

A Study on the impact of the Tourism Industry on India's Economy with a look at Iran-India Tourism Relation

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Abstract

With an ancient civilization and rich culture, India has always been an attractive destination for international tourists. For an emerging power like India, the tourism industry can not only be beneficial to the economy but also provide an acceptable image of the country. The current study aims to discover the impact of the tourism industry on the economy of India by applying a descriptive-analytical method and tries to answer the question of 'what has been the impact of the tourism industry on India's economy?' According to the data collected for this study, the Indian government has invested heavily in the tourism sector in recent years and tried to develop specific types of tourism like religious tourism, MICE tourism etc. These initiatives have had positive effects on the industry; as a result, they have also been beneficial to the GDP, employment, tourism export and investment attraction of the country. Although the tourism industry has had positive impacts on the economy of the country in recent years, there are still some challenges and problems which prevented India from using its full potential in the tourism Industry, like inadequate conditions of infrastructures; in the last two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has also worsened the situation. The author tries to examine the opportunities and challenges of tourism industry in India and suggest some ways to expand Indo-Iran cooperation in this field.

• **Keywords:** Tourism industry, Iran, India, Religious tourism, Medical tourism, MICE Tourism

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Introduction

India is a large travel and tourism market. Cruises, adventure, medical, wellness, sports, MICE, Eco-tourism, film, rural, and religious tourism are among the available niche tourism products. India has also been regarded as a spiritual tourism destination for both domestic and international tourists. In the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019 which was published by the World Economic Forum, India came in at number 34. According to the WTTC's Economic Impact 2019 report, India's travel and tourism GDP contribution increased by 4.9 per cent, ranking third after China and the Philippines. In addition, the report states that between 2014 and 2019, India saw the greatest increase in the number of jobs generated in the tourism sector (6.36 million), followed by China (5.47 million) and the Philippines (2.53 million). (IBEF, 2021)

The travel and tourism industry contributed US\$ 121.9 billion to GDP in 2020, and it is predicted to grow to US\$ 512 billion by 2028. Between 2019 and 2028, the industry's direct contribution to GDP in India is predicted to expand at a pace of 10.35 percent per year. In 2020, the Indian tourism industry employed 31.8 million people, accounting for 7.3 per cent of the country's overall workforce. It is estimated to employ almost 53 million people by 2029. By 2028, international tourist arrivals are predicted to total 30.5 billion. As of March 2021, 171 countries had access to the e-Visa system. The government launched a scheme to stimulate the tourism industry by providing 5 lakh travelers with a one-month free tourist visa until March 31, 2022. The government of India has launched various branding and marketing campaigns, such as 'Incredible India!' and 'Athiti Devo Bhava,' which have offered a focused impetus to growth. (Ibid)

To boost medical tourism in India, the Indian government has also introduced a new category of visa known as the medical visa or M-visa. By 2020, the government had 1 per cent proportion of global international visitor arrivals, and hopes to have a 2 per cent share by 2025. The government is also working hard to increase tourism-related investment. The automatic approach allows 100 per cent FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in the hotel and tourism sector. For hotels in the 2-, 3-, and 4-star category located near UNESCO World Heritage sites, a five-year tax exemption has been provided (except Delhi and Mumbai) (IBEF 2021).

The Indian tourism and hospitality industry has also emerged as one of the most important development engines in the country's services sector. Given the country's rich cultural and historical legacy, diversity in ecosystem, terrains, and natural beauty spots, tourism in India has a lot of promise. Foreign exchange earnings increased at a CAGR of 7 per cent from 2016 to 2019, but fell in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In FY 2020, India's tourism sector employed 39 million people, accounting for 8.0 per cent of the country's overall workforce. It is estimated to employ almost 53 million people by 2029. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, India placed 10th out of 185 nations in terms of total contribution to GDP from travel and tourism in 2019. Travel and tourism also contributed 6.8 per cent of the total economy's GDP, or US\$ 194.30 billion in 2019 (IBEF 2021).

