INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

Impact Factor: 5.928

A Study of Tourism Policy of Indian Government

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ABSTRACT: Tourism has emerged as a key driver of economic growth. It is one of the fastest growing economic sectors and has significant impact on trade, job creation, investment, infrastructure development and social inclusion. Tourism is a major source of employment. It is a labour-intensive sector and has significant multiplier effect on employment in related sectors. Tourism employs more women and youth than most of the other sectors. Tourism can generate resources for conservation of cultural and natural heritage and has huge potential to make positive contribution to sustainable development goals. Tourism has been the most affected sector by the Covid-19 pandemic. It has highlighted the vulnerabilities of tourism sector and our capacity to respond to such crisis. Post COVID-19, it is highly unlikely that tourism will return to business as usual. Safety and hygiene will become key factors to select destinations. Sustainability will become more prominent in tourism choices, due to greater awareness of climate change and adverse impacts of tourism. The crisis is an opportunity to consider the long-term implications of the crisis and reimagine the future of tourism and coordinate action across governments at all levels and the private sector

KEYWORDS: tourism, economic, policy, Indian, government, sustainability, labour, sector, cultural

I. INTRODUCTION

Challenged by COVID-19, India has come out with the resolve to become self-reliant. "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" is a call to become vocal for local. India's quest for self-reliance is about creating strong enterprises in India. Enterprises that can become global forces. Selfreliance is about generating employment and empowering our people to come out and create solutions that can define the future of our country. Aatmanirbhar Bharat will use the crisis as an opportunity to take advantage of new technologies, implement green recovery strategies, and shift to policy and business practices that better balance the environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism. There are opportunities to encourage innovation, drive new business models, explore new markets, open up new destinations, and align tourism development to the Sustainable Development Goals. The spirit of Aatmanirbhar Bharat will help India realize the full potential of tourism. India is celebrating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to commemorate 75 years of progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements. Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav is an embodiment of all that is progressive about India's socio-cultural, political and economic identity. This Mahotsav is dedicated to the people of India who have not only been instrumental in bringing India thus far in its evolutionary journey but also hold within them the power and potential to enable the vision of activating India 2.0, [1,2] fuelled by the spirit of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. It is the most opportune moment to unveil a shared vision for future of India's tourism guiding its course for next 25 years to make India as the most sought-after travel destination in the world when we celebrate India@100 in 2047.

Powered by its strong democracy, unprecedented economic growth, deep technological capabilities and young population, India is an emerging superpower of the World. India's philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' sees the world as one family. It gives India an unwavering belief in multilateralism. India's traditions of non-violence and pluralism, diversity and tolerance, its yoga and Ayurveda, its Bollywood and classical dances, are all well known. There is an increasing international recognition of India's cultural and civilizational heritage. The rise of Indian diaspora to top echelons of technology industry and other professions across the world has given a great recognition to India. Tourism can truly be a vehicle for enhancing India's soft power.[3,4]

As a travel destination, few other nations can offer the diversity of products and experiences found in India. However, tourism in India, though growing consistently, is yet to realize its full potential. Growth of tourism sector will impact Indian economy in terms of spreading benefits across the country including remote areas and providing employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to youth, women, marginalized sections of the society and those in the informal sector.

II. DISCUSSION

National prioritisation of the sector is critical to ensuring focus, investment, alignment and competitiveness needed as precursors to maximizing the impact of the tourism sector for the benefit of India at large. Tourism sector must be accorded priority by Central Government Ministries, State Governments and Local Bodies. Tourism not only creates jobs in the tertiary sector, it also encourages growth in the primary and secondary sectors of industry. Tourism is a global opportunity that cannot be ignored. The National Tourism Policy 2021 is part of the vision of New India on high trajectory of growth and prosperity. The new Policy is a holistic framework for sustainable and responsible growth of tourism sector in the country. The policy is architected around five key guiding principles, five national missions and ten strategic pillars supported by an Institutional and Governance Framework. The Policy aims at Improving framework conditions for tourism development in the country, supporting tourism industries, strengthening tourism support functions and developing tourism sub sectors. [5,6]

