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TOURISM INNOVATIONS
A JOURNAL OF INDIAN TOURISM CONGRESS (ITC)

Aims and Objectives:

TOURISM INNOVATIONS : A JOURNAL OF INDIAN TOURISM CONGRESS (ITC) is an annual referred research Journal focusing on academic perspectives in Tourism and Hospitality. Emphasizing upon integrated approach being an inter-disciplinary field, the journal focuses on various aspects of tourism like, tourism issues, tourism impacts, Eco-tourism, sustainable tourism, tourism, marketing, Medical tourism, Health tourism, culture tourism and applied other tourism areas. Papers on any of the related aspects are encouraged for this journal. The objective of the journal is to have a comprehensive collection in various areas to develop and to disseminate update knowledge and information about tourism sector.

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SEMINAR REPORT “TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY – OMISSION, INNOVATION AND CHALLENGES”

Prof. Lalit K Bansal,

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In view of the contribution of tourism and hospitality industry in the development of economies, employment generation, entrepreneurship and skill development, strengthening of culture, contribution for infrastructural development, cementing of international relations and enhancement of our environment, this seminar on “**tourism and hospitality industry – omissions, innovations and challenges**” was organized by University Institute of Hotel Management and Tourism, Panjab University, Chandigarh on 15-16 October 2011, which was dedicated to address a wide vista of industry related issues that rightly acknowledge the importance of this sector, further appreciating the changes in the industry in form of innovations.

On 15th October at 1200 HRS seminar was inaugurated at ICSSR seminar hall by Mr. Pawan Kumar Bansal, Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Water Resources. Prof. R.C. Solti, Vice Chancellor, Panjab University delivered the presidential speech. Noted tourism author and researcher Prof. Erik Cohen; Professor Emeritus, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel delivered the keynote address. At this occasion Dr. R. N. Pandey, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Prof. Manjula Chaudhary, Director, Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management were the guests of honour. Around 133 delegates from various parts of India participated in the seminar and there were 107 research presentations in the seminar.

The plenary session started the pace for the seminar with the presentations by Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board on Destination Punjab; by Dr. R.N. Pandey- on tourism statistics; by Prof. Manjula Chaudhary on the tourism and hospitality education; and by Prof. S.P. Bansal (Director, Institute of Integrated Himalayan Studies, Himachal Pradesh University) – on sustainability issues in tourism and hospitality industry.

Seminar recommendations:

1) Need for Comprehensive Tourism Survey:

Before going ahead let's understand what people expect from India. To fulfill this gap a need for detailed survey of tourism (foreign and domestic as well as of tourism intermediaries) is felt.

2) Re-learning the 3c's – Customers, Channels and Content

Customers – The challenge is to target new and emerging markets that can be targeted. There are many other niche markets that could be offered, like medical tourism, adventure tourism, festival tourism and rural tourism.

Channels – We do not see the optimum usage of the internet at least in the Indian tourism industry especially in case of small ventures.

Content – so that individual customers can assemble their expectations and experiences on line in real time.

3) Promoting Tourism Starts from “US”

The practice of sound tourism starts from the people within India. The product needs to be promoted amongst the local people and it would generate the word of mouth that is necessary. It is also very essential that as citizens everybody must believe in the product first, before they promote it to others. This can be achieved with the help of some serious awareness campaign amongst people of India, and making tourism a culture within the country.

4) Involvement of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO)

Effective and pro-tourism NGOs can have a significant influence on tourism development as it relates to poverty reduction. They range from rural development organizations, groups concerned with the conservation of cultural and natural heritage and organizations dealing with business development issues. NGOs can play a role for developing sustainable tourism in the following ways:

- Act as a facilitator between each Stakeholder in the planning and development process of tourism development.
- Provide training and technical assistance to the local people.
- Explore and facilitate business options for linking private operators and government agency.

5) Safety and Security

Based on the rising levels of terrorism or threats of terrorism, security and safety have become major ingredients in ensuring the success of a tourist destination. There are obviously elements a destination cannot control but there are a number of initiatives that can be taken by a destination to provide for both the perception as well as the reality of security and safety.

While the overall responsibility for the security of the tourist is usually the responsibility of the State government, local government bodies must be oriented to supplement national and international security measures. The police have to become more aggressive in providing security especially in heavily tourism populated areas and during fairs/festivals.

Why not to take the help of NGO's in this issue?

6) Every Tourist Counts

Due importance must be given to all visitors, since he would be a future repeat visitor, and it is reported by some researchers that in tourism people rely more on recommendations of friends and relatives. The efforts must be on making present visitors the brand ambassador of the state.

7) Need for tourism specific laws/ legislation

Today when tourism is a big industry in itself and the demand of the hour is to have a special law or legislations for this industry. If not then the existing laws and legislations may be incorporated with special focus/sections on tourism and tourists. The crimes by and against tourists should not be covered under or adjusted with other laws. There can be a proper law which must deal with tourism and problems and perspectives related to it. The law should also be beneficial for foreign tourists who is aggrieved and has returned to his home country and is unable to come for the hearings. There must be provisions for speedy dispersal of grievances which are less harassing, less time consuming and justice should not be denied to a tourist sitting in far off country. The principle of natural justice "*Audi Alteram Partem*" must be provided to such aggrieved tourists. There should also be a provision of compensation to the aggrieved by the wrong doer. As new provision of CrPC is incorporated pertaining to plea Bargaining, similar provisions may be also incorporated in laws related with tourism. If it is not possible to incorporate sections for tourism in existing legislations/ laws then special tourism laws should be framed like on the similar pattern of POTA, NDPS Act etc., which solely deal with tourism and tourists so that whenever a crime or any wrong by tourist against local, or by local against tourist occur then immediately shelter of such legislation can be taken.

8) Count on human resource

Good planning must start with the planning for the human resource, which will drive the industry in future. The tourism and hospitality education is quite new discipline and government has already taken some initiatives for its promotion. It is felt that new schemes of MoT (Ministry of Tourism) like CFA (Central Financial Assistance- Broad Basing of Hospitality Education)/ capacity building scheme for service providers have given boost to the hotel management education in the country. It is felt that the tourism and travel education needs immediate attention. Most of the students with travel and tourism degree join tourism industry or start their ventures in tourism, ultimately contributing for the development of tourism in India. There are lots of state and central universities in India, which are running tourism programs at undergraduate and post graduate level and such universities do have provision for research programs in tourism also. Due to lack of funds the tourism departments of such universities are facing some hardships. To strengthen the tourism department of universities, MoT must start a CFA and fellowship programs for tourism programs.

Final Words

There is no denying the fact that it's been a roller coaster ride for the tourism sector. It has witnessed an era of tremendous growth. But recent turbulence in international economic and political arena made tourism industry to experience some jolts also, but still industry gave encouraging results. The role of tourism industry in development cannot be undermined. Hence it is the need of the hour to give due respect to this industry in a manner that must have enough flexibility to face turbulences also. It is also felt that by keeping future in mind, India must invest heavily in human resource development for tourism, which will make this industry a more professional industry.