Objective and Methodology

Using a descriptive-analytical method, this study aims to determine the contribution of the tourism and hospitality industry to the economy of India. The main question of this study is 'what has been the impact of the tourism industry

on India's economy?' The study also uses secondary data gathered from a variety of governmental and non-governmental sources, including India's Ministry of Tourism, IBEF (India Brand Equity Foundation), India Exim Bank, WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council), academic journals, Internet, etc.

Promotion of New Forms of Tourism

The focus of this section is on the specific types of tourism in which the Indian government has invested in recent years, including religious tourism, medical tourism, MICE and Eco-tourism

- **Religious Tourism**

Within and without India's boundaries, the country's rich civilizational and cultural legacy remains a highlight of the country's image and identity. India's large and ever-growing pilgrimage economy is an important part of this history, with various lucrative potential for foreign direct investment (FDI) in this area. The Indian government has shown increasing interest and investment in this sector in recent years, as seen by large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Buddhist Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, and Char-Dham road project, to mention a few. In some ways, the development of tourism-rich economic zones along pilgrim routes stems from a significant study that has revealed that shrines have been important economic hubs throughout Indian history.

As a civilizational state with multiple cultures, India's pilgrimage economy is one of the most important sectors of the country's economy, providing jobs for millions in industries ranging from infrastructure and construction to the travel and tourism business. It has been highlighted that there has been a larger

investment in improving pilgrim infrastructure at both the state and federal levels of government. The Ramayana Circuit, a tourist circuit connecting cities/towns associated with Ram, one of Hinduism's holiest deities, and the Chaar-Dham road project, which aims to improve road connectivity between the four major Hindu pilgrimage sites (Chaar-Dham) in Uttarakhand, have been important projects of the current central government. There is widespread agreement within the current government that pilgrimage as an economic sector has enormous potential to contribute to the growth of the Indian economy, as this industry has mostly remained informal and underutilized despite being a big component of domestic tourism in the country. The travel and tourist business alone is estimated to employ more than 80 million people in India, with a year-on-year increase of more than 19 per cent and revenue of more than \$234 billion in 2018-2019 (Chawla 2019).

Religious tourism will also boost Indian economic earnings and pave the way for long-term economic growth. Religious tourism contributes to the creation of jobs. Tourism development would also work as a catalyst for the growth of entrepreneurship, small businesses, and economic variety. Individuals who want to work in this field are given the opportunity to improve their capabilities, skills, and talents so that they may make a significant contribution to enhancing socioeconomic benefits (Sharma 2019).

In India, religious tourism is critical to reducing economic disparities. The majority of localities, particularly rural regions and areas with no core competency or business, rely on religious tourism to thrive. It helps to meet the needs of the local community by providing business and job possibilities. For example, 'Sulli Karadu,' a little dry rural place near Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, is

well renowned for a powerful rural deity who should be worshiped by offering large quantities of Camphor is readily accessible in neighbouring shops. Thousands of devotees form a mile-long line to make their donations. It supports the local inhabitants by allowing them to sell Camphor to devotees, which is supplied by camphor makers (Vijayanand 2012).

- **Medical Tourism**

One of the fastest expanding industries in the world is medical tourism. Medical Value Travel (MVT) is being promoted as a synthesis of medical tourism. Medical Value Travel has grown all around the globe, but many opportunities still remain untapped. Thailand, Mexico, the United States, Singapore, India, Brazil, Turkey, and Taiwan are the top destinations for Medical Value Travel in terms of patient numbers. The global medical value travel business is estimated to be worth \$60-80 billion, with 14 million people travelling across borders for medical treatment. Medical Tourism Association has placed India 10th out of 46 global locations in the Medical Tourism Index (MTI) for 2020-21. India has developed into a top-notch destination for medical value travel over the years as a result of its strong scores on a variety of parameters that affect overall treatment quality. India's high-end healthcare system is on par with the greatest in the world. Complex surgical treatments are performed by renowned medical specialists in a world-class global hospital at a much lower cost than they would be in other countries (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India 2021).

One of India's fastest expanding categories in marketing is health or medical tourism. The Ministry of Tourism, several state tourism boards, and even the private sector, including travel agents, tour operators, and the hospitality industry,

see health and tourism as a market with huge promise for future growth in Destination India today. According to India's health policy, treating foreign patients is a legal "export" that is "qualified" for all financial incentives offered to export earnings (Naik and Lal 2013).