The policy shall be applicable for 10 years from the date of notification unless extended further. Most of the provisions of the policy would require concurrent and coordinated action by the Central Government, State Governments and Local Governments in partnership with Industry Stakeholders. Specific roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders will further be spelt out in the detailed strategies and action plans, schemes and guidelines to be prepared for the implementation of the Policy from time to time. The vision of the Policy is "to transform our tourist destinations to provide world class visitor experience making India one of the topmost destinations for sustainable and responsible tourism." The mission of the Policy is "to create an enabling policy framework and strategic plan in partnership with Central, State and Local Governments and Industry Stakeholders to improve framework conditions for tourism in the Country, support tourism industries, strengthen tourism support functions and develop various tourism sub sectors."[7,8]

III. IMPLICATIONS

The key strategic objectives of the Policy are:
 (i). To enhance the contribution of tourism in Indian economy by increasing the visitation, stay and spend
(ii). To create jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities in tourism sector and ensure supply of skilled work force
 (iii). To enhance the competitiveness of tourism sector and attract private sector investment
 (iv). To preserve and enhance the cultural and natural resources of the country
 (v). To ensure sustainable, responsible and inclusive development of tourism in the country

The main guiding principle of the Policy is to promote sustainable, responsible and inclusive tourism, which will cut across all the initiatives under the policy to make India one of the top most destinations for sustainable and responsible tourism. The policy aims to promote sustainable tourism by minimizing the negative impact of tourism on social, environmental and economic aspects and maximizing the positive impact. The policy further advocates responsible tourism to bring all Stakeholders together for taking responsibility for achieving sustainable tourism, and to create better places for people to live in and for people to visit. The Policy also focuses on inclusive growth of tourism by creating opportunities for marginalized sections of society including people living in remote areas.[9,10]

Use of digitalization, innovation and technology is one of the key guiding principles for the promotion and development of tourism sector. The Policy aims to use technology for several initiatives under the Policy and aims to help the tourism industry make the most of the opportunities presented by the digital economy. The plan is to increase the support provided to the tourism industry in the digital transformation of its business models and processes. It will also aid in the digital transformation of tourism market development activities. It will help tourism enterprises to expand their market reach, increase growth, improve operational efficiencies, and sharpen their competitive edge. At a collective level, it will help to develop and customize product offerings, improve destination connectivity, generate data to track performance, and help to improve destination management.

The Policy follows a whole of government approach keeping in view that the Governments both at the Centre and States are involved in tourism in a variety of capacities including, marketing and promotion; border security; the regulation of markets such as aviation; planning regulations; controlling or managing tourism attractions such as national parks; skills development; and funding the development of roads and other infrastructure. Due to its cross-cutting and fragmented nature, tourism policy development is an increasingly complex process, with longer time-scales

and a wider scope than in the past. A whole of Government approach can address the major and multi-faceted challenges faced by the tourism industry, including the infrastructure and skills needed to meet expected future demand[11,12]

The Policy is guided by the principle that growth in tourism sector has to be led by Private Sector and the public sector has to play an enabling and facilitating role. The tourism policy places great importance on promoting entrepreneurship. The tourism policy aims to create a tourism-friendly regulatory environment by revising regulations and easing the administrative and regulatory burden for tourism businesses. This will increase the entrepreneurial scope while reducing the cost of regulation. The Policy will focus on increasing productivity, boosting the skills and competencies of all players and supporting structural change.

