

TOURISM BASED ADVERTISEMENTS IN INDIA: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THEMES USED

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the ever-growing service industry, which provides philip to economy of a country. In addition to that, it acts as an ambassador of the nation to project the image of the nation in front of the world. Perception of tourists about the tourism destination is an important parameter for choice of tourism destination. This perception is developed by the way the destinations are advertised by the respective Medias. Often there is a conflict in the way these destinations are projected by the western media and the Indian local media and government. This paper is analysing the various trends that the western and the Indian media as well as the Indian government is using to attract tourists by using content analysis methodology. Further, by using the same methodology various themes that are being projected by the Indian tourism media and government are also analysed in the paper.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to do content analysis of tourism-based advertisement in India. Tourism is an ever-growing business, which can contribute not only to national economy but also to international image of the country. How foreign tourists visualize tourism destinations and how they are projected by the foreign media are the significant factors in choice of tourism destination. However, different stakeholders project this image differently for their own gains.

This paper is attempting to analyze the major themes that are being projected in the advertisements about Indian tourism destinations by international tourism media, Indian government and Indian tourism media.

International tourists are portrayed colonial image of Indian tourism destinations based on themes of primitive nature of the country and exoticism. In reaction to this, some destinations have initiated a media propaganda of their own focusing on the local themes. Indian government and tourism media have their own representations about the tourism destinations.

The study highlights the different themes used by the Indian government, Indian tourism industry and popular tourism media as a reaction to way it is popularly perceived by international tourists because of the typical way it is showcased by western media. The difference in these representations of various stakeholders can be attributed to preconceived notions and actual reality perceived by different stakeholders.

Literature Review

Literature review of research articles published in reputed journals was undertaken to critically analyze the difference in perceived image of Indian tourism industry by various stakeholders viz. international tourism media, Indian government and Indian tourism media.

Perception of the destination plays a significant role in tourism industry (Hollinshead, 2004). Western imagination of the Indian or the Oriental tourism destinations is based on the consumption of images dominated by the political thought and perception based on it (Silver, 1993). Positive image of the destination is the key deciding factor for a choice of a tourist destination. (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989; Alhemoud and Armstrong,

1996; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Echtner and Ritchie, 2003; Choi, Lehto and O'Leary, 2007; Yilmaz et al., 2009).

The role played by the image of the tourism destination has generated significant interest in the research in this area. (Pritchard and Morgan, 1998; Jenkins, 1999; Chen and Usyal, 2002; Mossberg and Kleppe, 2005; Morgan, Pritchard and Pike, 2006; Molina, Gomez and Consuegra, 2010; Tavares, 2011) However, in spite of this there is no single agreement upon what constitutes this image. The single definition of image is still a debatable topic. One of the most agreeable definitions of the image is that it is a holistic concept resulting from impressions created in the minds of the individual based on the beliefs and ideas of that particular individual. (Crompton, 1979).

The creation of a destination image this is a complex phenomenon based on what a particular individual perceives aided by his feelings and mental beliefs about that destination. (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999;).

Mayo 1975; Lawson and Baud-Bovy 1977 The level of satisfaction regarding experience of tourism destination and the factors essential for choice of a particular tourism destination or effect of destination image created in the minds of the tourists which are function of mental faculties like bias, emotions and perceived knowledge. These finds are supported by Chon 1992 and Crompton 1979.

Silver 1993 and Cohen 1993 state that international tourists are mystified and attracted towards tourism destination by the way tourism media and international local tourism industry portray facets like primitiveness and romanticism about the destinations. Britton 1979; has similar findings.

Cohen 1993; Echtner and Prasad 2003 - have extensively researched discrepancy between tourist representation and reality. These interpretations are in concurrence with Said's (2004) seminal work on the subject matter. Here in it is pointed out how contrast has been used as a strategy to attract western tourists to Oriental locations. The industrialised west has a fascination for the contrasting primitive world like India.

Manning 1978, first pointed out that international tourism is form of neo-colonialism. Leong 1989 and Bruner 1996 were first to point out that the reaction to western oriental outlook towards Indian tourism destinations has created a natural reaction of displaying images of nationalism fueled by different motivations and asserting their versions of the story. Hasty 2002 and Cohen 2001 further point out that these portrayals are mostly targeting the horrifying colonial history of exploitation and power struggle that ultimately lead to their independence. Study conducted by Leong 1989 and Bossen 2000, reveals that the governments of developing countries are using tourism representations to promote nationalism.

