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TOURISM IN GUJARAT THRIVING ON AGGRESSIVE MARKETING

Gujarat—a state that was nowhere on the tourist map of India until a few years ago—is now being seen in a completely new light. The credit, of course, goes to the aggressive marketing campaign by the state government



International kite festival, Gujarat

Tourism is today the world's largest industry. It provides a robust gross output approaching \$304 trillion, employing more than 200 million people, and is attracting the attention of academicians worldwide. With 11 per cent of consumer spending, 11 per cent of all capital investment and 7 per cent of all government spending, this industry is considered to be one of the most crucial sectors of the world economy. It is also the

backbone for allied sectors like hospitality, civil aviation and transport.

The immense growth opportunities in this sector, the increasing consumer expenditure on travelling and the government's increasing investments in the tourism industry make this a topic worth studying. In the light of these developments, it is worth looking more closely at the aggressive marketing campaign taken up by the Gujarat tourism ministry. The most reliable superstar of the Indian film industry donning the

cowboy look and getting face to face with Asiatic lions at Gir has forced television viewers to see Gujarat in a completely new light.

Going ahead, let's look at the following:

1. The position of India and Gujarat in the context of world tourism
2. Gujarat's offering as a tourist destination
3. Initiatives taken up by the state government to develop Gujarat as a tourism destination
4. Marketing campaigns of the Gujarat tourism ministry

The position of India in the context of world tourism

India is expected to become a leader in the tourism industry in South Asia by 2020, with about 8.9 million arrivals (World Tourism Organization). The Indian tourism economy is deemed as the second-most fast-growing (8.8 per cent) tourism economy in the world by World Travel and Tourism.

Gujarat and tourism?

Typically, Gujarat is perceived as the land of the Mahatma, people with extraordinary business acumen, rich culture, handicrafts and so on. Gujarat is well known for its

industrial and agricultural growth, and has been making headlines by accounting for 16 per cent of India's manufacturing output and 12.7 per cent of India's investments. But Gujarat had rarely made a mark as a tourist destination. Gujarat was nowhere on the tourist map of India—let alone the world map!

Here is a quick look at some facts:

1. Compared to all the states and union territories in India, Gujarat ranks 10th in domestic tourist visits and 15th in foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs). Whereas states like Kerala recorded earnings of Rs 173.4 billion from tourism in 2010.

2. Gujarat could not carve for itself a distinct identity as a tourist getaway, the way its rivals like Rajasthan, Kerala or Goa could.

3. In spite of Gujarat being rated among the ten most unsung places of the world (by Lonely Planet), the share of tourism in its GDP is merely about 3.5 per cent.

4. The people of Gujarat are known for their love of travelling. If estimates of travel agency owners are to be believed, of every 100 Indians travelling abroad, more than 50 are from Gujarat. However, most people of Gujarat preferred travelling to other states or countries for leisure and entertainment.

5. There is a lack of quality accommodation and transport facilities across all major tourist destinations of Gujarat.

6. A series of calamities—natural



Somnath temple

and man-made—in the recent past also put tourism on the back foot.

7. Language is a major barrier; especially when a foreign tourist travels alone or to places away from Ahmedabad.

8. There is a dearth of strong partnerships between tour operators and travel agents, who can actually influence the tourist inflow to the state.

9. The archaeological sites, beaches and wild life sanctuaries were neglected to such an extent that local people had also forgotten their grandeur.

So the question that arises is: Does Gujarat have what it takes to be a popular holiday destination?

Can it make its mark in the tourism industry in spite of so many bottlenecks?

The answer is 'yes.' Gujarat is one of the few places in India with tremendous potential to become a tourist destination.

Gujarat—A tourist destination in the making

Gujarat, located on the westernmost part of India, has one-third of India's coastline (1600 km). The state is bestowed with beautiful beaches, mountains, vast sand deserts, a thick forest cover and rich wildlife. Historically, the state of Gujarat has been one of the main centres of the Indus Valley civilisation. It has innumerable monuments of architectural and archaeological importance, as well as temples and shrines of great religious significance.

Spiritual tourism. Gujarat has important religious spots that attract both domestic as well as international travellers.

Pilgrim spots like the Somnath Temple and Dwarkadhish Temple

India's Position in the World in 2010

- Share of India in international tourist arrivals — 0.61 per cent
- India's world rank in tourist arrivals — 40th
- Share of India in international tourism receipts — 1.54 per cent
- India's world rank in tourism receipts — 17th
- Foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) during Jan-Feb 2012 were close to 1.36 million.
- India's tourism sector contributes about 6.5 per cent to its GDP.
- Tourism minister Subodh Kant Sahai has said, "Our aim in the Ministry now is to increase India's share in the international tourist arrivals from the present 0.6 per cent to 1 per cent (of 1 billion travellers) by the end of 2016."



