

Vocal for Locals: A Boon to boost Domestic Economy of**Andhra Pradesh**

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ABSTRACT

Tourism, defined as the movement of persons from the place of their ordinary residence to other places for more than one day either for pleasure or for business motive, enhances the revenue of the economy, creates millions of jobs, develops the infrastructures of a country, and promotes cultural exchange between foreigners and native citizens or among the citizens of the same country. The tourism industry which has been growing at significant rates particularly during the era of liberalization and globalization has come to a grinding halt consequent upon the onset of the COVID-19 from the beginning of 2020. Doors were completely shut down for the foreign tourists. However, since November 2020, gradual relaxations have been effected for the domestic tourists. Since, the domestic tourism constitutes an overwhelming proportion of the total tourism in terms of number and revenue earned, it is imperative to promote domestic tourism. Honourable Prime Minister of India emphasized the importance of promoting the domestic tourism. Andhra Pradesh is one of the top ranked states in India in attracting the domestic tourists in view of existence of vast scope for the religious tourism and eco-tourism even though it is lagging behind in attracting the foreign tourists. Ever since, the new government assumed office, several innovative measures are taken to promote domestic tourism. Under the stewardship of the new Tourism Minister, Mrs.Roja, the state is expected to regain its lost glory not only in attracting the domestic tourists but also to woo the foreign tourists.

Key Words: Domestic Tourism, Foreign Tourism, Religious Tourism, Eco Tourism, COVID-19
Vocal for Locals

Introduction

Conceptually, Tourism is divided into domestic tourism and foreign tourism. This categorization enables to understand and to analyse impact of Tourism on the economy. Domestic tourists are those who belong to own country and travel generally within country but outside of their living area for entertainment, business or office purposes for the duration of more than 24 hours. Foreign tourists are those who belong to other countries and travel crossing their national boundaries with passport and visa permissions. Both are treated with respect and gratitude with full sense of “AthidhiDevoBhava” in India. In fact, foreign tourists are given more respect and importance as they contribute in terms of foreign exchange and promote cultural exchange among countries in a globalised world now. However, in almost all developing economies including in India domestic tourism occupies major proportion in terms of numbers with almost 80 to 95 per cent of total tourists’ inflow and a lion’s segment in terms of contribution to domestic income and employment every year. With a view to realising the goals of Atmanirbhar Bharat, Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a clarion call for according 'vocal for local tourism' in December 2020. The Central government is taking all measures to attract tourists through schemes like 'Swadesh Darshan and Prasad'.

Focus of the paper

This paper attempts to study the size and pattern of the domestic tourism in India in general and in Andhra Pradesh in particular. The paper also strives to justify the prominence and importance being given to the domestic tourism to revive the economy which was hit hard badly by the Covid-19 Pandemic and the fiscal and other promotion measures being extended to the Tourism industry in Andhra Pradesh in spite of the fiscal crunch being faced by the state.

Methodology

The study mainly sources its data from the secondary sources such as those published by the World Tourism Organisation, IMF and the World Economic Forum, Reports of the Ministry of Tourism being issued by both Union and the Andhra Pradesh state governments. The paper also made use of the earlier studies relating to the impact of Covid-19 on tourism and tourism policies appeared in newspapers like Economic Times and Tourism journals.

Tourism Industry on the Eve of Covid-19

International Tourism maintained sustained growth during the last decade with 1.5 billion tourists travelling worldwide in 2019. It is the largest provider of employment with major share going to women and youth. Nearly 54 per cent of workforce employed in the tourism industry is women particularly from the marginalized sections of the society indicating that tourism industry is the pace setter for achieving empowerment of women and the marginalized sections of the society particularly in developing countries like India. Tourism is the third largest export industry with the value of US \$ 1.7 trillion of which fifty percent is shared by low developed countries. In fact, it is the accelerator of economic growth in many developed and emerging

economies that are growing faster than global economy. According to the Travel and Tourism Report 2020, this sector contributes nearly 6.9 per cent to GDP and 8.0 percent to employment in India mainly in small medium enterprises and to the informal labour. The Travel and Competitiveness Report, 2019 published by the World Economic Forum ranked India at 35th position out of 145 countries in attracting the tourists. During the last decade, it became one of the vibrant sectors in accelerating India's economic growth.

