

**A Destination Branding Perspective Unearthing Unlimited Possibilities – A Destination Branding Perspective with Special Reference to Chamaraj Nagar – An Untapped Tourist Destination of Karnataka**

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**Abstract :** tourism industry is growing rapidly with vast potential for employment and forex earnings, besides giving a fillip to the country's overall economic and social development. Still there are many untapped tourist destinations in India, presenting unlimited possibilities to advance the economy. Strategic marketing and destination branding initiatives play a vital role in transforming the untapped destination into a decent tourist spot. Chamarajanagar a southern most district of Karnataka has been chosen for the study. As it has many tourist attractions which are not tapped to their potential. This study aims at understanding the lacunas of the untapped tourist destination; suggest marketing strategies overcome them, devising destination branding initiatives which create awareness, image and brand identity for Chamarajanagar as preferred tourist destination, resulting in augmentation of recurrent and incessant tourist traffic.

**Approach:** A survey was conducted to ascertain factors influencing tourists and visitors satisfaction with respect to the destination Chamarajanagar & suggest suitable destination branding and marketing strategies for making Chamarajanagar a preferred tourist destination,

**Methods:** Data were analyzed using statistical techniques such as factor analysis, cronbach's alpha, correlation coefficients, KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) and Bartlett's test, Scree Plots and percentage analysis.

**Results:** the assessment unearthed various factors influencing visitor's satisfaction with respect to Chamarajanagar – climatic conditions, kindness of local people, local traffic, availability of banks and shops, quality of water were prominent.

**Conclusion/Recommendations:** recommendations include initiatives or changes in the following aspects all of which contribute to destination brand equity – strategies to augment tourism infrastructure and experience, internet based destination branding strategies, trade and relationship management strategies, partnership and stewardship strategies

**Key Words:** Destination branding, tourism economic development, forex, strategic marketing

## **Introduction**

Tourism is vital for continuous contribution of revenue towards the economic development of the nation. It can contribute to balanced regional development through PPP – public private partnerships in enhancing the infrastructural facilities and thereby increase tourist traffic; which results in increased economic activity. Be it a developing or developed nation, tourism has a significant contribution in the upliftment of the economy by earning huge amount of foreign exchange revenues to the government. Due to increased number of tourists the destinations all over the world face stiff competition, which necessitated the effort of branding and destination marketing as an inevitable option. In order to make a particular place a preferred destination among tourists; continuous branding and marketing efforts have to be carried out. According to Manhas & Dogra(2012) the present global scenario in the tourism industry is competitive in nature. They further explored that due to this, the tourism destinations worldwide make several efforts toward projecting their destinations with latest advent of online technologies (p.130). tourism is often advocated as a means to diversify economic conditions in rural and regional areas by providing alternative sources of employment and income generation arising from fluctuations and downturns in traditional industries such as agriculture and forestry, depressed commodity prices and drought conditions (parliament of Victoria rural and regional committee, 2008). Since 1960's there has been a growing stream of research investigating tourism destination management, development and especially the destination marketing and promotion. The research is generally fragmented, often case specific and underpinned by a range of value, theoretical frameworks and world views, such that it is often difficult to draw meaningful insights and identify implications for practice, moreover, many tourism managers, destination stakeholders and other tourism practitioners don't have time, access to resources or skills to put this growing body of information into context and extract lessons for practice. As a result, many practitioners still tend to rely on gut feeling, anecdotal evidence and personal experience to guide them in their decision making (Wray et al, 2010). Destination branding is a complex subject, not just because of its overlap between service, corporate and product branding, but also because of the multiplicity of stake holders, diverse customer base and product offerings (Balakrishnan, Nekhil and Lewis, 2008).

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. To ascertain the status of tourism infrastructural facilities at Chamarajanagar.
2. To understand the problems faced by tourists at Chamarajanagar.
3. To understand the role and contribution of destination branding activity in promotion of Chamarajanagar as tourist destination.
4. To suggest strategic marketing imperatives for effective destination branding and promotion of Chamarajanagar as preferred tourist destination.
5. To suggest ways to fill the tourism infrastructure gap at Chamarajanagar.

### **Research Methodology**

**Research instrument:** the Likert 5 point scale technique has been used to formulate a structured questionnaire.

**Study Area:** the study area was Chamarajanagar an untapped tourist destination, a southern most district of Karnataka state.

**Sample design:** total 95 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 75 were found valid and were considered for the study. The sample included the tourists who completed the tour of Chamarajanagar. The data collection was done at Chamarajanagar railway station and bus stand, the technique of convenient sampling was applied for data collection.

