

## Marketing a tourism destination by assessing visitors perception towards dimensions of destination image in India

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### Abstract

As tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world, it became one among the world's most competitive industries. The competition is increasing day by day since more and more countries seek to attract tourists and more companies and organizations become involved in the highly skilled business of transporting, accommodating and catering for tourists. Just as any other products tourism too needs to be marketed, as it is an industry in which the customer still has an immense variety of choices. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to identify dimensions of India's image as a tourism destination, measuring perception of foreign tourists regarding identified dimensions and to suggest efficient marketing practices in order to increase number of visitors. So in the marketing tourist destination, identifying image of destination are considered as the major issue for destination marketing.

This paper aimed to study destination marketing by assessing perceptions of tourists visiting India. For this purpose, a field survey has been undertaken in Delhi as a capital of India. Surveys were received from 600 participants, but 133 of them were not filled out as required for this survey; thus, the analysis was made of 467 survey forms. The sample was collected in a convenience sampling technique from selected locations. The locations selected were Indira Gandhi International Airport and northern railway station located at Delhi. Using a structured questionnaire, data relating to the personal profile of the tourists, their perception on identified dimensions of destination image were collected. Following the analysis of demographic profiles of tourists, an assessment was made about perceptions of visitors at this destination. Mean score of visitors attitude regarding India's image were analyzed. This study identified factors like Travel Environment & Accessibility, Infrastructure, Price & Value, Cultural Attractions and Natural Attractions as determinants of destination image. Research findings revealed that cultural attractions are the most important factor to attract foreign tourists.

**Keywords:** destination marketing, perception, destination image, dimensions of destination image, foreign tourists

### Introduction

Tourism is the second largest growing business area in the service sector after information technology in the global economy. Many of the economies are successful in marketing their country as best destinations and there by generating a substantial amount of foreign exchange from tourism sector. Even countries with poor level of infrastructure and facilities are able to attract investors to invest money in their country for tourism promotion.

Tourism can help countries achieve their priorities for sustainable economic growth. As India is a blend of ancient and modern destinations with having varied tourism products and all these factors make this destination ideal in terms of potentiality for attract foreign visitors. Therefore, planned and effective marketing to improve and promote image of India as a tourism destination has become a vital requirement to attract more and more tourists. Destination image plays an important role in marketing of tourism destination.

This paper aims primarily to identify dimensions of destination image and determine foreign visitors' perceptions towards identified dimensions in India and to reveal which

marketing practices should be taken to increase the number of foreign visitors by taking these perceptions into account.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to identify determinants of destination image and assess perceptions of visitors towards these determinants. In this paper, study the marketing aspects associated with tourism, measuring tourists' attribute regarding the destination image and the mean score of each items was actually given. Within the field research, the application of the survey form used as the data collection process was mentioned, and in the findings section the data obtained with the survey method was evaluated. Demographic profile of respondents were primarily revealed. Suggestions section, findings were interpreted and concrete suggestions were formed.

### Objectives of the study

1. To identify dimensions of India's image.
2. To assess perception of international tourists regarding India's image as a tourism destination.
3. To offer valuable suggestions from the study in order to marketing India as a tourism destination.

## Literature Review

Literature pertaining to the Study is presented under two heads namely tourism marketing and destination image dimensions.

### Tourism Marketing

Kumar *et al.* (2014) attempted to give proper definition of destination marketing that is the process of communicating with potential visitors to influence their destination preference, intention to travel and ultimately their final destination and product choices. This study determined that developing a strategic marketing plan to provide direction for destination marketing activities, promotional and advertising actions to influence visitor perceptions, awareness and destination choice, Understanding the motivations and preferences of visitors, Effective sales and distribution channels and Development of cooperative marketing programs with tourism organizations are the most important strategies and practices for successful destination marketing.

Raju (2009) [8] propounded that tourism marketing is the development of a product to meet the needs of the consumer and then employing the techniques of promotion to bring this product to the consumer. He stated that tourism acts as a positive force to simulate economic development to foster national integration and to bring people and culture of different nations closer. Tourism is an infrastructure based service product. Effective marketing of tourism needs steady gearing up of the infrastructure to international standards and presupposes its coordination with the tourism suppliers. It calls for the adoption of an integrated approach to management and marketing tourism.

