

A study on “Tourism in Maharashtra and its future potential”

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Abstract:

Tourism nowadays is an important driver of socio-economic growth as it creates job opportunities, revenues for the government and contributes to the infrastructure development. Countries around the world are increasingly investing in tourism and the numbers of destinations for tourism are increasing rapidly. Travel and tourism industry has been one of the major driver of growth among the service sector in India and it is said that it has the potential to become a game changer for the country. Tourism in India can be divided into North Indian tourism, East India tourism, West Indian tourism and South Indian tourism and combination of them is collectively called Indian tourism. Maharashtra is a state which comprises of Medical Tourism, sightseeing, pilgrims, business as well as Agro and Rural tourism. In this study, the researcher saw a gap in promoting tourism in Maharashtra to the overseas tourists, and the actual satisfaction of the tourists visiting Maharashtra. The state having a number of tourist attractions, there is also a need to find out the possible potential for tourism in the state. The researcher has conducted a conclusive research wherein the data was collected using simple random sampling for 678 respondents.

Keywords: Maharashtra tourism, Medical tourism, Potential, Agrotourism, Promote travel

Introduction:

Tourism in India is strongly related to economic development, cultural growth and national integration. Due to the vastness and diversity of India, it has tremendous potential. “With her rich cultural heritage as superbly manifest, in many of the architectural wonders (palaces, temples, mosques, forts, etc). The caves and prehistoric wall paintings in India, the widely varied topography ranging, from the plains to mountains, the large climatic variations ranging from wet to the dry regions, right from the hottest and the coldest parts, beautiful beaches on the sea coast, stretches of sands, tropical forests and above all, the great variety of the life-style, offer an unending choice for any tourist. There is a diversity in geography and culture in India. The tourism root in India can well be traced to pilgrimage. Places of pilgrimage are important and are a firm ground to tourism right from the beginning and are one of the most effective factors of promoting tourism in India. “In the early stages, pilgrimage based tourism was only of domestic nature but as the time went by, an increasingly large number of foreign tourists have also started visiting places of pilgrimage” (Bhattacharya, 2014). “With other tourist attractions gradually getting famous, one can notice the detectable changes in the character of Indian tourism, with a shift from pilgrimage to pleasure trips” (Bhattacharya, 2014). Today, the majority of the tourists feel that travelling for sheer pleasure offers much wider scope than what is offered by pilgrimage, making the experience of tourists more colorful, lively, intimate, soothing to mind and body and hence, more enjoyable. Therefore, many a times, people combine pilgrimage with pleasure trips to draw the benefit of both. It was from little after 1950’s that organized tourism was conducted. Tourism in India has

grown considerably which is indicated by the arrival of foreign tourists. This shows that the number of foreign tourists visiting India has increased substantially after the beginning of the planned era.

Employment Opportunities in Tourism

“Tourism in India has tremendous employment potential, much of which is yet to be exploited. At present about 20.44 million persons are directly employed by hospitality services”(Chand Smriti). “This is about 5.6 per cent of the total work force of the country” (Chand Smriti). “By 2015, it would provide 25 million jobs. In addition, the industry provides indirect employment to about 40 million persons”(Chand Smriti). “It is very interesting to note that the employment generation in proportion to investment is very high in tourist industry”(Chand Smriti). “According to one estimate, an investment of Rs.10 lakh creates 89 jobs in hotel and restaurant sector as against 44.7 jobs in agriculture and 12.6 in manufacturing industries”(Chand Smriti). “The ratio further increases if one takes into account the ancillary services associated with hotels and restaurants” (Chand Smriti). “Another aspect of employment in tourism is that it employs a large number of women, educated and uneducated, as well as skilled and unskilled”(Chand Smriti). “In fact, women are greater in number than men in hotels, airline services, travel agencies, handicraft making and cultural activities, etc”(Chand Smriti). With increasing number of women opting for employment because of the education they have received, the tourism sector is throws open excellent opportunities for them. “Tourism is a very labor-intensive industry and is likely to offer more jobs in the coming years”(Chand Smriti). “And since most of the natural beauty and wildlife are to be found in non-urban areas, rural people could find employment as guides and transporters; with proper training”(Chand Smriti). “More jobs in rural areas would also help reduce continuous migration of people to towns. In comparison to manufacturing, this sector needs much less investment for a given potential for employment generation”(Chand Smriti).

