

Election Tourism in India: A Niche Market to Encash India's Biggest Festival of Worlds Largest Democracy

Priyanka Payal

Assistant Professor,

Department of Management Studies,

Swami Keshvanand Institute of Technology Management & Gramothan
(SKIT Jaipur)

Dr. Rajeev K. Saxeena

Associate Professor,

Department of Business Administration,

University of Rajasthan, Jaipur (Raj)

Abstract: Tourism Industry's growth is increasing year by year. It is providing employment at a large scale and proving income opportunities to masses. India's rich historic places, ancient heritage, religious places, diversified cultures and landscapes have marked their place in the world, and it is rich in delicious and variety of cuisines. There are number of reasons to visit India, now a new niche market has been created in India as an Election Tourism. This term "Election Tourism" was first initiated in 2012 from Gujarat Assembly Polls and then used again in 2014 and now in 2019 Lok Sabha Election. The same positive results are expected during 2019 elections. Elections in India are conducted at a large scale and celebrated like a festival in the largest democracy of world. India got new opportunity to encash India's biggest festival of democracy through Election Tourism. It will enhance the foreign exchange earnings of India. This paper will explore the way how election tourism took place and its contribution in the

development. The research will focus upon the growth of tourism and foreign exchange earnings. The comparison of 2014 and 2019 general elections will also be dealt in the paper. Secondary source of data is used for the study and conclusion is drawn accordingly. Different charts and tables are used for the explanation of growth of Travel and Tourism sector and foreign exchange earnings. The study mainly focuses upon how Election Tourism will be contributing further for the development of Tourism Industry.

Keywords: Election Tourism, Lok Sabha Election, Democracy, Ministry of Tourism.

1. Introduction

Main fascinations for the international and domestic visitors are India's rich historic places, ancient heritage, religious places, diversified cultures and landscapes, delicious and variety of delicious cuisines and many more reasons that fascinate the minds visitors of India. There are different types of tourism in India like summer tourism, winter tourism, eco-tourism, rural tourism, medical tourism, night tourism, and now election tourism is the more addition to give a boost to travel and tourism industry. This election tourism attracts the international tourists because world's largest democracy is no less than a "Mahakumbh Mela". In this election "Mahakumdh Mela" the foreign tourists can experience poll meetings, street plays, the different types of symbols used by the candidates, folk songs, regional rallies, and electoral colors used by the contestants, create its unique identity. Even the visitors get opportunity to meet the political party candidates in rural and urban areas and engage with the voters. Various Indian travel and tourism companies pitched India's Lok Sabha Elections by offering variety of tourist package as well as election tourism package. It was formulated successfully because of electoral fever in the country. Election tourism is not only enjoyed by the visitors but also by the political party's candidates. Presence of foreigners during election campaigns among the rallies increases the charm of the gathering, as local people also get the opportunity to speak and meet the foreigners and discuss their culture as they belong to different countries.