Year	Number of Foreign Tourist arrivals for medical purpose
2015	233,918
2016	427,014
2017	495,056

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

The Indian healthcare industry is extremely diverse, with potential in every segment, including providers, payers, and medical technology. Businesses are looking for the latest dynamics and trends that will have a favourable impact on their business as the competition grows. The hospital business in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of 16–17 per cent from Rs.4 trillion (US\$ 61.79 billion) in FY2017 to Rs.8.6 trillion (US\$ 132.84 billion) in FY2022. By 2025, India's government intends to expand public health spending to 2.5 per cent of the country's GDP (IBEF 2021).

- **Eco-Tourism**

Eco-Tourism entails safe and responsible travel to various natural locations, as well as safeguarding and conserving the natural environment in which we live and increasing the well-being of local residents. The goal of Eco-tourism is to educate travellers and visitors, to raise funding for environmental conservation, to

directly assist the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, and to foster respect for diverse cultures and human rights. Eco-tourism is a type of socially responsible travel that emphasizes the preservation of natural habitats, the development of natural regions, and the long-term sustainability of the environment. Travelling to different sites across the world that are rich in flora and fauna, as well as culturally heritage-rich areas, is what Eco-tourism is all about. Eco-tourism initiatives that have a low negative impact on the environment and promote cultural integrity and local people's protection are examples of responsible Eco-tourism. Recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and the provision of economic opportunities for local populations are all part of Eco-tourism (Kumari 2021).

Due to its premise of producing social and economic advantages for all, as well as the emphasis on conservation, Eco-tourism has grown in popularity over the last three decades. One of the most important aspects of Eco-tourism's effectiveness is the accrual of economic benefits to local communities. Eco-tourism takes place mostly in and around national parks and locations with high wildlife populations, which are characterized by poor infrastructure, lack of education and skills, outmigration, and a lack of other economic opportunities, among other things. In addition, the exclusion of local communities in the name of development and conservation has frequently resulted in conflict between residents and government organizations in India. Eco-tourism is a viable solution for addressing the aforementioned issues by establishing a responsible type of economic activity that connects conservation and social empowerment. Many studies have shown that Eco-tourism programs in India's protected regions have benefited local residents by creating jobs, increasing earnings, and giving

alternative livelihood options. Many of Eco-tourism's beneficial contributions to local development in India may be seen in programs that recognize local communities as major partners in the development and management of Eco-tourism. For instance, Eco-tourism in PTR and Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary (BLWS) has been effective because of a community approach and a community-based eco-tourism (CBET) paradigm. The success of CBET is largely dependent on the participation of locals, whose willingness to participate is determined by the number of practical and intangible benefits that CBET development may provide to local communities. An excellent example of a successful CBET model in India is PTR in Kerala. During the years 1996–2001, as part of the India Eco-Development project which was facilitated by the World Bank, an intervention strategy was implemented at PTR. It is regarded as India's most successful eco-tourism effort so far (Pujar and Mishra 2020).

- **MICE Tourism**

Among the various forms of tourism that exist in the world, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) is the one that has shown its maximum potential worldwide. Since the concept was created in Europe and America almost a century ago, the MICE industry has grown steadily and has had a persistent impact on the development of a destination and its economy. Overall, the MICE segment, with a 54 per cent market share, has surpassed the traditional business travel segment. The two largest sub-segments of MICE are Meetings/Conferences/Seminars (41 per cent) and Exhibitions/ trade fairs (29 per cent) (MRSS, India 2016).

The estimated size of the global MICE market exceeded US\$808 billion in 2017 and is expected to reach US\$1.2 trillion in 5 years. The estimated size of the MICE market in India is Rs37,576 crore, of which almost 60 per cent comes from MIC (meetings, incentives and conferences). It should also be mentioned that 65 per cent are B2B events. The estimated size of the market for an event is around Rs4,800 crore for space rental, but it has a multiplier impact on the economy in terms of accommodation, travel, media, advertising, and remuneration to skilled ones (Majestic MRSS Ltd 2019).