Lowenthal 2005 To self-serve own interest of attracting more tourist's history is deformed using the veil heritage aims. Added to this the goal of commodity commoditisation, politicisation and popularisation gives heritage a different flavour from reality. Whereas MacCannell 1992 gives a broader explanation to the concept of tourism, apart from mere commercial activities. He asserted that tourism has a power of transforming the cultures as per its own requirement. Tourism is a complex of historical ideology, tradition and capable of self-transformation. Sabhlok 2002 interprets that the identity of Indian heritage is based on smaller groups of religion, caste and language.

Marketing plays a key role in the success of almost all the businesses. Tourism in India is no exception to this. Marketing has been a successful strategy of increasing number of tourists to India and growth of this sector. Marketing has ultimately lead to creation of brand image of Indian tourism destinations. At times it is seen that uncontrolled marketing leads to negative effect by boosting the destination more than it actually offers. (Mishra, 2020)

Image of the destination is most agreed upon decision-making factor of a tourism destination. The both push and pull factors of the tourism industry are impacted by destination marketing. (Tasci & Gartner, 2007)

Literature review of 02 number articles from A* Journal - "*Annals of Tourism*" by Elsevier:

Table 1: Analysis of Dissonance in representation and Religion and politics of Indian Tourism

	Paper 1 Dissonance in Representation		Paper 2 Religion and Tourism Politics		
Representor/ Stakeholder	American Tourism Media	Indian Govt	Indian Govt	Indian Tourism & Trade Media	Indian Popular Media
Time Frame of Data Collection	1998 to 2003		March 2002 to June 2005		
Why this timeframe?	India Targeted American Tourist base by Campaign " Eternally Yours" 1997 & “Incredible India” in 2002		Indian Tourism Industry boosted post liberalization in 1991 and by then		
Approach to Study	Developing a coding data that is not only comprehensive and unambiguous but also workable for the scheme of study		Qualitative Study through secondary data collection method		
	Methodology is based on content analysis of account of themes represented in tourism magazines, brochures and articles.		Content Analysis Technique was used since data available was text based and subjective of contributors view		
Author Background & Perspective	Both authors read everything in entirety and coded data and possible themes were shortlisted.		All content coding done by three different authors of three different religious backgrounds		
	Indian + European collaboration, as different backgrounds gives different perspective of looking at the same subject matter				
Keywords	India, representation, dissonance, colonialism, resistance.		‘Architecture’, ‘Buddhist’, ‘Christian’, ‘Church’, ‘Colonial’, ‘festivals’, ‘fort’, ‘heritage’, ‘Hindu’, ‘Jain’, ‘Muslim’, ‘palace’, ‘pilgrimage’, ‘Sikh’ and ‘temple’.		
Data Sources Used	Brochures, Magazines, Newspapers, articles - a standard communication tool within the tourism and hospitality industry.	Brochures from the New York Tourist Office of government of India	Tourism related articles to promote Indian Govt. were collected and analysed	India’s premier tourism trade magazine: Express Travel & Tourism	India’s premier popular tourism magazine: Outlook Traveller
	For Ex: Thomas Cook / Cox & Kings, etc.	Articles published and websites maintained by the Indian Embassy in the United States Advertisements sponsored by the Indian government.	Newsletter major data source - once a month frequency	Express Travel World - This magazine was selected based on it being the India’s sole national level trade publication on tourism professionals.	
	10 agencies - after that reached saturation and data was getting repeated		For India's heritage <www.incredibleindia.org>).		

Primary Contributor to data creation	Private agencies contribute based upon the preferences of the targeted customer base	Govt contributes and gives an insight into the Indian Culture	Govt contributes and gives an insight into the heritage development and history of India	Both Govt and private people contribute	Travelogues about India
Difference in Tourism Representation	“On a hot day when I was fully drenched in sweat was chased by a huge crowd on a crowded street full of smoke from the street food stalls”[the tourists]	“The signs of India becoming world’s spiritual destination: Seeking happiness, peace and spirituality tourist are pouring from almost all corners of the world.” (ITO 2001:23).	Trying to create a national identity in tourist representation Hindutva - Propagation on India as a Hindu country.	India has a mesmerising variety of destinations and experiences for tourist attraction	
Difference in Tourism Representation	“dazzlingly cosmopolitan, yet quintessentially Indian”	“India is a classic example of melting pot of cultures displaying diversity in unity not only in its current times but also across the times displaying a unique mixture of ancient glory of past and modern way of life of the present. It has all, relaxed mental peace to highly action oriented metro life.” (ITO 2001:22).	Indian Politicians exploit religious sentiments and even manipulate history based on religions, with narrow-minded political gains ignoring the harsh consequences on the society		