Navratri festival

are visited by Hindus from all over the world at least once in their lifetime. Other major attractions are Ambaji, Pavagadh, Narayansarovar, Dakor, etc. It also has Jain temples like Sankheshwar, Taranga and Palitana.

Nature tourism. Gujarat has four national parks and 21 sanctuaries. It is home to the Asiatic Lion (Gir forest), the wild ass (in the Rann of Kutchh), whale sharks off the coast of Gujarat, and the Great Indian bustards. It is also home to the four-horned antelope and black buck, bears, Nilgai, the paradise flycatcher, chinkara and dolphins. Migratory birds like flamingos, pelican and storks make Gujarat a bird-watcher's ideal travel destination. The Gulf of Kutchh is India's first Marine National Park.

Heritage tourism. Gujarat is rich in archaeological sites (more than 400) including the world heritage sites of Champaner, Indus Valley Civilisation sites like Lothal and Dholavera, ancient Buddhist sites, etc.

2. Ahmedabad's Heritage Walk is the only daily walking tour in India.
3. The presence of many erst-

while princely states in Gujarat has resulted in the state having more than 20 heritage hotels including converted forts and palaces.

Medical tourism. According to Jaynarayan Vyas, state minister for health and tourism, last year 450,000 tourists visited the state for medical care. With the kind of capacity building lined up for the health care sector in the coming days, it is expected that Gujarat will soon surpass Singapore in medical tourism.

The total health care market in India was estimated to be about Rs 3200 billion in 2012, and on a conservative estimate, even if Gujarat gets 10 per cent share of this booming market, it will throw open huge opportunities.

Treatments related to advanced radiology, nuclear medicine applications, orthopaedics (especially joint replacements), cancer care, renal transplants, cardiac and GI surgeries, urology, IVF, cosmetic surgery, obesity treatment, neurology, and the advanced diagnostic capabilities of modern labs in Gujarat have proved to be a big attraction.

Another major reason behind the increase in the number of medical

tourists to the state is the low cost of cardiac surgery, angiography, joint replacements, dentistry and other medical services, which is one-tenth the cost incurred abroad.

Business tourism. Gujarat is becoming a major attraction amongst businessmen and investors. The state offers a model for economic progress and development to other developing nations. Here are some interesting facts:

1. The chemical industry in Gujarat contributes to more than 20 per cent of India's chemical output.
2. The gems and jewellery industry in Gujarat accounts for over 80 per cent of India's total diamond exports.
3. Gujarat is rich in bio-resources and has a forest cover of 1.88 billion hectares.
4. Gujarat accounts for 40 per cent of India's pharmaceutical production.

About 7936 MoUs were signed for Rs 20,830 billion (\$ 450 billion) at the Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2011. This summit witnessed participation from 101 countries, with over 1400 foreign delegates.

Event tourism. The Gujarat government is promoting tourism in the state through its many fairs and festivals, such as:

1. Navratri (representing the true Gujarati spirit—and the world's longest dance festival)
2. International Kite Festival
3. Rann Utsav—which has been running since 2006. Around 32,000 visitors attended the last one.
4. Global Bird Watchers' Conference
5. Modhera Dance Festival
6. Tarnetar Fair
7. Chitra Vichitra Fair

Recreational and leisure tourism. Here are some of the various options that Gujarat offers to tourists:

1. Beautiful beaches along the coastline

2. A hill station at Saputara and other hill sites in South, East and North Gujarat

3. One of India's first multiplexes came up at Gandhinagar in Gujarat, which led the way to the opening of hundreds of multiplexes in Gujarat. Ahmedabad also has an IMAX theatre.

4. India's first water park came up at Mehsana in Gujarat. India's first drive-in theatre is at Ahmedabad.

5. Shopping malls are mushrooming in the affluent cities of Gujarat.

6. Gujarat has some of India's best museums.

Adventure and sports tourism. Adventure and sports lovers have much to enjoy in the state, like:

1. Aero sports at Saputara, Pava-gadh and Junagadh

2. Beach and water sports—at Ahmedpur-Mandvi, Ubhraat, Dwar-ka, Nargol, Tithal, Chorwad, Dum-mas, etc

Initiatives to boost tourism

1. A dynamic tourism policy with an aim to make Gujarat a prime attraction for international tourists. The policy promises long-term investment and business opportunities for national and international corporate bodies and private enterprises.

2. The state government is also working on developing 11 new air-ports in the state. The state already has the largest number of airports



Chitra Vichitra fair



Adventure tourism

(17) in India.