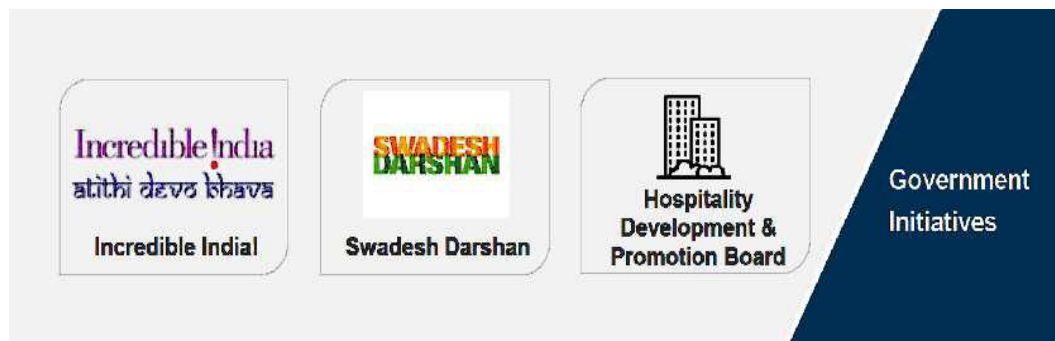


Source: <https://electiontourismindia.com/about.html>

2. Tourism in India

Tourism has different dimensions. Tourism is a thrifty production area that fulfils the mood according to the requirement of the common man and likewise the tourism market is established. Based on the demand and demand fluctuations, this market remains unstable. Due to tourism demand, tourism is highly motivated for travel. There is no fixed line of tourism business. These are neither limited to any region nor any other country. That is why tourists have many options. Either they can travel abroad or can take advantage of tourism within the boundaries of the country. According to the World Tourism Organization, there no fixed boundaries and number of tourists coming in a country and they are non-resident tourists who visit outside their own country means other countries for tourism. It also includes tourists who come in a country from different countries. According to the World Tourism Organization, tourists who go out are categorized in the slot of foreign tourism. In this category, tourists from native countries visit other countries. According to the World Tourism Organization, domestic tourism is the true meaning of internal tourism. When a citizen of a country travels to different place within the boundaries of his country, then such travels are labeled as internal tourism.

Government initiatives to promote Tourism in India

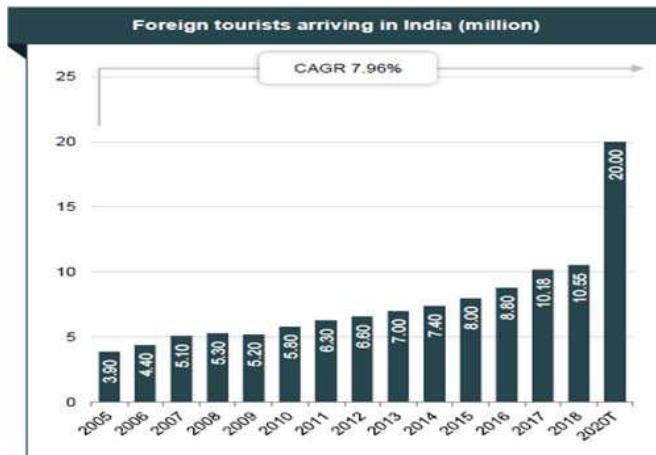


Source: Ministry of Tourism

Ministry of Tourism department used taglines and logos to promote travel and tourism sector in India. Incredible India, Atithi Devo Bhava are the initiatives to describe guest as a God. Swadesh Darshan and Hospitality Development & Promotion Board are among other new way to develop Tourism in India.

3. Economic impact of Tourism

Growth of Foreign Tourists arrivals



Note: T-Target., FTAs – Foreign Tourist Arrivals, CAGR

Source: Ministry of Tourism

During 2005 FTAs in India was at 3.90 million and now in 2018 it has arrived at 10.55 million. CAGR during 2005 to 2018 is 7.96 %. This growth is witnessed due to flexible government policies and development of infrastructure and facilities like E-Visa to international tourists.

The forecasting of 20 million FTAs by 2020 by Government of India is possible due to the development of good infrastructure initiative taken in the growth of tourism industry. In the table also from 2005 to 2018 every year there is a positive growth in foreign tourist arrivals in India.

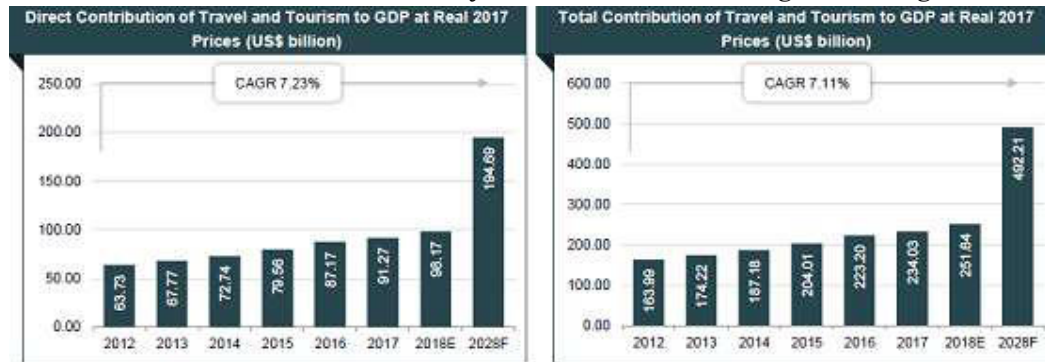
Growth in Foreign Exchange



Note: FEE – Foreign Exchange Earnings, T-Target

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Economic Times

Tourism sector plays a significant role in foreign exchange earnings in India like several other countries. In 2018, foreign exchange earnings in India were US\$ 28.89 billion from tourism sector. During 2007 to 2018 CAGR is 8.5%. . Government of India is working towards how to increase the FTAs which will automatically increase India’s foreign exchange reserve.