Maharashtra tourism:

India has many tourist attractions. In spite of that the arrival of tourists in India is not up to the expectations. Even though, Maharashtra attracts the maximum number of tourists coming to India, still it is not established whether the tourism scope in Maharashtra has been well exploited or not. Therefore there is a gap in the understanding of the tourist potential of Maharashtra and the efforts that is needed to get more tourists coming from all over the world and make it as an international tourism destination. It is necessary to analyze the satisfaction of the tourists coming to testate, what they feel about it, what they feel about the infrastructure, what they feel about the hotels, and hospitality etc. Maharashtra has already won many awards as given here. But there is more to improve.

This study through a comprehensive primary and secondary data analysis finds about the response of tourists about tourist facilities in Maharashtra. The major parameters identified were :

- Tourism information in Maharashtra
- Promotion of tourism by the state in Maharashtra
- The media used for promotion

- The infrastructure available to facilitate tourism
- The referrals used
- Hospitality of people in Maharashtra towards tourist visiting

The major findings of the study are enumerated as follows:

Tourism information in Maharashtra :

- The study shows that most tourists travelling to Maharashtra state are from home country India.
- 30% have travelled alone, 31% with friends, 15% with a group and 24% with family.
- Most travellers to Maharashtra state are from Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Haryana and Maharashtra. Very few travellers are from Sikkim, Goa, Meghalaya and Uttarakhand.
- 40% of the tourists visit Maharashtra for sightseeing, 35% for a conference and business purposes, 6% for medical reasons and a few for visiting religious place and 19% have other reasons for visiting Maharashtra.
- 42% of the travelers plan to stay in Maharashtra for 4 to 10 days, 21% for 1 to 3 days, 20% for 11 to 30 days, and 17% for about 2 months.
- 48% of the respondents said they have travelled to Maharashtra state earlier and are repeat visitor to Maharashtra. 51% said they are first time visitors to Maharashtra state and 1% of the data was missing.
- 50% of the respondents said that they have visited Maharashtra before on 2 to 5 occasions, 17% said they have visited for more than 5 occasions, whereas, 33% only once.
- 54% of the travelers were between the age group 20 to 30 years, 30% of the respondents were between the age group 30 to 50 years, 4% of the travelers were between the age group 50 and above, 12% were up to 20 years of age. Most the respondents were between age group 20 to 30 years.
- 69% of the respondents were men, 31% of the respondents were women. Most the respondents were men.
- 38% of the respondents are students, 29% of the respondents were business owners, 18% of the respondents are professionals, 6% are executives and 7.2% are housewives.
- 63% of the travellers were budget travellers whereas 37% were luxury travellers.

Promotion of tourism by the state in Maharashtra :

- When travellers were asked to tell about their present location, 83% said they know that they are in Maharashtra, 15% could not make a correct guess, and 2% of the data were missing.
- Most travelers said Maharashtra is popular for sight-seeing.
- Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat are ranked number one in other places to be visited by traveler who visited Maharashtra, Kerla and Goa ranked number two, where as Rajasthan was ranked three.
- 43% of the respondents said they felt Maharashtra tourism is promoting tourism somewhat well, 39% said well, 7% said very well, and 10% said not so well.

Media used for promotion :

- 51% accounted for friends and relatives, 15% accounted for websites, and 10% accounted for journals and travel magazines, 7% said TV advertisements, 5% said newspaper reports, 4% radio channels, 4% movies and 4% social media. Most travelers referred to friends and relative for information about Maharashtra state for travel issues.

Infrastructure available to facilitate tourism :

- 79% of the travellers said their expectations have been met, however 21% said their expectation were left unmet as a traveller in Maharashtra.
- 50% accounted for 'connected well on transportation by rail/road/air', 38% accounted for 'wide price range for accommodation', 4.3% accounted for 'sporting facilities', 5.2% accounted for 'spa facilities' and 2.3% accounted for other. Most respondents would like to have tourists places to be connected well on transportation by rail/road/air, and wide price range for accommodation.
- 46% of the respondents said Maharashtra fares somewhat well in the afore-mentioned factors, 41% said well, 4% said very well and 10% said not so well.
- Travelers ranked Juhu, Ali baug and Murud beaches to number one in popularity in Maharashtra, Konkan ranked number two and Aksa ranked number three.
- 88% of the travelers said that the afore-mentioned cities have enough facilities for a business traveler, 12% did not agree to this.
- 51.8% accounted for Mumbai, 39.7% for Pune and 8.5% others. Mumbai and Pune are the most preferred for medical treatment by travellers.
- 49% of the travelers said 'well trained and reputed doctors' is the reason for choosing Maharashtra for medical tourism, 26% said well-equipped hospitals, 13% said recommended by friends and relatives and 1% had other reasons.