MICE Hotspots in India

Established destination	Emerging destinations
Delhi (NCR)	Agra
Mumbai	Varanasi
Chennai	Udaipur
Hyderabad	Ahmedabad
Goa	Surat
Bangaluru	Pune
Trivandrum	Vishakhapatnam
Bhubaneshwar	Amravati

Source: <https://tourism.gov.in/>

Tourism's Contribution to GDP of India

According to the WTTC Report, travel and tourism contributed Rs.15,239.6 billion (about US\$234.0 billion) to India's GDP in 2017, accounting for nearly

9.4 per cent of GDP. This sector's contribution to India's GDP is predicted to reach 9.9 per cent in 2028 (Exim Bank 2019). India's travel and tourism sector also contributed roughly 4.7 per cent to the country's overall GDP in 2020. This was a considerable decline from the previous year's figure of about 7 per cent because of the Covid-19 pandemic (Statista 2021).

Total Contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP

2019	2020
6.9% of total economy Total T&T GDP = INR14,181.9BN (USD191.3BN)	4.7% of Total Economy Total T&T GDP = INR9,039.5BN (USD121.9BN)

Source: World Travel & Tourism report 2021

Tourism's Contribution to Employment

There are primarily two ways in which employment opportunities in tourism might be established:

1. Direct employment opportunities: the entire number of job opportunities directly supported by travel and tourism; for example, employment provided by travel agencies, restaurants, tourism information offices, hotels, museums, religious sites, protected places like national parks, monuments, etc.

2. In-direct employment opportunities: Furthermore, it should be noted that tourism is also responsible for the creation of jobs outside of the industry in its more strictly defined sense and that individuals who sell goods and services to

those directly involved in tourism are also benefactors of tourism. Construction companies that build and maintain tourist facilities and infrastructure, restaurant suppliers, various handicrafts producers, aircraft manufacturers, marketing agencies, accounting services, furnishing and equipment industries, souvenir industries, farming and food supply, and other activities that are more or less dependent on the companies that provide direct employment are examples of indirect employment opportunities (Venkateswari and Anumol 2018).

Travel and tourism also contribute significantly to the generation of jobs in the country. In 2017, the sector employed about 8 per cent of the workforce. In 2017, the tourist sector directly created over 26 million jobs or 5.0 per cent of total employment. By 2028, the total number of jobs provided by the industry is predicted to rise from 41.6 million to 52.3 million (Exim Bank 2019).

According to WTTC, the Travel and Tourism sector provided 40,111,900 jobs in 2019, which accounted for 8.8 per cent of the country's total employment. In 2020, the figure declined to 31,785,200 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Total Contribution of Travel & Tourism to Employment

2019	2020	Change in jobs
40,111.9 Jobs (000s) (8.8 % of total employment)	31,785.2 Jobs (000s) (7.3 % of total employment)	-20.8% -8,326.7 (000s)

Source: World Travel & Tourism Report 2021

Tourism's Contribution to Investment

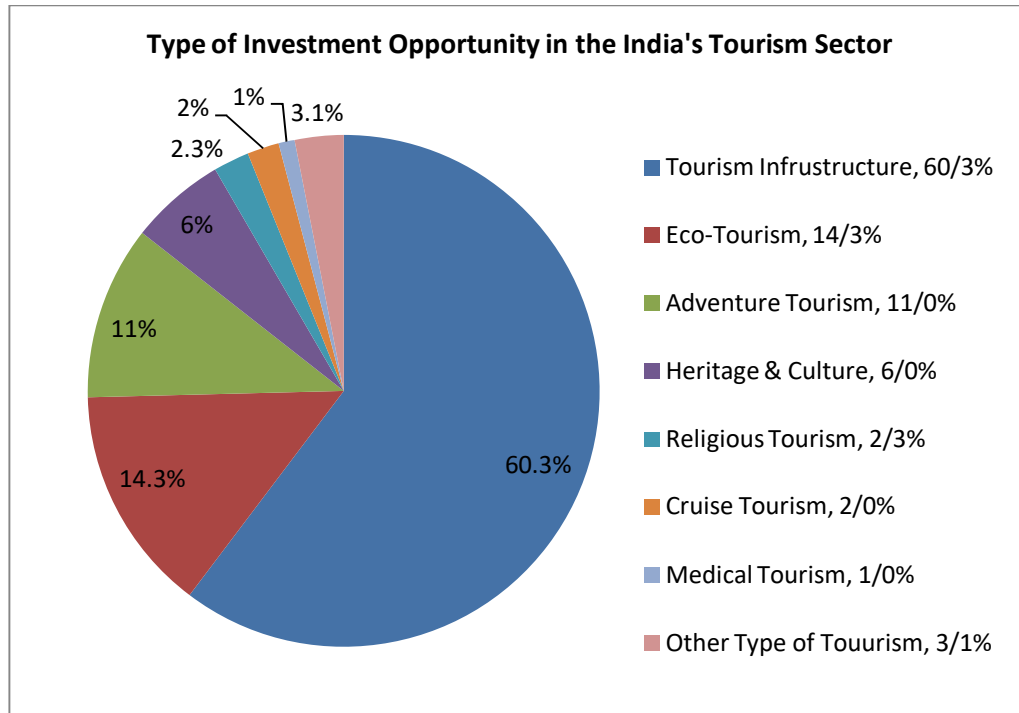
The value of capital investments in India's tourist sector is expected to be over 95.3 billion dollars in 2028, up from roughly 47.8 billion dollars in 2017. From 2008, there had been an overall increase in investments (Statista 2021).