Pandemic Driven Sickness

With the onset of Covid-19 in China in December 2019 and since the announcement of this disease as global pandemic by the WHO on 1st March 2020, world experienced many shockings in all spheres of life. Tourism is one of the worst affected sectors due to international travel restrictions, lock-downs within countries and various restrictions on the gatherings of local people in social, cultural activities. By April 20, 2020, there was 100 per cent travel restrictions and the lives of the people have come to grinding halt. By the November of the same year, 27 per cent of all destinations were permanently closed for international tourism with a view to reduce transmission of the deadly virus and to save the lives of millions of people.

As a result of these restrictions on international travel, the total number of international tourists travelled drastically cut down from 1.5 billion in 2019 to just 381 million in 2020 registering unprecedented a negative growth rate of -74.0 per cent. Earlier, due to the fear of infection due to SARS in 2003 the growth rate of tourist decelerated by only -0.4 per cent and during the global Economic downturn due to sub-prime crisis in 2008 the inflow of tourist travel fell by 4.0 per cent only. During the Covid-19 period, the Asia-Pacific region recorded the highest negative growth with -84 per cent, attracting only 57 million in 2020 when compared to 360 million in the previous year. It resulted in many unwanted and unwarranted consequences in the global economy.

Loss in export revenues from international tourism is US \$ 1.3 trillion. Nearly 120 million direct jobs have got evaporated, let alone indirect jobs and businesses, aggregately leading to the loss of global GDP to an extent of over US \$ 2 trillion. World Tourism Organization estimated that the total income loss due to Covid-19 is estimated to be 11 times the loss of GDP due to Global Economic crisis of 2009. Tourism sector was ultimately thrown back by 30 years to the levels of 1990s leaving many dependent families, firms on roads with empty stomachs and offices.

In India, as many as 14.5 million jobs, out of an estimated 34.8 million active jobs in tourism during the pre-pandemic period of 2019, were expected to have been lost as a repercussion of the pandemic and the resultant lockdown in the first quarter of 2020-21. India's GDP is estimated to have contracted by 8.0 per cent in real terms in 2020-21. This implies an overall economic loss of Rs. 11.6 trillion.

In Andhra Pradesh, tourism industry contributed nearly 10 per cent to the state GDP until 2019. As per estimates of A.P Tours and Travel Associations, the industry employed about 6000 workers. But the industry sustained almost zero revenue for over 17 months from the date of announcement of lock down in March 2020. It was estimated to have incurred a loss of Rs. 425 crores, with 95 per cent of employees having lost their jobs.

Post Lockdown Period – The Tortoise Revival

Covid-19 and its precautionary compulsions brought tremendous changes in the socio-psychological behaviour of the travellers. Now majority of them preferred to travel nearby destinations in their own countries as they prefer safe and comfortable relaxation. Travelling in large groups is avoided and the tourists prefer to travel in small groups confining to their close kith and kin. Nature Tourism, Rural tourism, road trips through cars or small vehicles have become popular choices for them for getting clean and healthy air and atmosphere to come out of long periods of indoor stay due to lockdown. Majority of young travellers are now willing to come out of their home town or village even though scepticism continues to dominate the mind set of middle aged and senior citizens.

India's Potential in Domestic Tourism

The UNWTO (2020) report acknowledges the potential of domestic tourism as an alternative for recouping the tourism industry. It showcases that the major domestic tourism markets in the world are India, China, The USA, Japan, Brazil, France, Spain, Russia, and Korea. India is the major attractive destination for domestic tourists as the country is endowed with rich diversified historical, geographical, natural and cultural resources.