Table 2: Determining codes for content analysis

Sr. No.	Research Paper Title	Author(s)	Journal (A* / ABDC)	Parameters identified from literature survey, based upon how is the Indian tourism perceived by tourists and what are their agendas for the visit to India.
1	“The culture of hospitality: From anecdote to evidence”	Tijana Radojevica, Nemanja Stanisicb, Nenad Stanicc	Annals of Tourism Research 79 (2019) 102789	Culture
				Hotel workers
				Service quality
				Customer satisfaction
				Hofstede's cultural dimensions
2	“Representative Dissonance India’s Self and Western Image”	Ranjan Bandyopadhyay Duarte Morais	Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 1006–1021, 2005	Hospitality
				India representation
				Dissonance
				Colonialism
3	“Religion and identity in India’s heritage tourism”	Ranjan Bandyopadhyay Duarte B. Morais Garry Chick	Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 790–808, 2008	Resistance
				Heritage
				Religion
				National identity
4	“Emic understandings of Kumbh Mela pilgrimage experiences”	Christine N. Buzinde Jyotsna M. Kalavar Neena Kohli David Manuel-Navarrete	Annals of Tourism Research 49 (2014) 1–18	Representations
				Politics
				Kumbh Mela
				Pilgrimage
5	“Barbarians in India. Tourism as moral contamination”	Natalia Bloch	Annals of Tourism Research 62 (2017) 64–77	Ganges
				Spirituality
				Communitas
				Hampi
				UNESCO World Heritage Site
				Religious nationalism
				Postcolonial theory
				Occidentalism

With worth of around \$ 234 bn in 2018 that is the tourism industry has become the largest service industry in India. With annual growth rate of 17.9% in 2017–18 this industry is the third largest foreign exchange earner of India. Not only this but it has supported 42.67 million jobs that is approximately 8% of employment in India. ("Tourism Industry in India - FDI, Investment, Market Share", 2020)

The key cards that attract tourists to particular destination or primary tourism products (Benur & Bramwell, 2015)

Social media promotion is the key influencing factor for promotion of Indian tourism destinations. ("Factors influencing Indian tourism promotion in social media", 2020) Considering the potential of the tourism industry in India it is social responsibility of media to enhance this potential. This can be achieved by proper propagation by media about amalgamated national and international cultural values in India. (Praveen Kumar, 2014).

Methodology

Content analysis of 225 advertisements on Indian tourism by Indian government, international tourism media and Indian tourism media was conducted to identify the undergoing theme in these advertisements based on following 07 themes viz.

1. Heritage structures,
2. Cultural diversity,
3. Pilgrimage,
4. Primitiveness/ simple life,
5. Royal exotic treatment/ luxurious treatment,
6. Scenic beauty /natural beauty and
7. Spirituality and wellness.

The source of these advertisements was twitter, traveler magazines, websites promoting Indian tourism and internet. The coding of these advertisements as per the above themes was independently performed by two fellow researchers. For this detailed rules for framing the parameters were made and as far as possible standards acceptable to tourism industry were used in these coding and further categorization. Inter judge reliability was established as under to arrive at conclusions.

Table 3: Inter judge reliability of Content Analysis

Inter judge reliability

Theme	% Agreement
Heritage structures	100%
Cultural diversity	98%
Pilgrimage	97%
Primitiveness/ simple life	99%
Royal exotic treatment/ luxurious treatment	97%
Scenic beauty /natural beauty	98%
Spirituality and wellness	100%

Findings

225 advertisements on Indian tourism were coded using 07 codes as mentioned above. Interesting fact to note was that in many cases there was more than one theme that was highlighted in the advertisement. However, it had certain pattern as well. Following table summarizes the findings

Table 4: Themes used by different stakeholders for representing Indian Tourism

Heritage Structures	85
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Cultural Diversity	110
Pilgrimage	40
Primitiveness / Simple Life	56
Royal exotic treatment / Luxurious Treatment	67
Scenic beauty / Natural Beauty	89
Spirituality & Wellness	79

Thus cultural diversity, scenic beauty / natural beauty and heritage structures are the major themes in overall advertisements about Indian tourism. However, different stakeholders project different themes in their portrayal of India as a tourism destination.

Table 5: Stakeholder wise distribution of themes in advertisements is as under:

Stakeholder	American Media	Indian Government	Indian Tourism Media	Grand Total
Cultural Diversity	46	52	12	110
Heritage Structures	17	64	4	85
Pilgrimage	20	11	9	40
Primitiveness / Simple Life	48	5	3	56
Royal exotic treatment / Luxurious Treatment	25	28	14	67
Scenic beauty / Natural Beauty	33	0	56	89
Spirituality & Wellness	35	16	28	79

Thus for American media it is primitive and simple life that are the major themes in their advertisements about Indian tourism whereas for Indian government it is heritage structures and cultural diversity which are major themes. Indian tourism media on the other hand prioritises scenic & natural beauty and spirituality & wellness themes in the advertisements.