Capital Investments Value across the Tourism Sector in India from 2008 to 2017, with a Forecast for 2028 (in billion U.S. dollars)

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2028
33.7	23.8	28.9	33	31.3	32.2	35	34.6	36.6	47.8	95.3

Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/799836/india-capital-investments-value-in-the-tourism-sector/>

Tourism infrastructure has also been highlighted as the area with the highest investment opportunities in the tourism sector. The tourism infrastructure category is expected to get almost 60.3 per cent of tourism investment, followed by eco-tourism and adventure tourism (Exim Bank 2019).



Source: Incredible India Tourism Investors Summit, FICCI

Tourism Contribution to Visitor Exports

Tourist export is an important component of the direct contribution of tourism and travel. Visitor exports reached US\$27.3 billion in 2017, accounting for 5.8 per cent of total exports of goods and services for the year. By 2028, international tourist arrivals are expected to surpass the 30 million mark (Exim Bank 2019). In 2019 international visitors spent US\$ 30.8 billion, which contributed 5.8 per cent of total exports. In 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the figure reduced to US\$ 12 billion.

Visitor Impact

2019	2020	Change in visitor spend
International: INR2,282.3_{BN} 5.8% of total exports (USD30.8_{BN})	International: INR890.7_{BN} 2.5% of total exports (USD12.0_{BN})	International: -61.0% -USD 18.8_{BN}
Domestic: INR10,384.8_{BN} (USD 140.1_{BN})	Domestic: INR7,201.4_{BN} (USD 97.1_{BN})	Domestic: -30.7% -USD 42.9_{BN}

Source: World Travel & Tourism Report 2021

Challenges and Problems

Although India has always been an attractive destination for tourists due to its rich heritage and culture, there are still challenges that have had negative impacts on this industry and reduced the attraction of the country. Physical infrastructure, such as parts of entrance, means of transportation, and urban infrastructures, such as access roads, electricity, water supply, and telecommunications, are all needed for travel and tourism. Airlines, surface transportation, accommodation, and infrastructure and facilitation systems are all parts of the travel and tourism industry. One of the primary reasons why international tourists have been skipping India is the country's poor infrastructure. Another important problem that India has faced in recent years is the condition of amenities; various tourist destinations and facilities along the routes need to be improved. This includes

basic facilities such as drinking water, clean and well-maintained waiting rooms and toilets, first aid, etc. Another important issue is security and safety; there are anxiety within the community and the terrorist attacks that the country sometimes faces. The lack of banks and ATM facilities for international tourists is also problematic. Most tourist destinations in India do not have ATMs and banks for international tourists. The last issue is lack of publicity; lack of publicity of good tourist destinations among travellers and lack of education to the locals regarding the receiving and hosting guests are sometimes problematic. All of the mentioned issues have had negative effects on India's tourism economy (Sujith and Jisha 2017).