There had been a continuous increase in domestic tourist visits, with the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) registering at 13.63 per cent during the period from 1991 to 2015. But in the case of the foreign tourist visits, though there has been increase over the years in absolute numbers, there was a decline in certain years like 1998, 2001, 2002, 2009 and 2012 due to global issues like, East Asian Crisis, SARS, Sub-prime Financial crisis etc., which certainly impacted our tourism performance. The foreign tourist visits to all States/UTs during 1991 to 2015 witnessed only a CAGR of 8.71 per cent.

As per tourism statistics provided by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, out of total tourists visited traditionally India has large chunk of the domestic tourists. If we fathom tourism data during the first two decades of the 21st century, these trends would be amply clear. The relevant information is provided in Table – 1. As data reveals, during the last two decades, even in crisis years like global financial crisis of 2008-09 and during the present Covid-19 Pandemic period, domestic tourism accounted for nearly 99 per cent of the total tourists inflow in the country. It has been a great strength and asset for our economy to speed up our GDP growth and create employment at a large scale in the nook and corner of this vast country of continental size.

TABLE- 1

Tourists' inflow into India during the selected years

YEAR	Domestic tourists (In millions)	Foreign Tourists (In millions)	Total tourists (In millions)	% of Domestic tourists in Total
2001	236.47	2.54	239.01	98.9
2005	392.04	3.92	395.96	99.0
2010	747.70	5.78	753.48	99.2
2015	1431.97	8.03	1440	99.6
2019	2321.98	10.93	2332.91	99.5
2020	610.22	2.74	612.96	99.5

Source: India Tourism Statistics 2021, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

Even in the COVID -19 affected year in 2020, domestic tourists constituted around 99.5 per cent, even though, in absolute terms the total number of tourists declined drastically due to lockdowns and other restrictions on the movements of people from one state to another state. NRIs data are not included in foreign data as they are our citizens and they bound to visit their motherland even without any special tourism facilities and packages to see and meet their relatives and friends.

More earnings in domestic tourism

According to an estimate made by the NCAER, an average domestic trip is estimated to cost much less than other types of trips for a tourist. A domestic trip is estimated to cost only Rs. 5,429, as compared to the corresponding in bound trip at Rs. 2.10 lakhs and outbound trip at Rs. 60,000. However, since the domestic tourists undertake number of trips, the total expenditure incurred by the domestic tourists will be considerably very high. Hence, the contribution of tourism to the economy is mainly on account of domestic tourism and hence it needs to be encouraged in all possible ways.

Andhra Pradesh – The Leading in Domestic Tourism Destination

Within India, some states have been in the forefront in attracting the domestic tourists with their pro-active policies and encouraging packages. Andhra Pradesh has been among the top five states during last decade as a leading successful state in attracting the tourists. But it doesn't have a place even among the top ten states in attracting the foreign tourists. During 2020, the number of domestic tourist visits to the States/ UTs was 610.22 million as compared to 2321.98 million in 2019 registering a negative growth of 73.7 per cent. The top ten States/UT in terms of number of domestic tourist visits (in millions) during 2020, were Tamil Nadu (140.65), Uttar

Pradesh (86.12), Karnataka (77.45), Andhra Pradesh (70.83), Telangana (40.00), Maharashtra (39.23), West Bengal (28.84), Madhya Pradesh (23.52), Gujarat (19.46) and Punjab (16.69).

