



Prioritising cruise tourism: prospects and challenges

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Abstract

This paper examines the prospects and challenges of the cruise industry in India. India is a magnificent cruise destination with several attractions along its 7500 km long coastline. India is home to beautiful coastlines, virgin forests, uninterrupted serene islands, and a rich historical and cultural heritage. The Indian economy is developing at a steady pace, and the growing middle-class population is increasingly eager to spend their disposable incomes on leisure and recreation. India can prove to be a global cruise destination. There is a need for a well-planned cruise tourism policy.

Key words: cruise tourism, Cruise shipping, Indian economy, leisure industry.

Introduction:

Cruise shipping is one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing components of the leisure industry worldwide. It is fast emerging as a new marketable product. India, with its vast and beautiful coastline, virgin forests, undisturbed idyllic islands, and rich historical and cultural heritage, can be a fabulous tourist destination for cruise tourists. With the Indian economy developing at a steady pace, the middle class is growing in number and increasingly possessing disposal incomes that could be spent on leisure activities. Indians could also take on cruise shipping in a big way.

All ports in India are situated in nine coastal states.

1. Andhra Pradesh
2. Goa
3. Gujarat
4. Karnataka
5. Kerala
6. Maharashtra
7. Orissa
8. Tamil nadu
9. West Bengal

On The west coast, there are ports of

1. Cochin port
2. Kandla port
3. Mangalore port
4. Marmagoa port
5. Mumbai port

On the east coast

1. Chennai
2. Ennore
3. Kolkata
4. Paradeep
5. Tuticorin
6. Visakapattanam

The Indian cruise industry: Major challenges - The Indian Cruise industry is facing several challenges, which are listed below.

1. Challenges of cost management
2. Challenges of advertising
3. Challenges of marketing
4. Challenges of health management
5. Challenges of technological advances
6. Challenges of the shipping industry
7. Challenges of Inter- national hospitality
8. Challenges of providing world-class recreation

The need to attend

1. **Challenges of cost management:** Cruise ships are the most expensive assets both as a fixed asset and to operate, making this sector very challenging. Indian companies need to focus on the challenges of managing heavy capital investment, arranging heavy venture capital, and maintaining a large work force. The companies that would come forward to invest in cruise tourism need to understand the depths of unwieldy investments and the challenges of managing in times of pandemics, seasonal shortfalls, and economic recessions.
2. **Challenges of advertising:** Advertising is one of the major challenges. Some global companies have shifted to virtual reality models. But this is also very expensive. Innovative advertising is needed to promote cruise tourism. The cruise tourists comprise mainly youth who expect rapid and smart solutions, which can be possible only through virtual reality advertising applications. All types of virtual reality advertisements are very expensive, and finding the technology itself is very cumbersome.



3. **Challenges of marketing: Cruise** companies in India need a marketing strategy, reevaluating the market place, and creating new content that is able to push the cruise line into the forefront of the customer's mind so that when the pandemic hits, the company will be at the top of the traveller's list.
4. **Challenges of health management: With** continuing emphasis on health and wellbeing due to the pandemic, the trend of cruise tourism will continue in the industry and will become a key selling point for a cruise line. As all are aware, pandemics and lockdowns crucially hit the tourism sector. Prioritising health-related issues throughout the year needs to be focused.
5. **Challenges of technological advances:** Strategies for developing India as a cruise hub, policy initiatives, and the port infrastructure potential of river cruise tourism. The role of technology is very imperative. The right technological inputs are needed to manage consistency in the year-round work of the cruise sector.
6. **Challenges of the shipping industry:** The cruise **ships emit** carbon, which is equivalent to the emission of carbon by 100 million cars. Hence, companies need to focus on limiting carbon emissions by cruise and opt for carbon-less cruises.
7. **Challenges of Inter- national hospitality:** India needs to become more updated in providing International Hospitality. People across the globe thrive to visit India, and they are different in culture, language, food, and cuisine. Hence, there is a need to address international standards in hospitality for international tourists.
8. **Creation of world-class recreation**—cruise tourism—has become a priority for the middle class and upper middle class too. Earlier, cruise tourism was only elite tourism, but now other classes of people are looking forward to enjoying cruise rides. Hence, there is a need to create world-class recreation and amusement activities.

Strategies for developing India as a cruise hub India has the potential to grow tenfold over the next decade, driven by rising demand and disposable incomes.

