



Integrated Destination Development Practices of Gujarat Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Being an interdependent industry, tourism needs to incorporate integrated development practices in order to attract increased tourist footfall, enhance tourist experiences, generate local employment, promote sustainable growth of the destination, and survive in a competitive world. The segregation method of operating the business may lead to undesirable consequences for the community, industry and the country at large. Therefore, the study aims to explore various integrated development practices adopted by the Gujarat government to develop the state as a tourist destination. An exploratory research design is employed for this study. The information collected for this research is based on secondary sources of data such as journals, websites, and PDFs. Out of 28 States and 8 Union Territories of India, Gujarat was selected as the sample for the study. It has been found that the government has already made the alliance with local community, other tourism States, Private companies to develop amenities and promotion of the destination. The state has also developed the New Tourism Policy 2021, which focuses on the all-inclusive development of the destination. It has been recommended to expand the integral collaboration approach by including inbound tour operators, tourism educational institutions and universities and mega event partners.

Keywords: Integration, destination, development, Gujarat, Tourism

1. Introduction

It has been seen that destination management needs an all-inclusive approach with a major focus on tourists' satisfaction, marketing and promotion of the destination and resource management. This ultimately requires an integrated effort from all stakeholders, including tourists, the community, suppliers, government departments, NGOs, and the private sector, among other¹. The ambiguities in the efforts of any of them may lead to a negative impact on the tourists' satisfaction, economy, environment, society and the survival of the destination as a tourist place in a large context. It would become very difficult to survive in this competitive world with a fragmented business.

Being an interdependent industry, the tourism destination needs to have integrated development practices and network-based operations so as to provide tourism products to tourists as a whole and work in the direction of sustainable growth (Macchiavelli, 2001). It has been seen that, by collaborating on the work of all the concerned stakeholders, more revenue-earning opportunities for the locals can be generated as well as a high level of tourism experiences can be achieved in the long term in the future².

Gujarat as a tourism destination has a wide variety of tourist attractions ranging from the longest coastline of India, desert, dense forests, hill stations, religious places, heritage places, fairs and festivals showcasing the multi-cultural aspect of the state³. The contribution of the tourism industry to GDP of the state is expected to be 10.22%⁴. According to the Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Ltd., 72% of tourists were from within the state, 26% from other states, and only 2% were from outside the country (Parikh, 2019).

It has been seen that the segments of religious tourists and business tourists account for 91% of the share of the tourists who visit Gujarat. Shraavan Gupta, executive director for leisure businesses, FCM Travel Solutions India, suggested attracting leisure tourists by improving infrastructure facilities and connectivity between tourist spots⁵. Tour operators were also of the opinion that the lack of good connectivity, improper promotional strategies and the prohibition on liquor consumption have resulted in fewer tourist footfall outside the state, Anuj Pathak, secretary, Tour Operator and Travel Agents Association of Gujarat (TAG) stated that though the state government has given provision to give liquor permit to tourists, the procedure is time-

¹An integrated Destination Management approach, Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/immigration-and-tourism/tourism/destination-management-guidelines/an-integrated-destination-management-approach/>

² <https://www.destinationbc.ca/what-we-do/destination-management/destination-development/>

³ <https://www.gujarattourism.com/about-gujarat.html>

⁴ Contribution of tourism to GDP of Gujarat in India 2002-2022, Statista Research Department, Feb 10, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/799852/india-contribution-of-tourism-to-gdp-of-gujarat/>

⁵ Gujarat tourism grows 17%, even 7 years after campaign, Business Standard: June 19, 2017, <https://www.ibef.org/news/gujarat-tourism-grows-17-even-7-years-after-campaign>

consuming and people don't like to undergo such lengthy procedure if they are on vacation (Parikh, 2019). Therefore, the study aims to identify the integrated destination development practices of Gujarat tourism.

1.1 Destination Development:

Destination development is defined as the process of creating of the looked-for destination for the tourists with the provision of fascinating experiences, qualitative infrastructure and extraordinary services⁶. Lisi and Esposito (2015) have defined Integrated Tourism as the "connection of local resources, activities, products, production and service industries, and a participatory local community." Plummer et al. (2006) elucidate that 'working together' is increasingly advanced as a logical strategy to pursue nature-based tourism because it embraces multiple benefit claims to the natural environment. They further describe that Cooperation among individuals, organizations, and agencies with an interest in tourism resources, and the benefits associated with them, has been attracting increasing attention as an innovative development strategy.

