



Repositioning of Brand India: Tourism Destination

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ABSTRACT

Indian tourism has positioned itself well in the global market through 'Incredible India' campaign which has run successfully through more than a decade now. The results of this campaign have shown positive signs by branding Indian tourism as an incredibly unique destination but the share of tourist arrivals in International scenario remains dismally low at less than 1%. That shows that Indian tourism has certainly gained its brand value but not the volume. Before the inertia sets in, it is time to take the brand of Indian tourism to the next level by reinventing its positioning in the global market. We need to move ahead aggressively while competing with other Tourism brands particularly with the South Asian counterparts like Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand etc. who have shown better adaptability with time. Branding has become increasingly competitive in the Tourism Industry today.

The dynamics of global tourism with constantly changing trends of International market and the increasing demands from tourists also require realignment of our products especially in terms of packaging and delivery. There should be major paradigm shifts made in developing physical, social and cultural infrastructure at various touch points. There has been concentrated effort to give tourism its due recognition but it is a long way to go. India needs a strong branding and promotional strategy in place to secure a high position in the top rankings of global market.

Keywords: Branding, Incredible, Image, Reinventing, Tourist arrival.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, an ever increasing number of destinations have opened up and invested in tourism development, turning modern tourism into a key driver of socio-economic progress through the creation of jobs and enterprises, infrastructure development and the export revenues. Destination branding has a significant importance now-a-days, because there is a need for a particular destination to be positioned in buyers' and stakeholders' mind. Every country needs a 'personality' of its own to be identified with the 'brand' it stands for. When consumers decide on a destination, several "brands" compete for their attention. A strong brand is differentiated from others, has several strong advantages when compared to others, and has an attractive appeal to consumers. At present in Indian tourism there is a multi-pronged promotional campaign in key markets across the world with the brand of 'Incredible India' that was launched in 2002. The primary objective of this branding exercise was to create a distinct image or brand for the country. 'Incredible India' campaign has successfully delivered the promise to the tourists. Now there is need to reinvent and redefine its strategy to provide a wider acceptability and visibility in the international market. The innovative brand

image with a strong international appeal has to be projected by creating a brand promise in the form of a tagline or slogan. Indian tourism requires a positioning statement that projects India as a unique destination in the global market. Reinventing the positioning of Indian tourism is a creative exercise that involves branding for its target consumers, which must eventually translate into a positive decision-making in favor of India.

METHODOLOGY

The research on “Reinventing the brand positioning of Indian Tourism in global market” incorporates quantitative as well as qualitative methods. The research endeavour of reinventing the brand positioning of Indian tourism begins with identification of the uniqueness in India such as nature, culture, human elements etc. The unique selling propositions lead to evolving the core brand elements through a consumer survey that motivate the tourists to visit and experience India. The survey is designed around the consumer perceptions that relate to the image of India as a destination and the aspirations of the International tourists.

After the survey through questionnaire with a sizable number of 400 foreign respondents, the brand image is created by compiling all that the Indian tourism has to offer in the terms of uniqueness as well as its core brand elements. The information thus collected was further quantified and analyzed with the tools such as correlation, cross tabulations and diagrammatic representations like pie charts, bar graph, line graph etc.

The brand image building qualitatively leads to the brand promise to be made to the potential buyers. Brand promise is to be compelling as a slogan/ message/ tag line/ name, that reflects the brand image of Indian tourism. The branding of Indian tourism finally evolves as a creative exercise when a couple of touch points which are instantly recognizable in the scenario of Indian tourism. The present study has chosen Taj Mahal and Banaras as such touch points to be highlighted. At Banaras the redefined brand was also tested through another survey with foreign visitors.

The undertaken research used the secondary sources of print media, academic articles, travel magazines, newspaper etc. besides internet sources like W.T.O website, Incredible India website, travel blogs etc. Also, informal conversations with the foreign travelers and domestic shopkeepers have provided noteworthy information.

DISCUSSION

Branding Indian Tourism

1. Brand Image

Brand image is an essential component of the brand development. This involves an individual's mental picture of a place based on their knowledge and other global impressions. In tourism, while factors such as cost of travel, convenience, and quality of facilities are important, the strongest motivator is ‘image’. Image puts a destination on the consumer's mind and creates an emotional appeal, which enhances that destination's chances of being chosen over others.