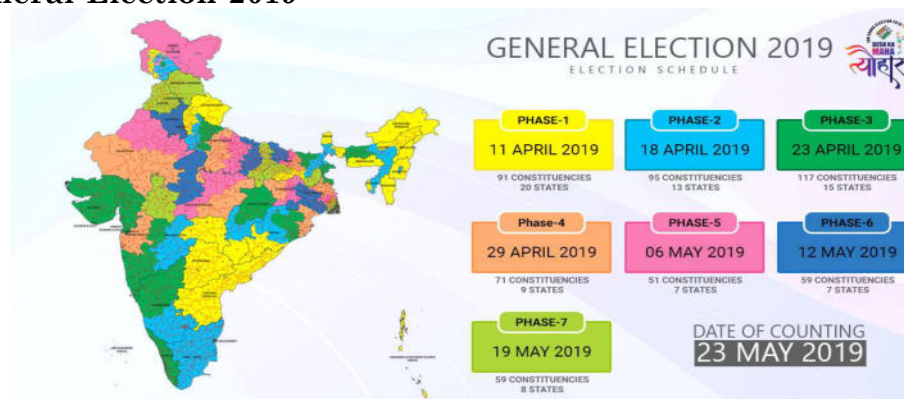


Note: E- Estimated, F -Forecast

Source: World Travel & Tourism Council’s (WTTC’s) Economic Impact 2018

India got 8th rank in direct contribution to GDP by travel & tourism industry in the world in 2017. India ranked 3rd in foreign exchange recipient in the World. Direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP at Real 2017 was US\$ 91.27 billion which is equal to INR 5.94 trillion and it is anticipated to touch US \$ 198.69 (Rs. 12.68 trillion) by 2018. Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 7.23 % for the duration of 2012-2018. World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) report for 2018 ranked India 3rd largest in the World in tourism sector. In 2018 India generated income around US \$ 234 billion. Expected revenue by 2028 will be US \$ 492.21.

General Election 2019



Source: <https://eci.gov.in/general-election/general-elections-2019/>, Downloaded on 23/8/2019

In India 17th Lok Sabha Elections were conducted in 7 phases in different states from 11 April to 19 May, 2019. This time around 900 million voters contributed their votes for 543 constituencies in different states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Chandigarh and many more. First phase of election was conducted on 11 April 2019 in 91 constituencies in 20 states. In 2014 around 68.77% voter's casted votes to their representatives, now in 2019 it has increased to 69.50 % form 142 million eligible voters in India.

In second phase elections happened on 18April 2019 which includes 95 constituencies from 13 states, in second phase eligible voters were 156 million out which 69.44% voters casted votes in 2019 compared to 2014 percentage of voters were 69.62%, which was more than this year.

Third phase of voting happened on 23 April 2019 in 117 constituencies in 15 different states. Attendance of voters in 3rd phase was 68.40% in 2019, compared to 67.15% in 2014. In 2019, 189 million eligible voters were there, percentage of voters is higher than the previous elections in 2014. In fourth phase was on 29April 2019, eligible voters were 128 million they voted for 71 constituencies in 9 states. A per Election Commission of India 68.51 % turnout was there in 2019 compared to 63.05% in 2014 for the same seats. Fifth phase of election occurred on 6 May 2019 in 51 constituencies in 7 states, 87.5 million voters were eligible to cast their votes. 101 million eligible voter in the sixth phase of election on 12 May 2019, 59 constituencies in 7 states, 63.49 % voters casted their votes in 2019 in about 113000 polling booths. Last is the seven phase 19 May 2019, 59 constituencies in 8 states. Counting of the all phases votes was done on 23 May 2019. The result is mentioned in the below mentioned table.