Referrals used :

- 36% of the travelers rated their experience with Maharashtra as somewhat good, 36% said good, 15% said very good, 3% said excellent and 9% said not so good.
- 55% of the travelers said that they will recommend Maharashtra tourism to friends and relatives, 17% said they will definitely recommend, 22% said they may recommend, and 6% said they will not at all recommend.

Hospitality of people in Maharashtra towards tourist visiting :

- 38% of travellers said that the people of Maharashtra are good when it comes to hospitality, 38% said somewhat good, 11% said very good, 2% said they are excellent and 10% said they are not good.
- 45% of the travellers said that they are somewhat satisfied, 42% said they are satisfied, 6% said they are very much satisfied, 7% said they are not at all satisfied. Overall travellers find hotels in Maharashtra to be within budget.

- 35% accounted for tourists' places, 28% accounted for facilities for tourists, 10% accounted for transportation facilities, 9% said information to tourists, 7% said hospitality 8% said cleanliness of public places. Most respondents like tourists' places and facilities for tourists.
- 41% of the respondents said they disliked rude behaviour of people of Maharashtra the most, 14% said food, 15% said transportation. The remaining said, crowd, traffic, pollution, bad roads, language difficulty are other problems in Maharashtra.
- 50% travellers said they feel somewhat homely while in Maharashtra, 28% said they feel homely, 5% said they feel very homely being in Maharashtra and 17% said they do not feel homely being in Maharashtra.

Findings - Expert Opinion from intermediaries who facilitate tourism.

- ▶ 91% of the travel agents said tourist to Maharashtra come with family, very few come alone. Similarly, very few agents said 'both'.
 - ▶ Approximately 38% of the tourists are from other countries.
 - ▶ 25% accounted for sightseeing, 16.7% accounted for conferences/seminar/business, 16.7% accounted for visit religious places, 5.6% accounted for Medical treatment and 36.1% accounted for mixed responses. Hence it can be concluded that the top three reasons for which foreign tourists visit Maharashtra are (1) sightseeing, (2) conferences and seminars (3) Medical treatment.
 - ▶ 61% travel agents said foreign tourists visit Maharashtra state for a short period, whereas, 39% set said they visit for long time.
 - ▶ 9% of the travel agent said foreign visitors feel that hospitality of Maharashtra state is very good, 57% said it is good and 31% said is fair.
 - ▶ 17% of the travel agents feel that Maharashtra state has enough hotels for every budget, whereas 83% said no.
 - ▶ 22% of travel agents said foreign tourist like historical places in Maharashtra, 13% said heritage and pilgrimage centres, 22% said culture, 17% said weather, 8% said nature and scenic beauty and 4% medical treatment.
 - ▶ 52% of the travel agents said foreign tourists are generally not happy with cleanliness of places in Maharashtra state, 43% said they are happy, and 4% said they are very happy.
 - ▶ 52% travel agents said the foreign tourists are generally happy with the transportation facilities in Maharashtra state, 48% said happy whereas none said they are very happy.
 - ▶ 40% of the travel agents said the foreign tourists are unhappy with road and transport facilities at Maharashtra, 30% said they are unhappy with cleanliness, 15% said political disturbances, and 15% had no specific answer.
- 22% of the travel agents feel that Maharashtra tourism department is promoting tourism well, 74% said no, needs improvement.

Recommendations:

1. The data reveals that only 24% of the tourists have visited Maharashtra with family. This can be interpreted to mean that Maharashtra is yet to gain a name as family tourist destination.

This may be because of the Mumbai city, where people come for conferences etc. But there is a possibility to project some of the destinations as a family tourist destination, a place to visit with family.