IV. RESULTS

India's strength lies in its unity in diversity. Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat will be a central idea under the Policy to enhance interaction and promote mutual understanding between people of different States/ UT to promote a sustained and structured cultural connect in tourism and related areas of culture, traditions & music, cuisine, sports and sharing of best practices etc. The policy recognizes that competition in tourism is not confined to tourism service providers or one particular experience, but the overall experience of the destination. It is the destinations, which have to compete and succeed. The Policy accordingly follows a destination centric approach to planning and development of tourism. The Policy aims at enhancing tourist experience throughout his journey from arrival to return and it will be a key element of planning for tourism development under the Policy. A tourist centric approach would ensure availability of all relevant information and services to the tourists online. It should also allow feedback and rating of services. There must also be a mechanism for tourists to register their grievances and seek resolution of the same. The Policy recognizes that tourism sector faces many significant challenges related to sustainable development. The challenges get further compounded in view of the multiple crises being faced by the world currently: covid-19, climate change, fuel crisis, food crisis, and water crisis. Some of the specific challenges include energy and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, water consumption, waste management, loss of biological diversity, effective management of built and cultural heritage and planning and governance.[13,14]

Green tourism or tourism in green economy refers to tourism activities that can be maintained, or sustained, indefinitely in their social, economic, cultural, and environmental contexts: "sustainable tourism". Sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.
The Policy further recognizes that sustainable tourism is not a special form of tourism often erroneously equated with eco-tourism. In this context, it is clarified that the concepts of ecotourism and sustainable tourism are quite distinct: "The term ecotourism itself refers to a segment within the tourism sector with focus on environmental sustainability, while the sustainability principles should apply to all types of tourism activities, operations, establishments and projects, including conventional and alternative forms"

The Policy aims to mainstream sustainability into tourism sector, which can aspire to be more energy efficient and more climate sound; consume less water; minimize waste; conserve biodiversity, cultural heritage and traditional values; support intercultural understanding and tolerance; generate local income and integrate local communities with a view to improving livelihoods and reducing poverty. Making tourism businesses more sustainable benefits local communities, and raises awareness and support for the sustainable use of natural resources. The Policy will endeavour to promote green tourism, which will imply significant changes in the performance of conventional tourism, as well as growth and improvements in smaller niche areas centred on natural, cultural and community resources. The growth of the latter, as a proportion of the industry as a whole, may have proportionately higher positive effects on biodiversity conservation and rural poverty reduction; whereas the greening of conventional and mass tourism is likely to have its largest effects on resource use and management, as well as on increased economic spillovers and inclusion of disadvantaged populations.[15]

V. CONCLUSION

The Policy sees the hiatus in the tourism sector brought about by COVID-19, as providing a chance to rethink and reset the direction of tourism and the values on which its success is judged. The COVID-19 crisis is a watershed moment to

align the efforts of sustaining livelihoods dependent on tourism to the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and ensuring a more resilient, inclusive, carbon neutral and resource efficient future. The Policy reiterates that India is committed to SDGs 2030 and it recognizes that tourism has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to all of the goals. The Government will set up a National Green Tourism Mission, which will work at the three levels namely National, State and Destinations. The Mission will have the following key interrelated objectives:

(i)   To mainstream sustainability in tourism sector
(ii)   To encourage climate action in the tourism sector
(iii)   To promote responsible tourism
(iv)   To promote inclusive tourism
(v)   To align tourism development with sustainable development goals 2030[16]

The Mission will forge partnership with the private sector for promoting sustainable and responsible tourism. The private sector players such as hotel owners, tour operators, and transport services can play a key role in protecting the environment and influencing tourists to make sustainable choices. Increased public environmental awareness, including traveler awareness, has contributed to the development of a host of voluntary industry initiatives. The Mission will create enabling conditions for private sector to become energy efficient and climate sound, consume less water and minimizing waste, conserve bio-diversity and cultural heritage and values. The Mission will establish mechanisms for coordinating with Ministries responsible for the environment, energy, labour, agriculture, transport, health, finance, security, and other relevant areas, as well as with State and local governments for relevant regulations, policies and governance structure. Destination's Tourism Master Plan will include environmental and social issues in order to manage the critical assets and promote greener outcomes and will be prepared by a multi-stakeholder participatory planning process. It will also include mitigation of carbon emissions, biodiversity conservation, waste management, water supply and consideration and mitigation of impacts on socio-cultural and built heritage.[17]

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