In this study as the first step towards developing a redefined brand we attempted to ascertain the image of India as a destination.

Image of India as perceived by Tourists: The perceptual study through questionnaire captured the respondent's view regarding various images of India such as thrilling and exciting, exotic, unique and incredible, bizarre and chaotic, both positive and negative. Out of all the options the three image that appealed the most in descending order of popularity were unique and incredible (46%), exotic (30%), and thrilling and exciting (15%). Among the other variables suggested were bizarre and chaotic with 3% responses, ordinary and uninteresting (2%) and others (4%).

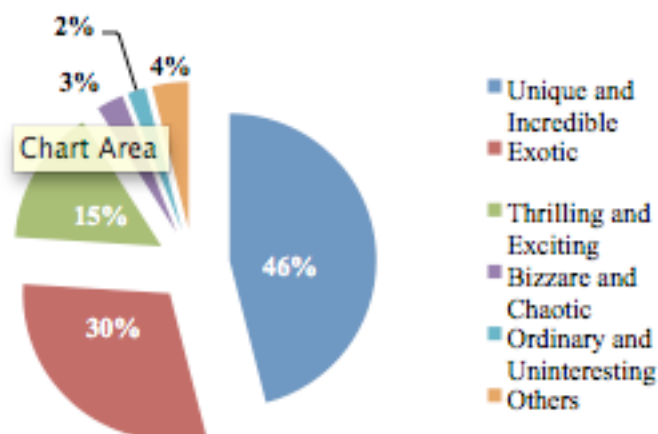


Figure-I Image of India as perceived by tourist

In the survey two queries were put up, A- to know that how is the prevailing brand of 'Incredible India' doing and B- to know how is the conventional tagline of hospitality in India 'Atithi devo bhav' perceived by the International tourists.

A-Perception of tourists whether "Incredible India" suits India Aptly:

Out of the 400 who were surveyed and administered the questionnaire, more than 85% tourists feel that 'Incredible India' describes India aptly. In absolute numbers 224 agreed, while 120 strongly agreed which shows that Incredible India describes India, her people as well as the culture and environment of the region aptly (Fig-2).

It is India's uniqueness that attracts tourists and its diversity that has something to offer to everyone; her history and heritage, culture and languages, spices and bollywood that give an exotic experience to her visitors making it 'Incredible India.' On the other hand, according to our survey 11.5% of the tourists are of the opposite opinion. 38 people agree and 8 people strongly disagree with this statement. Reasons being, the traffic snarls, cheating, beggars, petty thefts and other incidents of sexual harassments.

B- Perception on India's conventional tagline of hospitality- "Atithi Devo Bhava": The verse "Atithi Devo Bhava" is derived from Scriptures, which means - Consider the guest as God. This beautiful cultural belief has its imprint on Indian tourism too.

In 2003, Ministry of Tourism for the first time used it as a tagline for social awareness campaign that aimed at welcoming inbound tourist with love, warmth, and respect in our country. 'Atithi devo bhava' attracted as many as three million tourists from

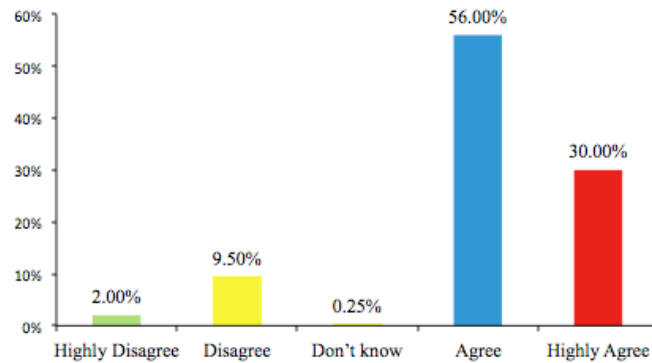


Figure II: 'Incredible India' Describes India Aptly

across the world in year 2013. The survey reflects that 49.8% of foreign tourist respondent agreed to the conventional tagline of 'Atithi devo bhav', 21.8% strongly agreed with the it. Of the 400 respondents surveyed only 1.3% are not aware of this tagline because of linguistic constraint. Only 17.3% of the total respondent disagreed because their travel experience diverged from it. (Fig- 3)