2. Most travellers (95%) to Maharashtra state are from home country India. This can be interpreted to say that Maharashtra is yet to get acceptance from the international traveller as a travel destination. There is a need to promote the Maharashtra Brand in other countries
3. Even within India, most travellers are from Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Haryana. There are very few travellers from Sikkim Goa, Meghalaya, and Uttarkhand. There seems to be a scope to promote Maharashtra as a tourism destination in these states.
4. While about 40 % of the tourists came for sightseeing, and about 35% for conferences, there are only 6 % of the travellers coming for medical tourism. With so many reputed hospitals in Mumbai, and Pune, this seems to be a small percentage. There is a need to look at promoting these two cities as a medical tourism destination.
5. On the duration of stay, 42 % of the travellers plan to stay for 4 to 10 days which sounds reasonable for a tourist to stay in a state, thus efforts may be made towards providing facilities and promoting about tourism in Maharashtra.
6. Maharashtra seems to get a good percentage of visitors (51%) as first time visitors, which is a good sign. Efforts to be made that the first time visitors go back and recommend the same to their friends and relatives.
7. On the question about their source of information, 51 % was on recommendation by friends and relatives. TV ads, newspaper reports, and social media do not account for much. There is a need to look at these media for promotion, since they can be powerful to attract tourists. Only about 4 % accounted for the social media. There is a need for the Maharashtra tourism development corporation to look at social media as a potential source for promotion to the younger audience.
8. On the question about 'what Maharashtra is famous for' – there has been a mixed response. 42% accounted for sight-seeing, 17% accounted for temples, and 12% accounted for world heritage sites, 6% for medical tourism, 19% for corporate headquarters of companies, 1% Ayurveda and 3.9% others. While a major percentage is attracted for sightseeing, the percentage for world heritage sites and medical tourism is not encouraging. There is a need to look at these areas for promotion.
9. On the hospitality, only 2 % has said 'excellent' and 38 % said very good. There is a need to look at this area. There may be need to train people who work in hotels, travel agencies,

guides etc. to be trained in hospitality. If the percentage of people who will say 'excellent' then state of Maharashtra can expect more referrals.

10. On the availability of hotels to suit budgets, most of them have said that they are somewhat satisfied and satisfied. Only about 7 % said that they are very much satisfied. This can vary from city to city. But there seems to be a general satisfaction level on this factor. However, efforts to provide requisite facilities must be looked into.
11. On the facilities available at tourist places, there seems to be a problem regarding the information to tourists are concerned and also about the cleanliness of tourist places. On the facilities available at tourist places, it is imperative to look at cleanliness and the information availability. This is a vital aspect in a tourist place.
12. On the aspect of knowing what the tourists dislike in Maharashtra, the data reveals that 41% of the respondents said they disliked rude behaviour of people of Maharashtra the most, 14% said food, 15% said transportation. Other aspects did not find much mention. The rude behaviour which 41 % tourists have responded is a problem area. There is a need to train the personnel in tourism related areas on good behaviour with tourists since this will leave a bad taste and the tourists will not recommend the destination to others.
13. On being homely, only about 17% said that they are not being homely. This is still a high percentage which needs to be addressed, considering the factor that most tourists are from other states of India.
14. A very high percentage of the tourists said (almost 80%) that their expectations have been met. this is a very good sign for the state to be promoted and should be used in their sales campaigns.
15. Only 39% said that the Maharashtra tourism is promoted well, and hence there is a need to look at the effectiveness and reach of the promotion campaigns, which are being undertaken by the department of tourism.
16. The major concern of the tourists on their expectation is about the connectivity and availability of wide range of hotels as per their needs. Almost 87% of the tourists have expressed this. 40 %of the tourists have said that their needs are well met and 46 % felt that this has been somewhat met. Focus on the said aspect may be undertaken. .
17. Juhu beach has been named as the most well-known beach in Maharashtra. The point to be noted here is that this beach in Mumbai and many travellers to the city will come to know about it. There have been many other beaches in Maharashtra which needs to be promoted. Promoting beach destinations in Maharashtra may be a worthy proposition.

18. On the religious places of interest to those who are visiting for this reason, shirdi has emerged to be the number one destination followed by Haji Ali. The Maharashtra tourism department may look at promoting individual religious places as tourist destinations.
19. Though the total percentage of travellers who came to Maharashtra for medical tourism is a small percentage, their cities of preference is first, Mumbai and then Pune. Well trained doctors have come out to be the major reason for their visit .More than 50% said that they came because of the well trained doctors. Responses like this can be used by the tourism development department to promote medical tourism in the state.
20. On their experience with Maharashtra, only about 36% said that they are good. In this case Maharashtra does not look to be a place where the tourists will prefer to visit again. There is a need to see how the experience can be made memorable for the tourists. However 72% agreed that they would recommend to their friends.
21. Budget travellers accounted for about 60%. Hence there is a need to have hotels which would cater to their needs
22. Tourists do not have enough information has emerged as the most significant factor in the data analysis and in hypothesis testing. The areas are in business, sightseeing, in medical tourism, and ayurveda treatment. There is a need to provide information about these modes as well.