3. The Rann of Kutch is to be de-veloped as an active rural tourism destination, by involving the local community. In order to develop this destination, subsidies and manpower training are also being provided.

4. Gujarat Tourism Corporation has tied up with IL&FS to set up the Gujarat Tourism Opportunity (GUJ-TOP). Under this JV, GUJTOP will oversee 50 tourism projects.

5. The state has developed 41 large and small ports. And it has worked to lay out a road network that exceeds 74,000 km.

6. Encouragement for private-sector participation in building large tourism-related infrastructure projects.

7. Formation of a special cell to at-tract and facilitate film produc-ers to shoot in Gujarat. Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Limited (TCGL) also set up a stall at the Cannes Film Festival.

8. The concept of 'tourism policing' has been introduced, with a helpline number to provide security to tourists and to get all the necessary informa-tion.

9. An 'Integrated Tourism

Development Plan' for 37 destina-tions is in the pipeline and 24 eco-tourism projects have been taken up at a cost of Rs 210 million. These projects include eco-trails, jungle stays, desert safaris, etc.

10. Development of convention centres at Surat and Vadodara

Intensive marketing

"A successful and popular en-dorser has the capability to increase the consumer's purchase intentions and preference towards brands either directly or indirectly"—according to Lui et al

Since January 2010, TCGL has signed on Amitabh Bachchan—an evergreen superstar who is popular across the globe—to promote the state.

Bachchan's credibility as a brand ambassador is very strong because people have watched his journey through life. His start from a mid-dle-class humble background to the heights of stardom is only due to years of hard work.

The other reasons for choosing Bachchan were ensured attention, PR coverage and a higher degree of recall.



Tarnetar fair

Normally, brand endorsements by Bachchan cost between Rs 50 to 120 million; however, he offered to shoot the entire campaign without charging his endorsement fees.

The chairman of the Tourism Corporation of Gujarat, Kamlesh Patel, shared that since becoming the brand ambassador of Gujarat, Amitabh Bachchan promoted places like Kutch, Dwarka, Somnath and Gir National Park. All these destinations are seeing double-digit growth in tourist arrivals, including a 30 per cent increase in the number of foreign tourists.

In one of his blogs, Bachchan has said that the growth rate in tourism in Gujarat has been higher than the growth rate in Indian tourism that resulted from Government of India's campaign 'Incredible India.'

The tagline '*Khushboo Gujarat Ki*,' or the 'Fragrance of Gujarat,' is the creation of a team led by well-known ad guru Piyush Pandey, executive chairman of Ogilvy & Mather, South Asia.

Even TCGL's logo design was changed to feature the Gir (Asiatic) lion. The logo currently features the profile of a saffron-coloured lion, be-

side a traditional textile block printing design.

Media—TV, radio, print and outdoor advertising

"Whether it is TV, radio, print or outdoor, one can't simply miss the campaign. Internationally, too, we are present in the major in-flight and travel magazines of repute; and the campaign has run on channels such as CNN, Sky News, etc," reports Sanjay Kaul, the Commissioner of Tourism and the MD, TCGL.

Other marketing strategies

Joint promotions. Last year, Gujarat signed an MoU with Goa Tourism and is planning to sign other such MoUs with fellow state tourism boards. The idea is that the states get together and offer better packages to the tourists and understand needs of tourists in their respective states. Gujarat is tying up with Karnataka and other states for co-branding in tourism.

Road shows. Road shows were organised in neighbouring Maha-

rashtra, promoting the *Saputara* Monsoon Festival.

In order to take brand Gujarat to international markets, the government invited proposals from multiple ad agencies, which were asked to provide their creative strategies for a period of three years.

Metro train branding. In the first such case ever of a State Tourism Board taking over an entire Reliance Metro Airport Express train, Gujarat Tourism ads covered these coaches for a period of three months, spreading the flavours of Gujarat across Delhi.

Achievements of the Gujarat tourism department

The efforts of Gujarat government's tourism department have resulted in a considerable growth:

1. Data available from April 2011 to January 2012 shows a tourist count of 18,183,801—a growth of almost 18 per cent. International tourist arrivals to Gujarat grew at a much higher CAGR of over 45 per cent.

2. TCGL received the annual award from Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) for being the country's best tourism department for 2011.

3. TCGL won the National Tourism Awards for 2005-06 and for 2006-07 for the 'Best Kept Tourism Monument' (Champaner) and for 'Excellence in Publication Material' (collateral).

4. The state received the 'Best Tourism Film Award' from the Government of India in 2006.

5. The state also received an award for the 'Best Ethnic Tourism Pavilion' in Satte-2007 in New Delhi.

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