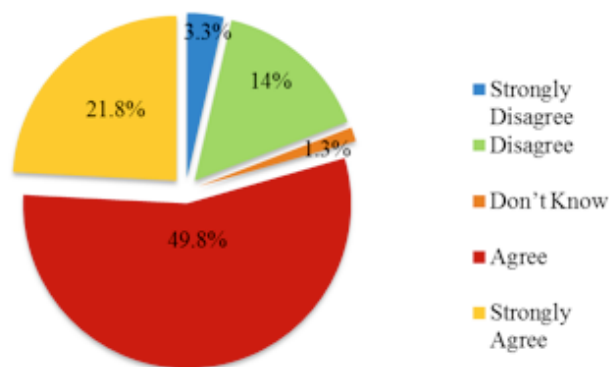


Figure III: Perception of Foreign Tourists in Indian Belief in 'Athithi Devo Bhav'

Brand identity is fundamental to consumer

2. Brand Identity

recognition and symbolizes the brand's differentiation from competitors. Brand identity contains all those noticeable elements of a brand that identify and differentiate a brand in target audience mind.

Top 5 words Synonymous with Land of India

For Tourists the destination itself acts as a source of identification of not only the destination's name, its character, its unexplored beauty, cultural ethos, and the sheer spirit of the place. Here, Brand identity refers to the various images underlined in the structured

questionnaire which was given to the respondents, they were to choose the one that relates best with India as per their perception and experience. The best five have been represented in percentage to the total through doughnut graph (Fig-4).

The survey results have shown that India identifies most with Spices, Bollywood, Temples, Colors and Traffic snarls. 27% respondents attributed such identity to Spices, as India worldwide is known as ‘Land of spices’. Multi-textured cuisines found all across the country are well known. Bollywood- the film industry of India also identifies well with India in International community scoring impressive 22%, closely followed by Temples with 21%. Temples reflect a synthesis of art and architecture, the ideals of dharma, beliefs, values and the way of life cherished under Hinduism. Colours are also an integral part of India’s identity.

Brand identity leads to brand loyalty, brand preference, high credibility, good prices and good financial returns.

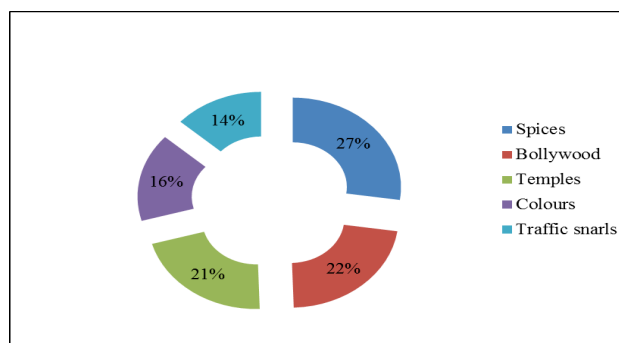


Figure IV: Share of the Top Five Words Synonymous with the Land of India

3. Brand Building

Brand building is about the core brand elements based on the traveler motivations. It needs a collaborative effort of all the stakeholders and provide a unique opportunity to sell all brand elements of India collectively to the world. Nations are complex cultural products created after the amalgamation of tangible and intangible components like nature, history, people, politics, arts, culture, architecture and innumerable others.

4. Brand Promise

A brand promise is the commitment to deliver which is made between that brand and its audience. It conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination. It enables you to deliver your brand in a way that connects emotionally with your customers and differentiates your brand. It is about selecting a compelling tagline/ slogan/ logo.

Taglines that appeal the Tourists

Taglines/slogans/logos are the visual aids of a brand that helps in making it more interesting and appealing for its consumers. In tourism industry creating a brand destination through taglines is important as it helps visitors connect to the place in all its essence and flavor. A tagline strongly gets etched into the memory of travelers which prompts a decision to travel to experience it. In this study, the task of reinventing the brand of India as a tourism destination was undertaken and in the process various taglines are suggested

India- Above and beyond
 India- Truly yours, Truly mine!
 India- It all happens here!
 India- Something for all
 India- Intimately yours!
 India Invites ! Be there.
 India- Another dimension
 India- Let the mystery unfold!
 India- Let's go for it.
 Mystique India calling you

Out of these taglines, the survey shows, 'India Invites! Be there' acclaimed the maximum appeal with 38.5%, followed by 26.3% for 'India- It All Happens Here'. 'India – Let the Mystery Unfold', 'India – Let's go for it' and 'India – Something for All' with 15.5%, 10.8% and 6% respectively, are the other credible taglines.