Contributions - Future direction of research :

The study was confined to understand the potential of tourism in Maharashtra using key factors. There is tremendous scope to conduct research in the tourism industry in India given the growing demand both from within and from tourist outside the country.

The areas where further research can be conducted are :

- Assessment of Tourist potential in India. India is witnessing a sustained growth in the last few years. There has been growth in the hospitality industry and one has seen the advent of internet based online travel websites which have attracted many consumers to transact online.
- Study on online services that aid and assist tourism in India
- Potential of promoting less frequented but must see travel places in India
- The tourism industry is affected by numerous elements which may not be in control of players within the industry. There is a need to study about the factors that impact the tourism industry.
- Capacity building of tour operators and agents to handle increasing number of tourist' at well known tourist destinations
- Does local culture aid or inhibit tourism. A study of select tourist destinations in India.
- Role of social media in promoting tourism in India

- With social media play a key role and influencing perceptions of groups and people, the effects of social media on branding of tourist destinations may be investigated.
- Trust perception based on online reviews and its impact on select tourist destinations and service providers.

Though the research has analyzed the data for current status and potential making a few recommendation, further research can show the degree of effectiveness when implemented

Conclusion :

This study has been conducted to assess the tourism potential in Maharashtra. The study focused on few tourism types such as sights seeing; business tourism and medical tourism. The study has identified some factors based on which conclusions on potential of tourism in the state were drawn. The factors provided information on the current status of tourism in Maharashtra, the facilities available to facilitate tourism, the types of tourism and the promotional efforts undertaken by the state. The research commenced with hypothesis formulated identified on the factors such as :

- Tourism information in Maharashtra
- Promotion of tourism by the state in Maharashtra
- The media used for promotion
- The infrastructure available to facilitate tourism
- The referrals used
- Hospitality of people in Maharashtra towards tourist visiting

An indepth literature review was carried out to understand the state of tourism in Maharashtra. The literature work of many authors was referred to ascertain the facilities, preferences, hospitality services, promotion of tourism in Maharashtra. Accordingly the gaps were identified to proceed in the research which pertained to identification of the key factors for the study.

A conclusive research design was adhered. The sample was selected through appropriate probability sampling tool. The data instrument was prepared using the identified factors and 678 respondents were selected to answer the key questions. The data collected were analysed with the help of statistical tools. Descriptive analysis tools were resorted for demographic / personal data and answers to various questions. Inferential statistical tools such as chi square test and binomial test were used. An in-depth analysis of data gathered from primary and secondary have been useful in testing the hypothesis which have been mentioned in chapter 4.

The study finds that most of the tourist travelling to Maharashtra are from other India. The study reveals the major states from which tourist travel to Maharashtra. The study has also identified the type of tourism that tourists prefer; i.e. majority prefer sight seeing than business or other reasons such as visits for conferences, religious occasions and other reasons. The period of stay in the state by the tourist varies from either 1-3 days, 4-10 days, 11-30 days and period of two months.

Majority of the tourist have visited Maharashtra more than once indicating the preference towards visiting the state.

Most of the tourist visiting Maharashtra were in the age group of between 20-30 years indicating that the younger generation were visiting Maharashtra more frequently than the tourist from other age groups. Of these most of the respondents were males (69%).

Regarding promotion of tourism, majority felt that Maharashtra has been taking efforts in promoting tourism. The study also revealed that many tourists referred to others about visits to Maharashtra indicating the potential of tourism that Maharashtra possesses. The tourists were also satisfied and informed that the state meets expectations of tourist regarding facilities and infrastructure available at the state.

The data was analysed and hypothesis were tested using appropriate statistical tools. The key findings from the data analysis revealed that

- Tourists visiting the state need sufficient information about tourism in Maharashtra.
- There is a need to improve promotional activities to promote tourism in Maharashtra
- The infrastructure in the state needs improvement to support tourism in Maharashtra
- The tourists are recommending Maharashtra state to their friends and others for tourism
- The satisfaction level of the tourist with reference to hospitality of people in Maharashtra state needs improvement.

Based on the above five conclusion it is proved that there is scope to increase tourist traffic in Maharashtra.

While this research conducted an exhaustive study of the existing works on the research problem, it also attempted to make some unique efforts to contribute to the existing body of knowledge. The research was conducted at Maharashtra at the cities identified in order to seek answers to the research questions. The relevant factors were identified and conclusions were drawn based on the data analyzed. The key factors were further explored to understand the potential of tourism at the state of Maharashtra.

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