1. India is a magnificent cruise destination. Several attractions of India along its 7500 km-long coastline and vast river systems are yet to be unveiled to the world. Most of the rivers remain unexplored by tourists because they are unreachable and isolated. Rivers in India are linked with religious fervour, and domestic tourists rely on rivers during festive seasons. River plunges are considered a sacred activity, and holy dips are an essential part of Indian life.
2. The government has realised the potential growth of the cruise industry and is determined to enlist India in the **Global Cruise Hub** with an emphasis on providing good infrastructure. The central government has allocated budgets for the development of new ports. Indian ports need good and updated infrastructure. Ports need infrastructure to handle

3. **Role of global companies:** global players have shown a keen interest in promoting cruise tourism, and with the right infrastructure, this could happen. With the adoption of modern technology, India will certainly become one of the top tourism destinations in the world.

Indian government strategies to boost cruise tourism: India aims to increase cruise passenger traffic from 0–4 million at present to 4 million. The economic potential of cruise tourism is expected to go up from USD 110 million to USD 5.5 billion in the years to come.

1. **Promotion of Task Force:** The government has established a task force for the development of cruise tourism. The setting up of a high-level Advisory Committee, comprising national and international experts, was announced to assist the task force in creating an enabling environment for the development of cruise tourism in the country.
2. **Promotion of theme-based coastal destination circuits:** Four theme-based coastal destination circuits have been developed to activate cruise tourists demand.
3. **Gujarat Pilgrimage Tours**
4. **West Coast: cultural and scenic tours**
5. **South Coast: Ayurvedic Wellness Tours**
6. **East Coast heritage tours**
7. **Promotion of Lighthouse and Island Development Projects:** Lighthouse and island development are also being undertaken to attract coastal tourists. Some tourists will be eager to study lighthouses and island development.
8. **Promotion of River Cruises or Inland Cruises:** River cruises or inland cruises are another potential component of cruise tourism that could be explored.
9. **Promotion of cruise tourism through the Maritime Vision Document 2030:** The Maritime Vision Document has been prepared by the government of India with a focus on Heritage tourism, Ayurveda tourism, Coastal Tourism, and river cruise tourism. These new segments will attract tourists and boost maritime tourism activity.
10. **Promotion of Upgradation and Modernization of Ports:** Upgradation and modernization of ports are being carried out at seven major ports in the country. Besides, the flagship **New Inter National Cruise Terminal** is coming up in Mumbai with a total cost of about Rs 495 crore. The terminal will have a capacity of handling 200 ships and one million passengers per year and will assist in boosting the cruise tourism sector. Similar infrastructure upgrades are also planned in the following ports:
 - Goa port,
 - New Mangalore port,
 - Kochi port,



- Chennai port,
 - Vishakapattana port,
 - Kolkotta port,
7. **Promotion of Prime Minister Gatishakthi National Master Plan:** This plan is being developed with a focus on shipping, river tourism, and forest and wild life tourism along the 7500 km of Indian coastal line.
 8. **Promotion of Swadeshi Darshan Scheme:** The Government of India has introduced the **Swadeshi Darshan** Scheme with efforts to clean and rejuvenate rivers and river-related tourist activity. The mammoth **Namami Gange** project, which focuses on the Ganges and related activities, aims to provide a major boost to river-based tourist activities. All Rivers flowing across India are also lined up to get a boost, like the Ganges. These projects will assist in attracting tourists who are eager to visit river destinations.

Other strategies to improve cruise tourism: Besides the above, several initiatives that can boost cruise tourism are planned. They include

1. Infrastructure Up-Gradation in all ports
2. Rationalisation of Port Fees
3. Removing outgoing Charges in ports
4. Granting Priority to cruise ships
5. Berthing cruise ships
6. Providing E-Visa Facilities

The government of India has made cruise development a priority.

Important cruises in India include:

1. Ganga Vilas Cruise
2. Sunderban Luxury Cruise
3. M.V. Mahabaahu Cruise
4. Lakshadweep Cruise
5. The Luxury Vrinda Cruise
6. The Oberoi Motor Vessel
7. The Vrinda Cruise
8. River Ganges Heritage Cruise
9. Goa Cruise Destination

There are also a number of other cruise companies that are operating.

The cruise shipping policy of the ministry of shipping was approved by the Government of India on June 26, 2008. The objective of the policy is to make India an attractive cruise tourism destination with good infrastructure.

Conclusion

Cruise shipping is thus one of the fastest-growing components of the leisure tourism industry worldwide. It is fast emerging as a new marketable product of the leisure and recreation tourism sector in India. But there is a need to explore the vast and beautiful coastline, virgin forests, undisturbed tranquil islands, and rich historical and cultural heritage through a well-planned cruise tourism policy. The Indian economy is developing at a steady pace, and the growing middle-class population is increasingly eager to spend their disposable incomes on leisure tourism and recreation activities. If a well-planned cruise tourism policy is adopted, India can prove itself as a global cruise destination.

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