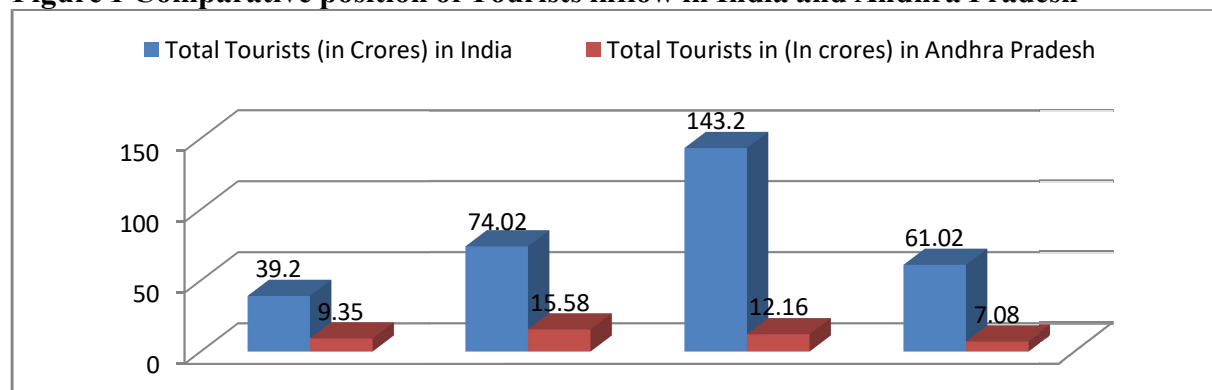
Table: 2

Domestic Tourism in India and Andhra Pradesh				
Year	India	Andhra Pradesh		
	Total tourists (in Crores)	Total tourists (In crores)	%	Place
2001	23.65	-	-	-
2005	39.20	9.35	24.50	-
2010	74.02	15.58	21.00	1 st
2015	143.20	12.16	-08.49	3 rd
2020	61.02	7.08	-11.60	4 th

Source: India Tourism Statistics & Tourism at a Glance, different years, MoT, India

From Table-2, one can observe that before bifurcation of state in 2014, combined Andhra Pradesh had maintained top position in domestic tourists visits. After that, the residual Andhra Pradesh with thirteen districts is also keeping up top position with the 3rd place among all states. But in the case of foreign tourists, the state is always placed above 10th rank among all the states in India. Even in the COVID year 2020, the state realized 7 crore domestic tourists though it registered negative growth of -11 per cent when compared to the previous year. In terms of aggregate visitors, the state achieved 4th position in India, which is not insignificant given the grave situation in the globe and in the country in view of Pandemic induced fear and uncertainty. Andhra Pradesh has been proving its potentiality in attracting considerable number of domestic tourists from all over India. This information can be lucidly presented in Graph – 1.

Graph -1

Figure 1 Comparative position of Tourists inflow in India and Andhra Pradesh

Source: Computed for the data in Table – 2.

Abysmal Levels of Foreign Tourists

During 2020, the number of foreign tourist visits to all States/ UTs in India was 7.17 million as compared to 31.41 million in 2019 registering a negative growth of -77.2 per cent. The top ten States in terms of number of foreign tourist visits (in millions) during 2020 were Maharashtra (1.26), Tamil Nadu (1.23), Uttar Pradesh (0.89), Delhi (0.68), West Bengal (0.46), Rajasthan (0.45), Punjab (0.36), Kerala (0.34), Bihar (0.31) and Goa (0.30). But for many reasons, the state had been lagging behind in the footprint of foreign visitors even before 2019 Covid. It had been recording ranks over and above 10th position among all states with average tourists visits of less than 30 lakh per annum during the last two decades. So there is a need to devise suitable measures to woo new tourists to Andhra Pradesh to earn foreign exchange and to boost its economic growth during the post COVID-19 period.

Potentiality of Domestic Tourism in Andhra Pradesh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people on the eve of 73rd Independence Day speech, 2019, to take pledge to visit at least 15 places locally within three years to regain charm of the domestic tourism and boost local economy again. All states including Andhra Pradesh is trying to build confidence among people to come out and visit nearby places.

Thus, domestic tourism has been an important activity to recover from sluggish growth in general and to improve fiscal position in the progressive state like Andhra Pradesh which is already reeling under difficulties of revenue loss due to the bifurcation of the state and COVID-19 negative ramifications. After fighting with the second and third wave of the virus, the Andhra Pradesh state government is trying cautiously to opening of the economy for different productive, trade activities including tourism with strictly following COVID protocols. Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board recognized tourism as one of the drivers of state growth. It is one of the focused sectors since 2014 to take proactive policies not only to attract a greater number of tourists to this area but also to make its tourism department slogan- *Everything is Possible*- a realistic experience to all types of the visitors.