Another important issue in the last two years has been the Covid-19 pandemic; the lockdown has disrupted the lives of billions of people and created a scenario of economic collapse in India. Through a half-year period, tourism companies only achieved 24.80 per cent of revenue compared to the previous half-year. Lost income over a six-month period was Rs23636.27 Crore, approximately equal to the nominal GDP of the State of Manipur or Arunachal Pradesh in 2017-18. This half-year income loss is the same as 75.20 per cent of the previous half-year income. Entire chains of hotels, restaurants, tour operators, travel agents, family entertainment venues and air, land and sea transports have been got into a slump (Yadav and Qureshi 2020).

A look at India-Iran Tourism Potentials

Beyond the energy collaboration between India and Iran, tourism is one area where the two long-standing friends may strengthen their bonds even further. According to research, 72,809 Indians visited Iran in the Iranian fiscal year

(March2017-18), accounting for 2.3 per cent of all international visitors. According to the Iranian tourism administration, the number of Indian visitors decreased by 6.6 per cent compared with the previous fiscal year. At a time when Indians are looking for more cost-effective vacation spots, cities like Dubai, Malaysia, and Singapore are being discussed. These places have glitzy nightlife and massive skyscrapers, where as Iran has all the charm to entice Indian tourists with its historical and natural attractions.

Iran and India have had a long and historical relationship. Multiple empires spanning both Persia and India ensured the ongoing migration of people between the two regions, as well as the development and evolution of Indo-Iranian linguistic groups. As a result, the people of India and Iran have a lot in common in terms of culture, linguistics, and ethnicity. Iran has to focus more on its tourist industry, which has enormous potential to change the country's struggling economy. It can begin with India (Rizvi 2018).

Results and Conclusion

As a country with ancient civilization, rich culture, and unique nature, India has always been an attractive destination for international tourists. For an emerging power like India, the tourism industry can not only be beneficial to the economy but also provide an acceptable image of the country. It seems that India in recent years has been successful in developing its tourism industry. According to the data gathered in this study, the following results were obtained:

- The Indian government has tried to develop specific forms of tourism, including religious tourism, medical tourism, Eco-Tourism, and MICE Tourism in recent years. Religious tourism has been important to improve the economic

conditions of communities in rural areas with no core competency or business. Medical Tourism Association has placed India 10th out of 46 global locations in the Medical Tourism Index (MTI) for 2020-21. The number of Foreign Tourist arrivals for medical purposes increased from 233,918 in 2015 to 495,056 in 2017. According to India's health policy, treating foreign patients is a legal "export" that is considered beneficial to the country's economy. Eco-Tourism is another important part of the tourism industry that has benefited local residents by creating jobs, increasing earnings, and giving alternative livelihood options. MICE Tourism has also developed in recent years in India. The estimated size of the MICE market in India is Rs37,576 crore, of which almost 60 per cent comes from MIC (meetings, incentives, and conferences).

- Based on the data gathered, the contribution of the tourism industry to India's GDP has always been positive. In 2019 India's travel and tourism sector contributed roughly 6.9 per cent to the country's overall GDP.

- Travel and tourism also contribute significantly to the generation of jobs in the country. According to WTTC, the Travel and Tourism sector provided 40,111,900 jobs in 2019, which accounted for 8.8 per cent of the country's total employment.

- Investment opportunities in India's tourism sector have been increasing in recent years. Most of the investment has been in the area of tourism infrastructure by 60.3 per cent.

- Another important aspect of the tourism industry is tourist export, which is very beneficial to the country's overall exports. In 2019 alone, international visitors spent US\$ 30.8 billion, which contributed 5.8 per cent of total exports.

- Given the historical and cultural commonalities of Iran and India, the interaction of the two countries in the field of tourism can greatly contribute to the economy of both countries.

Despite all the benefits that the tourism industry has brought to the Indian economy, the industry still faces challenges. It seems that the country has not yet been able to use its full potential in the tourism industry. These challenges have prevented the country from using its full potential in the field of tourism. Some of the challenges are an unfavorable condition of infrastructures, security, lack of publicity, etc. In the last two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has also worsened the tourism industry's situation. We should wait to see what programs will implement to revive India's tourism industry.

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