Yodsuwan and Butcher (2012) believe that to enhance tourism, collaboration effectiveness is a key goal for tourism industry leaders. They further explain that tourism destinations have long recognized the importance of their stakeholders in promoting the destination experience. They have identified five factors that contribute to collaboration member satisfaction and, consequently, to effective tourism collaboration. These five factors are: individual perceived benefit, trust, communication quality, participation quality and interdependency. Jaafar et al. (2012) also believe that there should be a strong collaboration on the development strategies between a tourism firm and other tourism businesses and organizations.

1.2 Need for integrated development:

Partnerships/ alliances are a must for tourism destinations to be developed in a better manner. Various researchers in their respective studies identified the importance of collaboration in tourism fields: for the development of tourism destinations (Baggio 2011); and to pursue nature-based tourism because it embraces multiple benefits that claim to the natural environment. (Plummer et al 2006), to gain credibility (Evans 2001); to lead the negotiation, shared decision-making and consensus-building about planning goals and actions which leads to significant benefits for sustainability (Araujo and Bramwell 1999); to manage growing concerns over climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion and impacts of globalization on indigenous and local inhabitants (Jamal and Stronza 2009); for business development and the success of destinations and regions (Mottiar and Tucker 2007).

1.3 Span and Scope:

Jamal and Stronza (2009) explain that collaborations can span local, regional, national or international level initiatives; organizations can collaborate within and across these spatial domains, alternatively, collaborative arrangements may operate through informal agreements and in unstructured forms. One other form is Community level collaborations: two important factors in such community-based partnerships: (1) ensuring long-term sustainability of tourism and natural resources and (2) community or local/Indigenous ownership, control and management of tourism enterprises and activities (e.g. community-based Ecologies, community involvement in guiding, concession, cultural activities and goods being produced for tourist consumption, etc.).

They also identify the collaboration's scope at destinations, like conservation, use, economic development, poverty alleviation, cultural protection and heritage management, tourism and growth conflicts and so on.

Hwang (2001) identifies the following types of international tourism networking:

- Traditional Type of International Tourism Networking (B2B): The mode of traditional business affiliation among destinations intends to link service providers. The benefits of linkage effects are said to be huge, since joint marketing and collective use of facilities are available in the case of franchise hotels and restaurants, and piers in fishing and cruise, respectively.
- New Type of International Tourism Networking (G2G): Governments for tourism promotion to be called G2G. Instead of private service providers, governments or public agencies take the helm of networking in this case.

1.4 Integrated development practices for tourism destinations:

There are many association methodologies adopted for the integrated development of tourism destinations, such as:

- Chancellor et al (2011) suggest an association of tourism entities with land trusts to increase the number of natural areas that are protected and usher in a new era for sustainable tourism planning, where land trusts can provide an efficient, economical method of protecting landscapes, while tourism entities may be able to provide a variety of resources, including promotion and financial support.
- Barkin and Bouchez (2002) think that have alliance between NGOs and local communities' approach to development might contribute to reconciling the conflicting interests in the region.
- Singh (2002) thinks that Collaboration between public and private sectors. It will help to meet the economic ends for which tourism was fostered.

⁶ <https://www.destinationbc.ca/what-we-do/destination-management/destination-development/>

- Hwang (2001) suggests the Clustering Approach to Cooperation of Inter-Regional Tourism. The central government (or the National Tourism Authority) takes initiatives in implementation in tandem with the hierarchical market structure of the tourism industry. Some essential functions of tourism policy, such as planning, product development, and marketing and promotion, all belong to central Local governments and are supposed to play an ancillary role by taking responsibility of on-site preservation and management.

1.5 Objective of the study:

The main purpose of this research paper is to explore various integrated development practices adopted by the government for Gujarat as a tourism destination.

1.6 Research methodology:

An exploratory research design is used for the study. The information collected for this research is based on secondary sources of data such as journals, websites, and PDFs. Out of 28 States and 8 Union Territories of India, Gujarat was selected as the sample for the study.

2. Discussion:

To have sustainable development of the destination and to achieve sustainable growth in tourist footfall, various integrated development practices have been adopted by the Gujarat government.