17th Lok Sabha Election Result – 2014 vs 2019 (BJP – INC – BSP – AITC – Others)

Party	2014		2019	
	Total Votes	Vote share	Total Votes	Vote share
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	282	31.00%	303	37.38%
Indian National Congress (INC)	44	19.31%	52	19.55%
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)	0	4.14%	10	3.63%
All India Trinamool Congress (AITC)	34	3.84%	22	4.07%
Others	183	41.71%	155	35.38%

Source: <http://www.elections.in/results/>

4. Introducing 'Election Tourism' in India

India is known as “Incredible India” because of its diverse culture, nature and people. The populace of the India are gregariously welcoming, fascinating and will entice you to come here repeatedly. In India election is considered as biggest festival of democracy. It is unique from rest of the globe and celebrated by entire country with full liveliness and enthusiasm. In India there are different types of tourism but election tourism is a new concept and established as a niche tourism product for the country. The inspiration of election tourism in India is taken from Mexico where it is called Poll Tourism. Mexico experimented their Poll Tourism in 2005. Manish Sharma (Chairman of Tourism Corporation Society and Founder & CMD of Akshar Travels Pvt. Ltd.) took the initiative to propose Election Tourism in India at the World Travel Market in London in presence of 100 tour operators and agents. He received the positive response from those operators and agents and decision was taken to take it to next level and which created a niche concept of election tourism in India. Gujarat was the first state which experimented the concept of election tourism in the year 2012 during Assembly Polls and then in Lok Sabha election in the year 2014. In 2014 participation of different countries like Australia, Japan, Germany, China, Nepal, France, UAE (Dubai & Abu Dhabi), US, Ukraine, and many more from different parts of the world. India witnessed around 5200 tourists in 2014 because of Election Tourism. All categories tourist was there which includes students, researchers, journalists, heritage & history lovers, Women’s wings, cultural exchanges, etc. Election Tourism provides the platform to international travelers to experience how elections are conducted in India. They visit rural parts of the country, where election was happening and take a feel of different types of rallies, events, parades conducted by the local candidates to raise their vote bank. Also get the exposure of strategies used by the regional candidates to influence people and promote their visions for winning election. If there is visit of any national leader, they get an opportunity to meet and interact with the candidate. Tour operators make many packages ranging from six to seven days for the visitors which include the election scenario to increase this Election Tourism in India. Election scenario includes community rallies, ballot campaign, meeting regional candidates, party leaders and election commission officer. By this new concept of Election Tourism, the tourists get the opportunity to understand the procedure of Indian elections along that they can explore by visiting the other parts of India. They can experience the heritage, tradition, and culture atmosphere in India which make India famous as “Incredible India”(<https://electiontourismindia.com/about.html>, Downloaded on 24/7/2019).

Around 900 million eligible voters will vote in 2019 Lok Sabha elections; 15 million voters are first time voters. Around \$ 7 billion expenditure is done on 2 million electronic voting machines, 11 million election officials in all 1 million election stations. U.S spend \$ 6.5 billion in 2016 elections which was less than India's expenditure (Hamdi Raini, "The Big Fat Indian Election Is the Country's New Tourism Draw", <https://skift.com/2019/03/28/the-big-fat-indian-election-is-the-countrys-new-tourism-draw/>, Downloaded on 21/8/2019).

Tourists have the curiosity to know how the elections get conducted in India and the procedure of conducting these on large scale. Tour operators and guide to the travelers to the rallies and the road show and will also answer all the curiosities of the international visitors about India's election code of conduct. The tour operators expected around 10,000 tourists in the name of election tourism as a niche service of travel and tourism industry. Elections are sold with the name of "Kumbh Mela" to boost the tourism business. Tours agents and guides are offering online theme based packages. They sell many packages to the visitors at the right cost. They sell packages of 7 days to 6 nights in just Rs 35,000(\$500) without airfare. The visits of international tourists lasted for longer duration as elections were conducted in 7 phases from 11 April to 19 May, 2019(Vaid Rohit, "Ballots attract tourists as India goes to vote (Election Tourism 2019)", https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/ballots-attract-tourists-as-india-goes-to-vote-election-tourism-2019-119033100100_1.html, downloaded on 23/8/2019).