### Destination Image Dimensions

Di Marino (2008) [3] analyzed the dimensions of destination image as a strategic management tool for a destination, which could assist to maintain the tourist flows towards that destination and it is necessary to understand the role of the image in tourists' travel decision-making process and how a positive image is significant in the mind of the consumers. Present study was based on the analyses of the image of the French Riviera in the Italian tourists market, in order to later discuss strategic options on how a positive image could represent a criterion for a successful marketing strategy. Author discussed that in case of image formation advertising plays an important role in promotion of tourism destinations, because it generates awareness of the destinations as possible places to visit, creating positive images of the destinations and motivating the tourists to travel to those destinations. Chi & Qub (2007) identified 9 determinants of destination image which were considered while developing the destination image measurement scale viz. Travel environment, Natural attractions, Entertainment and events, Historic attractions, Infrastructure, Accessibility and Price and value.

### Research Methodology

This study aimed to identify determinants of destination image and measuring visitor's perception towards identified factors.

As this research study has a large number of related items and wish to explore the underlying structure of this set of items, factor analysis was used in order to reduce the number of items.

The indicator variables related to destination image construct were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis to identify the underlying factors and to test whether the factors extracted are similar to the dimensions proposed in the study. 24 scale items were used to measure destination image in India as explained in the previous chapters. In order to identify the naturally occurring dimensions of destination image all 24 items were subjected to a factor analysis. Before proceeding for the factor analysis the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy were performed. As the following Table 1 'KMO and Bartlett's Test' showed, the Bartlett test was significant at .000, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) overall value was 0.715, indicating that data were suitable for factor analysis.

**Table 1:** Result of KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy & Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.715
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	6415.298
	105
	0.000

*Source:* Author

The Principal Component Extraction method along with Varimax rotation was performed to identify the underlying factors for destination image and factor loading of 0.30 or above on the items was taken into consideration. Exploratory factor analysis considered all the 24 items of destination image perception. The criteria for the number of factors to be extracted were based on the size of eigenvalues, the percentage of variance explained, and the item communalities. Only factors with eigenvalue equal to or greater than 1 were considered as significant. The rationale for this is that any individual factor should account for the variance of at least one single variable if it is to be retained for interpretation. To ensure practical significance for the derived factors, the solution that accounted for at least 60% of the total variance was regarded as satisfactory. A variant of the percentage of variance criterion involves selecting enough factors to achieve adequate representation for each of the variables, as indicated by the communality for each variable (Chi, 2005) [2].

Five factors with eigenvalues above 1.0 were generated, which explained about 79% of the total variance (see Table 2). The total number of items for destination image construct got reduced to 15 which have been grouped in five factors.

The communalities varied from 0.556 to 0.995, suggesting that the variance in each original variable was reasonably explained by the five common factors taken together. The factor loadings for the 15 variables ranged from 0.731 to 0.979, above the suggested threshold value of 0.30 for practical and statistical significance.

**Table 2:** Underlying Dimensions of ‘Destination Image’

Factors	Eigen Value	Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha	Factor Loadings	Communalities
F1 Travel Environment & Accessibility	4.097	27.312	0.867		
Safe and secure environment				0.731	0.556
Clean and tidy environment				0.900	0.830
Calm and restful				0.843	0.741
Pleasant weather				0.785	0.668
Availability of travel information				0.738	0.656
F2 Infrastructure	2.879	19.196	0.996		
Wide choice of accommodation				0.981	0.995
Wide selection of restaurant/cuisine				0.980	0.990
Wide Variety of shop facilities				0.979	0.990
F3 Price & Value	1.919	12.796	0.777		
Reasonable price for accommodation				0.843	0.746
Reasonable price of meals				0.856	0.735
Good value for money				0.774	0.618
F4 Cultural Attraction	1.738	11.587	0.844		
variety of Sites and areas of archaeological interest				0.911	0.854
variety of Historical buildings and monuments				0.926	0.873
F5 Natural Attractions	1.299	8.663	0.814		
Scenic mountain and valleys				0.907	0.852
Breathtaking scenery and natural attractions				0.873	0.830
	Total Variance Explained			79.555	

Source: Author

With the help of Exploratory Factor Analysis, following five independent set of underlying factors associated with destination image was extracted and described for further analysis: Travel Environment & Accessibility, Infrastructure, Price & Value, Cultural Attractions and Natural Attractions. Primarily the survey study was conducted in the Delhi destination and demographic situations of tourists coming to Delhi were inspected. This study used a cross-sectional sample survey. The survey questionnaire has been divided in the following two sections:

**Section I:** Consisted of questions designed to gather demographic information of the visitors.

**Section II:** the second section of the questionnaire contains questions that measured perception of the respondents towards destination image items which were rated on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree (SD) and 5= strongly agree

(SA).