**Data Analysis:** the data was analyzed with the simple percentage technique.

### **Literature Review**

**Destination:** A destination is a geographical area consisting of all the services and infrastructure necessary for the stay of a specific tourist or tourism segment. Destinations are the competitive units of incoming tourism. Destinations are therefore an important part of a tourism product.

**Branding** – however, the concept of branding has been extensively used in the context of products and services with more than a century of thinking behind it. It is a relatively new concept when applied to destination or places (countries, regions, cities etc). From its initial roots as a sign of ownership, branding has evolved and developed to the point where it can be used as a significant measure of distinction, with the ability to command price premiums, engage consumer loyalty both at the rational and emotional level to create strong attachment in the minds of the consumers. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2006) Brand building and management are essential skills in marketing of any product, service, organization, person, place or cause/idea. A branding is not just a name put on an offering; it is the driving force that shapes the marketing mix, providing a platform for organizations strategies and tactics.

### **Destination Branding**

Destination branding is about how the consumers perceive the destination in their minds. Branding a destination is not about creating a logo or a slogan; it is about capturing the distinct elements of the destination in the brand and communicating these elements through the brand components: identity, essence, personality, image, character and culture. Managing these components in order to create a unique position of the destination brand in the consumers mind is called as brand positioning. Destination branding, also known as Place branding (including place marketing and place promotion) is a new umbrella term encompassing nation branding, region branding and city branding. Place branding is the process of image communication to a target market. It is invariably related to the notion that places compete with other places for people, resources, and business; the global competition of cities is estimated to cost 2.7 million small cities/towns, 3,000 large cities, and 455 metropolises. The concept has been introduced several times by different thinkers such as Simon Anholt, Philip Kotler, Gold and Ward, Avraham and Ketter Seppo Rainisto, and others. Countries and cities compete for tourist

income, business, and often tax bases; even within cities there is a fierce competition between city centers vs. neighborhoods, big box retailers vs. main streets, shopping malls vs. traditional down towns. Proponents of place branding argue that this heightened competitive environment makes it important for places, no matter their size or composition, to clearly differentiate them and to convey why they are relevant and valued options. The strategic application of place branding is growing with nations, regions, cities, and institutions as they realize they compete with other places for people, resources, and business. The derived image of the place brand is then communicated through communication channels. These channels vary and range from television advertisements to Internet marketing efforts. These communications are aimed at a specific target market. Example: Las Vegas or simply Vegas is used by the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority as a brand to market the bulk of the Las Vegas Valley, including the Las Vegas Strip, Las Vegas, Nevada, Henderson, Nevada, North Las Vegas, Nevada and parts of Clark County, Nevada.

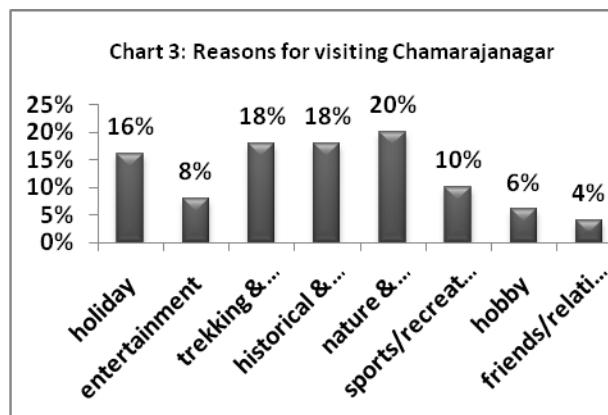
### **Tourism potential of Chamarajanagar**