Poll Tourism experiment generated revenues for travel and tourism industry in 2012 and 2014. Growth of election tourism in previous polls motivated tour agents and many travel operators to generate revenues in 2019 election too. The month of April and May are off season for tourism sector, there are less revenue they earn during off season. Election tourism as a niche service help the tour and travel agents to earn revenue by designing exclusively new election packages for the international visitors. Focus of tour and travel agents was to provide best deals to the foreign tourists. They created the scheme of tailor made or customized packages for them according to the convenience, taste and preference. Duration of the stay and cost are also reasonable as per the paying capacity of the international tourists. Packages of this election trip ranges from 4 to 7 days and expenditures also come in the range of \$500 to \$300. This year's unique selling points are Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh (from where Prime Minister will be contesting), Amethi, Lucknow (Congress President, Rahul Gandhi will be electing), Gandhinagar, Gujarat (BJP President, Amit Shah would be

References

- Al-Gahtani, S. and King, M., 1999. Attitudes, satisfaction and usage: Factors contributing to each in the acceptance of information technology. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 18 (4), 277–297.
- Andrews, R. L., & Currim, I.S., 2004. Behavioural differences between consumers attracted to shopping online versus traditional supermarkets: implications for enterprise design and marketing strategy. *Int. Journal Internet Marketing and Advertising*, 1(1), 38-61.
- Armstrong, G. and Kotler, P., 2003. *Marketing: An Introduction*. United States of America: Pearson Education International.
- Bettman, JR., 1979. *An Information Processing Theory of Consumer Choice*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Brinberg, D. & McGrath, J. E. 1985 *Validity and the research process*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
- Broekhuizen, T. L. J. 2003, Consumer Quality Perceptions of decision making in electronic channels vs. traditional channels. In *Proceedings from EMAC Doctoral Colloquium*. University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland.
- Broekhuizen, T. L. J., & Jager, W. 2004 A Conceptual Model of Channel Choice: Measuring Online and Offline Shopping Value Perceptions. In *Proceedings from EMAC Conference*, University of Murcia, Spain.
- Degeratu, A. M., Rangaswamy, A., & Wu, J. 2001. Consumer Choice Behavior in Online and Traditional Supermarkets: The Effects of Brand Name, Price, and other Search Attributes. *International Journal of Research in marketing*, 17(1), 55-78.
- Dholakia, R. R. and Uusitalo, O., 2002. Switching to Electronic Stores: Consumer Characteristics and the Perception of Shopping Benefits. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 30 (10), 549–469.
- Fischer, C.T. 2005, *Qualitative research methods for psychologists: Introduction through empirical studies*, Academic Press.

- Fishbein M, Ajzen I. 1975. *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley
- Folkes VS. 1984. Consumer reactions to product failure: an attributional approach. *J. Consum. Res.* 10:398–409
- Freedman, D., Pisani, R., & Purves, R. 2007, *Statistics*, 4th edition, New York: Norton Publications.
- Galvin, J.L. 2009. *Writing literature reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences* 4th ed. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak. H61.8.G34 2009
- Geissler, G. L., & Zinkhan, G. M. 1998. Consumer perceptions of the World Wide Web: An exploratory study using focus group interviews. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 25(1), 386-392.
- Gill, J., & Johnson, P. 2002. *Research Methods for Managers*, London, Sage Publications.
- Gorsuch, Richard L. ,1983. *Factor Analysis*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum
- Grazer, W.F and Stiff, M.R. 1987. Statistical analysis and design in marketing journal articles. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Spring, 69-73
- Gretzel, U., Fesenmaier, D.R., Formica, S. & O’Leary, J.T. 2006., “Searching for the Future: Challenges Faced by Destination Marketing Organizations”, *Journal of Travel Research*, 45, 116-126.
- Hacker, D. & Sommers, N. 2011. *A writer’s reference* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St, Martin’s. PE1408.H2778 2011
- Hawkins, D., Best, R. and Coney, K., 1995. *Consumer Behavior: Implications for Marketing Strategy*. United States of America: Richard D. Irwin Inc.