In current study-with the aim of measuring visitors' perceptions towards Delhi as a tourist destination sample of 467 Foreign tourists from Delhi were collected in a convenience sampling technique from northern railway station located at Delhi. SPSS (version 21.0) was used to analyze the data collected through questionnaire survey. Mean score of each items was given in order to explore most desired dimensions of India's image.

### Findings and Discussion

Descriptive statistics are used to describe the basic features of the data in this study. The finding of the questionnaire survey are presented in two sections. In the first section, frequency distribution of visitor demographic information were analyzed. In the second section, mean score of the dimensions of destination image were evaluated.

**Table 3:** The tourists' demographic profile (N=467)

Characteristics/ Profile	Count	Percent
Gender		
Male	273	58.50%
Female	194	41.50%
Total	467	100.00%
Age		
20 _ 30	254	54.40%
31 _ 40	141	32.20%
41 _ 50	20	4.30%
Above 51	52	11.10%
Total	467	100.00%
Family life cycle		
Single	219	46.90%
Couple/No Children	101	21.60%
Young Family	28	6.00%
Middle Family	40	8.60%

Mature Family	67	14.30%
Mature Couple / No Children	5	1.10%
Mature Single	7	1.50%
Total	467	100.00%
Education		
Primary	4	00.90%
High school	61	13.10%
Graduate	211	45.20%
P.G & Above	168	36.00%
Technical	23	4.90%
Total	467	100.00%
Monthly Income		
< 15000	99	21.20%
15000-30000	106	22.70%
30000-45000	132	28.30%
> 45000	130	27.80%
Total	467	100.00%
Occupation		
Self Employed	74	15.80%
Govt. Employee	59	12.60%
Pvt. Employee	123	26.30%
Retired	37	7.90%
Student	149	31.90%
Home maker	25	5.400%
Total	467	100.00%

Source: Author

The demographic profile of the tourists are presented on the basis of sex, age, income, family life cycle, education, occupation. The percentage distribution of sample tourists by characteristics reveals that the majority of the respondents were male (58.60%) and aged between 20-30 (54.40%), with single family life cycle (46.80%). Approximately 46% of visitors' education was graduate while around 36% of them were post graduate and above. Over 28% of the respondents' monthly income ranged from 30,000 to 45,000, while nearly 27% of them earned 45,000 or more monthly. Majority of visitors' occupation were student and Pvt. Employee ie. 32% and 26% respectively.

#### Tourist perception on destination image dimensions

The finding of this section were derived from the mean score of the dimensions of destination image in order to identify the most attractive dimensions of India's image for visitors. It has been found that overall India had served the tourist market well, with respondents moderately agreed.

**Table 4:** Tourist's Perception of Destination Image Dimensions

Dimension of Destination Image	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cultural Attraction	467	4.2173	0.44236
Natural Attraction	467	4.2313	0.72808
Price & Value	467	3.9886	0.76454
Infrastructure	467	3.9358	0.83507
Travel Environment & Accessibility	467	3.2749	0.92562

Source: Author

With different destination image dimensions (mean ratings ranging from 3.21 to 4.23). Among the five dimensions of destination image it was found that the highest mean score was 4.23, for the cultural attractions followed by natural attraction (4.21). The lowest mean score of 3.21 was found to

be for the travel environment factors. The result indicated that tourists have maximum perception on natural and cultural attraction dimensions of destination image and minimum perception on destination environment.

Among the five dimensions of destination image, it was found that natural and cultural attraction are the most desired dimensions of destination image in India and travel environment factor has been found to be a serious concern. The analysis of destination image revealed that tourists are quite satisfied with the cultural and natural attractions and the price of tourism products as dimensions of destination image. The findings of this study provided guidance for the success of marketing destinations. First of all, this study revealed that destination image was consisting of five dimensions which is a key factor in the hands of destination managers. Therefore, destination managers must strive to improve the image tourists hold of a destination if they are to compete successfully in the competitive tourism market. Adding to the fact that once an image is formed, it is difficult to be changed; it becomes more important for destinations to present the right image and then maintain it by proper use of marketing practices like promotion strategies. Although it is not possible to control (manage) all the elements contributing to the shaping of destination image, it is possible to manage some of them such as advertising and promoting tourist attractions, organizing cultural events that appeal to tourists, administering service quality provided by tourism infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants, tourist centers, etc.

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