentioned by domestic tourists, were temples and religious places, archaeological attractions, eco-tourism attractions like forests and waterfalls, leisure and adventure activities and special interests like pre-historic caves, handicrafts, etc. Whereas An average foreign tourist in Karnataka seeks a blend of Culture and Heritage, Leisure avenues and Business and Conference. The attractions and major items of tourist interest, as indicated by the foreign tourist, are culture and handicrafts, eco-tourism attractions like nature, forests, adventure and wildlife, archaeological attractions and monuments, leisure activities, tribal /village lifestyle and special interests like shopping for handicrafts items. The Perspective Plan must address various issues related to tourist needs & corrective measures to be taken while implementation of the plan.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF KARNATAKA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

The strengths of Karnataka as a tourist destinations are as follows:

- Presence of rich flora and fauna, historical forts

and royal palaces, temples and heritage sites, beaches and hills, wild life and bird sanctuaries

- Variety of potential tourist attractions within short distances
- Virgin and unexplored destinations
- Adequate availability of Infrastructure like Power, Water and Communication.
- Largely literate local community
- Brand Image of Bangalore as IT Hub all over the word.
- Stable Government and efficient administration of tourism department
- The climate essentially being a tropical monsoon type is a joy for the visiting tourists
- Land of peace and communal harmony.

The weaknesses of Karnataka as a tourist destinations are as follows:

- The image of Karnataka as a Technology Capital of India than a Tourist Destination amongst both Indians and foreign tourists
- Most of the major destinations are stand alone and far off from Bangalore
- Poor access roads to many of the tourist destinations
- Need for an International Airport to promote the state to foreign tourists
- Connectivity by land routes depends on private bus/taxi operators as public transport system and railway network are not up to the mark.
- Limited awareness among local community and misconceptions that tourism will bring environmental and social problems.
- Limited financial networking within the state - most of towns and destinations are yet to see ATMs and Forex Money changers
- High risk perception / conservative attitude shown by private investors.

Figure 1: Tourist Destinations in Karnataka



Though the state having more tourist destinations with a floating population due to IT, BT etc., it stands only 8th position both in the foreign and domestic tourism development. As such both the Government and tourism department must develop a strategy to achieve desired targets instead of looking at various destinations & activities in isolation, attempt would be to look at various tourism products holistically and in integrated manner. The important strategies include;

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Karnataka's tourism development strategy should focus on the following priorities:

- The management and implementation of the Tourism Master Plan.
- Promoting travel in Karnataka and establishing Karnataka's position as a world-class tourism destination while retaining its distinctive identity.
- The restoration and preservation of tourism attractions and the promotion of eco- tourism.
- Promoting repeat visits and educational trips.
- Raising Karnataka's profile and showcasing the State as a global destination.
- Increasing visitor arrivals and positioning Karnataka as a hub for meetings, Conventions and Exhibitions

MARKETING STRATEGY

For increasing the tourist inflow aggressive marketing strategies will be adopted to publicize the tourist potential of Karnataka both nationally and internationally. Some of the main features of this strategy are as follows:

- Opening of Tourist Information Centers in other

States.

- Appointment of marketing agents throughout the country and also abroad.
- Advertisement blitzkrieg in print and electronic media.
- Publishing of high quality literature in Indian and foreign languages.
- Screening of documentaries in theatres, railway stations, airports, bus termini etc.
- The Government will gradually assume the role of a catalyst/ facilitator and involve the private sector in restoring the prime position occupied by the State in tourism earlier.
- Other strategies include; Attract visitors from new markets; Generate longer stays; Increase the expenditure of each visitor; Extend the tourism season; and Attract special interest tourists.

From the target customers' point of view, marketing the tourist destinations in Karnataka will have to be done at two levels, i.e. marketing for the domestic tourists and marketing for the foreign tourists. Publicity in the print and Audio-visual media, Road shows and exhibitions, Interviews and newspaper articles, Familiarity (FAM) tours for tour operators, alliances with transporters, international airways, international tour operators, Tourist Information Center and Kiosks, etc. should be used to promote individual destinations, circuits and even the entire State. Such promotion of destinations would serve a dual purpose of attracting tourists as well as investments to that destination.

STRATEGY FOR PRIVATIZATION

There are various options for privatization of Karnataka's tourism destinations and it is essential, first to understand the objectives with which privatization is sought for these destinations. After selecting appropriate privatization option, Karnataka tourism would need to prioritize the projects to be put under privatization process. Initiating privatization in phases as per the priority appears more appropriate in the sense that such a process provides an opportunity to draw important lessons from earlier phases and chance to introduce amendments in the later phases making entire process very effective.

CONCLUSION

Tourist needs and expectations is one of the main driving factors for the development of tourism on a whole. Tourists would always like to have value for money when he visits any tourist destination. Various strategies are to

be used to develop models which adapt to the different spatial and land use realities of tourism and which are capable of overcoming problems such as seasonality or the indiscriminate exploitation of resources. It is quite evident that there is lot of scope for improving the trend of tourist's inflow (both domestic as well as foreign) in Karnataka. The relative inability of the State to harness and develop its full tourist potential and attract tourists may be attributed to a combination of factors such as lack of effective policies, inadequate infrastructure, ineffective marketing and lack of decent facilities for the tourists. The perspective plan must address various issues connected with tourists' inflow, especially, 1) Development of Distinct Brand Image and 2) Development of Superstructure to support the image.

REFERENCE

1. Dindayal Swainand Suprava Sahu-Opportunities and Challenges of Tourism in India
2. Gayathri Vijaya Kumar - Karnataka Tourism: Poised for growth.
3. Coleraine Borough Council-Tourism development strategy in the world.
4. Final report on government of India Ministry of tourism & culture department of Tourism- market research division- 20 year perspective plan for development of Sustainable tourism in Karnataka.
5. Department of Karnataka tourism websites and other related articles.