Source wise distribution of themes is as under:

Table 6: Source wise distribution of various parameters of representation

Source	Indian Tourism Websites	International Media	Online	Traveller Magazines	Twitter	Grand Total
Heritage Structures	64	10		1	10	85
Cultural Diversity	52	44		3	11	110
Pilgrimage	11	15		4	10	40
Primitiveness / Simple Life	5	48		1	2	56
Royal exotic treatment / Luxurious Treatment	28	25		8	6	67
Scenic beauty / Natural Beauty	0	26		22	41	89
Spirituality & Wellness	16	28		11	24	79

Discussion & Conclusion

Tourism is one of the key income earners and image builders for a nation. Apart for economic gains there are various intangible gains that are achieved through tourism. To attract tourists various themes and ideas about the

destinations are projected. There is a lack of homogeneity in these campaigns by various stakeholders. Each stakeholder projects a different image through its advertisement campaigns.

This paper has attempted to classify the 07 themes in tourism used by 03 stakeholders' viz. the Indian government, foreign media and local tourism media to project tourism image of India. The conclusion can be summarised as under:

Figure 1: Stakeholder wise perception of Indian Tourism

For American media it is primitive and simple life that are the major themes in their advertisements about Indian tourism whereas for Indian government it is heritage structures and cultural diversity which are major themes. Indian tourism media on the other hand prioritises scenic & natural beauty and spirituality & wellness themes in the advertisements.

It is an undeniable fact that with the available cultural, linguistic, geographical, ethnic and social diversity India has a huge untapped potential to be the global tourism leader. This in addition with the mythological mysticism and historical glory coupled with the colonial past that gives India a typical flavour as a choice of tourism destination. The most attracting features reported by most of the tourism magazines and literature which play a critical role in forming a perception of most favoured tourism destination is diversity in culture, primitive lifestyle, royal exotic and luxurious treatment, scenic beauty, pilgrimage and religious sites and spirituality and wellness. India is richly endowed with all this variety but this is not the only reason why it is being approached as a tourism destination. In addition to this India presents a typical mixture of traditional and modern style of life. It has rich cultural heritage which appeals tourists all over the world but nowadays it is also gaining fame with regards to latest technologies, hotel and resort facilities, modern infrastructure and all other latest features like pubs, well maintained urban facilities which allow a nice combo of modernity with spice of traditionalism. In addition to this India is also attracting lots of tourists with regard to medical tourism.

As seen from the content analysis of the most favoured themes that are used as an advertisement media to create a perception in the minds of the tourists visiting India there is lots of subjectivity, individual bias and hidden personal agenda. For proper promotion with aim of tourism development in mind all these subjective factors and personal agendas have to be removed and a holistic effort purely focusing on core strengths which are available in abundance in India should be used. The advertising themes should present transparency and clarity to the tourists and also be able to more than serve as a satisfying experience of hospitality and culture.

It is much easier said than done. The research paper leaves a trail for future research in this regard. While making an effort of advertisement in tourism major thrust should be upon the tourist expectations rather than preconceived notions. Analytical study of the profile of the tourists based on demographic criteria will allow proper alignment of the offerings of the tourist destination with the expectations of the visiting tourists. This coupled with further analysis of feedback of the visitors will allow development of comprehensive advertisement policy on tourism. A gap study on expectations versus satisfaction will further aid in this regard. Researchers suggest use of technologies like artificial intelligence for this purpose to reduce individual bias. This will lead to evolution of tourism 4.0 in India which can be researched further.

The overall conclusion drawn is that India has a huge untapped tourism potential. It has everything that is essential to be a major tourism player not only in the region but globally. The critical findings of the study are that perception and not reality plays a critical role in decision making regarding choice of tourism destination. The western media Indian tourism media and the government have their own specific agendas while promoting tourism which may or may not be in alignment with the tourist expectations. There cannot be any specific theme which will work in any specific time frame or with a specific tourist and that is precisely why a holistic approach in creating image regarding tourism destination should be undertaken by all the stakeholders involved. The current research work is based on the findings of the sample size and the methodology used for further clarity researcher recommends further study in this regard.

Limitations of the study

- a. The inferences drawn are limited to convenient sampling of 225 advertisements and based on the coding devised by the research team.
- b. The reliability and validity of the coding is subject to variation and is based on the rules of coding devised by the research team.
- c. Many aspects of the themes are not having watertight division and are liable to subjectivity.

The coding used lacks theoretical basis but is made as per the standard observable themes in tourism industry

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