Touch-Points of Indian Tourism (selective cases)

The image, a person has of a tourist destination is a function of various touch points of reference. Touch points are physical manifestations of how a destination delivers a certain experience e.g. instantly recognizable Taj, as the epitome of love and romance, and more recently, Banaras Ghats, as 'Ganga' is emerging as the latest brand element of Indian tourism among other scores of brand elements.

I - Taj Mahal as the Touch point:

In the scenerio of Indian tourism the Taj remained as the centre of attraction for a long time, as people have been coming to witness the profound love Taj Mahal reflected. People aspired to pledge their love in the backdrop of Taj standing there as a mute witness.



Figure V: Touch Point-Taj Mahal

We conducted a research trip to Taj, Agra, in order to have a first-hand feel of one of such brand touch-points of Indian tourism. But, our Taj experience deviated much from the fable that has been woven around it! We witnessed the civic amenities in shambles, poor maintenance, and total lack of ambience. It is felt that Taj Mahal needs to be reviewed as the most prominent touch point of Indian tourism. Either it should be maintained under PPP or change its priority order as the touch point in the new campaign.

II – *Banaras as the Touch point*: The Ganges has a strong presence within the Indian subcontinent, and is considered as the lifeline of India. Being of such importance, millions of people visit the Ganges, making it a powerful hub of religious and cultural activity. Ganga can be developed as a major tourist attraction and navigation corridor as part of the government's plan to rejuvenate the river Ganga.

The huge commitment of sanitizing Ganga is a welcome move. For this purpose the antiquity of Banaras Ghats and river Ganga is being packaged together. The essentials of this plan to make Banaras as a smart city are urban infrastructure, environment, culture and history and technology. While urban infrastructure will include developing a good public transport for Banaras such as mono rail, the work of cleaning Ganga and waste management has to be undertaken under the environment head. In technology, IIT-BHU and also IIT-Kanpur can play a leading role along with the Kyoto University and Japan's Advanced Institute of Science and Technology.

Outlining the plan to develop Ganga as a major tourist destination, exploring the possibility of introducing 'shikaras' on Ganga on the pattern of Kashmir. The Ministry is learnt to be working on a plan which includes river cruise facilities, floating hotels and moving light and sound shows.



Fig VI: Touch Point-Banaras

CONCLUSIONS

The present study has boldly undertaken this task of reinventing the brand positioning of Indian tourism in the global market. To brand India that is so diverse is difficult. The challenge has been to cover the entire panorama of Indian tourism under one umbrella. Therefore, this innovative research has evolved a **Master brand/ logo/tagline as – ‘India Invites! be there’**, as a direct call by the high spirited, down to earth, warm and welcoming Indian persona. The umbrella of Master brand can offer many more brands which are appropriate with their own merit in different regions of this land.

After the success of Incredible India the brand needs to be positioned at next level. No brand lives forever in the market however successful it may be. It needs to be either renovated or innovated with time.

I- Many tourists felt that the Incredible India campaign with its strong impact in the global market for over a decade should not be changed, rather it should be reinforced. To fulfill this aspiration the brand is suggested as: **India Incredible Indeed!**

(The 3x repetition of ‘In’ not only lends it more power but also accentuates its impact very well. It also endorses the success of a campaign in its life while at the same time redefines it).

II- Since the present study was undertaken with the purpose of reinventing the brand position, the Innovated Branding for Indian Tourism is recommended as: **India Invites! Be there.** Otherwise the vast canvas of India cannot be conveyed as a single expression.

(‘India Invites’ makes a direct call on the global tourists who have heard about her as a destination and yet to call on her. All the brand elements are concealed in this promise and they have to reach out to explore them. ‘Be there’ is a kind of reaffirmation of this Invite.)

Indian tourism branding should evolve now as a multi layered presentation. The entire gamut of branding needs a single umbrella like- ‘India Invites. Be there’ which should unfold the entire range of sub brands.

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