As we know human beings are different in their views, tastes and likes. Andhra Pradesh is one of the states in India which is capable to provide different types of tourism experiences to satisfy all types of tourists from all over the world. Andhra Pradesh, to begin with, is endowed with all types of natural resources as it is located in South East border. It has second largest coastline of 978KM after Gujarat with beautiful beaches, lakes, and back waters, the Godavari and Krishna deltas lands which enthrall the visitors to touch their inner core of souls. Coastal Andhra is more demanded not just normal people but it attracts more film makers, artists and cine directors as regular cine shootings are going on. Large ocean area can be developed for water-based tourism with boat races, marine food festivals etc.

The State is gifted with eco-tourism spots with vast stretches of Eastern Ghats from North to South with different names and distinctiveness. From Arakuvally near Visakhapatnam to

Manyam area to PaapiKondalu in Godavari districts to Nallamala, Seshachalam deep thick forest with stunning waterfalls in Rayalaseema area will certainly captivate nature lovers. It is the center of deep natural caves like Borra caves in Vizag and Belum caves in Kurnool district. It is famous for wildlife sanctuaries, national parks like Tiger reserve in Kurnool district and NellaPallu in Nellore district which is the center of continental wide migrated birds in particular seasons. State tourism department is providing hill resorts, Jungle Forest and Haritha chain hotels to provide basic facilities to the safety and comfort of the tourists. Hill tracks are suitable for adventurous games.

The State had been well-known with historical kingdoms and constructions to meet the tastes of archeological and heritage tourists. North Coastal districts were ruled by the Gajapatis, Middle Andhra by the Shalivahana, Chalukya dynasty and Rayalaseema, Southern Andhra areas ruled by Chalukya, Cholas, Vijayanagara kings for centuries and developed this area diversified art and culture.

Rayalaseema region is the area in unique with locations of Paleolithic ancient man habitations and renowned Ashoka rock edicts which is firmly take every visitor to the nostalgia. Andhra Pradesh is home to many pilgrim centers with all types of religious followers from the Hindu, Muslim, and Christianity. Coastal Andhra has many ancient centers of Buddhist religion like Amaravathi, Ghantashala etc, which are attracting national and international tourists. We can witness even Jainijim temples. Pilgrim and temple tourism has been main source of domestic tourists. State has rich income earning temples like Tirumala, Srisailem, Annavaram, Bejawada Kanakadurga, Mantralayam Puttapatri Sai baba and more than thousand small local temples, durgas, churches in different districts.

The Telugu people is culturally branded for Vihara, (travel) Ahhara (food) and Vinodam (entertainment). They travel to their relatives, friend houses seasonally from the urban to rural and rural to rural to participate local festivals like Sankranti, Dasara, Shivarathri and Goddess Durga pujas.

Present Andhra Pradesh has been famous and exceptional in local products in rural and semi urban towns where rural tourism or tribal tourism can be developed and utilized to support "Vocal for Local" in a precise way. It would generate demand for local products which in turn creates income and employment on a mass scale. For example: Tirumala Laddu, Kondapalli wood toys, Dharmavaram Cotton sarees, Vijayanagaram Musical instruments and Araku coffee. Many of them have been patented and have been given Geographical Indicators to be recognized worldwide. These local products should be advertised with state tourism ambassadors to make them popular in marketing. It has multiplier effect on creation of mass entrepreneurship in remote areas.

Andhra Pradesh state is fit for medical tourism especially Ayurvedic as rare species and herbs are available in Eastern Ghats which has to be harnessed fully. If state govt provides

sufficient infrastructure, this area is equally fit for Cine tourism with beautiful natural locations, hills and historical constructions.

Conclusion

The existence of natural, cultural, religious, historical and geographical advantages of Andhra Pradesh state can be utilized with clear policy support and vision to develop domestic tourism with safety and security as primary prerequisite to improve confidence among tourists to travel again and again. Present Tourism Minister of the state, Mrs. Roja has assured to take several innovative measures to rejuvenate the tourism industry in tune with the State Tourism Policy for 2020-25 which would give required impetus to this sector with responsible tourism practices and innovative tourism packages.

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