2.1 Alliance with other tourism states:

Gujarat is exploring the possibilities of signing an MoU with Punjab Tourism, for promotion of tourism in both states and abroad as well. The Tourism Corporation of Gujarat and the Tourism Department of the Government of Egypt will work for cooperation and understanding in tourism development in India. Gujarat has tied up with Karnataka and Goa. Gujarat has signed an MoU with West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan for marketing and promotion of Gujarat as a tourism destination. It is also planning to have tie-up with other state tourism boards, so as to have co-branding in tourism. The idea is that the states get together and offer better packages to the tourists and understand the needs of the tourists in their respective states.

2.2 Alliance with other companies to develop amenities at the destination:

Gujarat Tourism Corporation has tied up with IL&FS in a joint venture to form Gujarat Tourism Opportunity (GUJTOP) to develop 50 tourism projects within the State, including beach tourism, business tourism, eco-tourism, religious tourism, cultural tourism and development of wayside amenities⁷. It has also tied up with AMA to set up "The TCGL-AMA Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Management", which will be responsible for conducting Diploma programs in Tourism and Hospitality Management, Training of Tourist Guides, Tourism promotion seminars, studies and publications (AMA, 2025)⁸.

To facilitate the tourists with ease of information access on highways, TCGL and India Oil Corporation signed a special MoU on 07 March 2013. MoUs have been signed between private parties and the state government to develop the Eco Tourism Centres on the PPP model. Gujarat Tourism is soon launching a joint venture company with an initial equity basket of Rs. 100 Crore known as GUJ-TOUR which would develop tourism assets across the State. Pavitra Yatratham Vikas board associated with TCGL to develop the religious places within the state⁹. Gujarat Tourism Project Development Company Ltd (GTPDCL) in association with IL&FS works to achieve the state's potential in tourism development. Gujarat Tourism Opportunity Ltd (GUJTOP) - a joint venture between TGCL and ILFS- promotes the development of suitable tourism infrastructure within Gujarat on a public-private partnership basis¹⁰.

2.3 Alliance with other companies for promotion of destination:

Gujarat Tourism has entered into a marketing tie-up with travel services provider Cox & Kings to promote the state in India for one year and it will be the official marketing partner for Gujarat tourism¹¹.

⁷ www.gujtop.com: http://www.gujtop.com/about_us.html

⁸ <https://www.amaindia.org>: <https://www.amaindia.org/collaborations/>

⁹ <http://www.ifpgujarat.gov.in/portal/jsp/gujaratUpdate.jsp> <http://www.beautifulgujarat.com/blog/gujarat-pushes-pedal-tourism>
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¹⁰ Gujarat Tourism ties up with IL&FS to create tourism infrastructure in the state Earmarked 39 projects in six segments. Retrieved from <http://travel.financialexpress.com>: <http://travel.financialexpress.com/201101/market04.shtml>

¹¹ www.business-standard.com/article/companies/gujarat-tourism-enters-into-marketing-tie-up-with-cox-kings-112060800147_1.html

2.4 Integration with the local people of Kutch:

To make the tourists' experience memorable during the "Rann Utsav", the local people of Kutch have been involved by Gujarat Tourism. This also has resulted into the self-employment for the local people¹².

2.5 New tourism policy:

To increase the footfall of tourists within the state, Gujarat Tourism has come up with a new tourism policy-2021, that focuses on better tourism infrastructure and amenities, improved tourist experience, development of charging centers for e-vehicles, digital payment interventions, balanced regional development, diversified tourism products, developing an ecosystem for inclusion of all stakeholders especially investors, "Atmanirbhar Bharat" and "Vocal for Local" (Dhavan, 2021). The state is also planning to develop a State Heritage Tourism policy, to organize overseas roadshows, to attract more foreign tourists within the state¹³.

3. Conclusion

Integration may be in any form, but involved parties must benefit. For any tourism destination, it is important to consider various integrative approaches. Cooperation with different alliances brings new concepts and ideas for the development of the destination, financial support, acquisition of resources and talent, set up amenities, promotion of the destination and so on. The following approaches are recommended for an alliance that the government can adopt for better management of tourism destinations: alliance with: Inbound tour operators, Tourism educational institutions and Universities, Mega event partners and an Integral collaboration approach.

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¹² Kutch Rann Utsav 2020 – The Beginning of Rann Utsav Festival, <https://www.rannutsav.com/blog/kutch-rann-utsav/>

¹³ Investor Application Guideline Tourism Policy-INNER PAGE.cdr

Footnotes

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