Although tourism has enough potential to create job opportunities in Chamarajanagar, the lack of infrastructure for establishing small-scale industries and apathy of the Government continue to affect tourism in the district. Places of interest such as the Bandipur National Park, the Biligiri Rangana Temple and Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, the Mahadeshwara Hills, the Himavad Gopalswamy Hills and the B.R. Hills are within a radius of 100 km from the district. However, little has to be done by the Tourism Department to improve tourism-related infrastructure in the district. The poor tourist inflow has taken its toll on business in the district. Urgent measures must be taken to promote tourism in the region. The scope for development of tourism is tremendous in the region (NABARD - District Rural Industries Project (DRIP) survey). Though places of historical, religious, and cultural interest, besides the national park in close proximity to the district centre, efforts are not able to popularize Chamarajanagar as an important tourist destination (assistant governor of the R.I. District 3180 Rotary Club, Nagarjun.). Places such as the M.M. Hills, the B.R. Hills, the Bandipur National Park, the Hogenakal Falls, the Gaganachukki and Bharachukki waterfalls, and the Bale Mantap in Yelandur can be popularised. He says the Himavad Gopalswamy Hills near Gundlupet, which is covered in mist throughout the year, is one of the places that can be developed as a tourist destination. Nestled in the Bandipur Tiger Reserve, the Gopalswamy Hills can be popularised as a haunt for wildlife enthusiasts, he added. Popular temples Similarly, the Karivaradarajaswamy Temple, also known as Hulugina Maradi Venkateshwaraswamy Betta, the Madhyaranga Temple, the Chamarajeshwara Temple and its annual festival at the town, the Chandramouleshwara Temple and the Dewan Poornayya's house in Yelandur can be exploited for their tourism potential, experts feel. The absence of good roads connecting various tourist spots has also affected efforts to popularize these places. However, as long as the industrial scenario in Chamarajanagar remains bleak, there is little hope for developing the tourism potential and improving the economic situation of the district.

### Data Analysis:

**Table 3: Reasons for Visiting Chamarajanagar**

Reasons for trip to Chamarajanagar	Respondents
holiday	16%
entertainment	8%
trekking & safari	18%
historical & cultural visit	18%
nature & landscape	20%
sports/recreation	10%
hobby	6%
friends/relations	4%
TOTAL	100%



**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of visitors Responses about Destination Chamarajanagar**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Climate	40	4.17	0.984	0.969
Kindness Of Localites	40	2.98	0.832	0.692
Kindness Of tour Operators	40	3.15	1.252	1.567
Different Languages	40	2.62	0.979	0.958
Local Traffic	40	3.55	1.085	1.177
Parking	40	3.9	1.236	1.528
Information Availability	40	3.15	1.075	1.156
Events Souvenirs	40	2.18	0.636	0.404
Urban Design	40	2.18	0.958	0.917
Amenities	40	2.38	1.409	1.984
History Heritage	40	3.68	1.141	1.302
Cleanliness	40	2.78	1.271	1.615
Crowdedness	40	3.72	1.037	1.076
Landscape Beauty	40	4.25	0.742	0.551
Environment Protection	40	2.38	1.275	1.625
Water Quality	40	2.85	1.477	2.182
Safety Security	40	2.55	1.011	1.023
Bank Hours	40	2.47	1.154	1.333
Shops Hotels	40	3.15	1.075	1.156
Amusement Services	40	2.43	1.217	1.481
Valid N (list wise)	40			

### Descriptive Statistics

Looking at the mean, we can conclude that landscape beauty, climatic conditions, crowdedness, local traffic, information availability, shops and hotels at Chamarajanagar are strong influencers of tourists preference of destination, as they scored higher means of 4.25, 4.17, 3.72, 3.55 and 3.15 respectively etc.

**Table 2: Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.801	20

**Reliability Statistics:** Cronbach's alpha is .801, signifying that there exists a high internal consistency.

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.196
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	72.434
	df	66
	Sig.	.004

The **KMO** measures the sampling adequacy which should be greater than 0.5 for a satisfactory factor analysis to proceed. The off-diagonal elements should all be very small (close to zero) in a good model. Looking at the table below, the KMO measure is 0.196.

**Bartlett's test** is another indication of the strength of the relationship among variables. This tests the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix. An identity matrix we can see that the **Bartlett's test** of sphericity is significant That is, its associated probability is less than 0.05. In fact, it is actually 0.004, i.e. the significance level is small enough to reject the null hypothesis

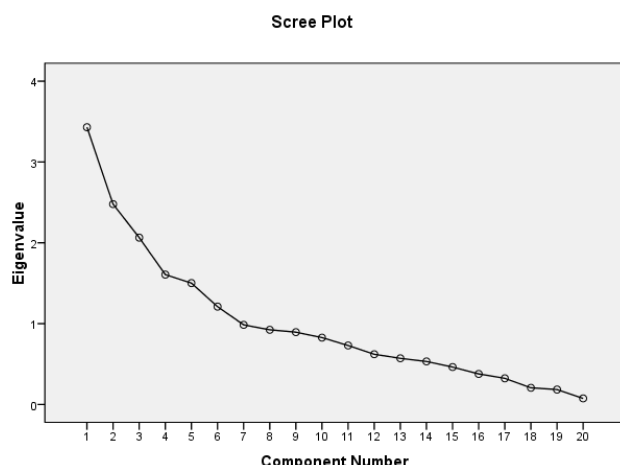
<b>Communalities</b>		
	Initial	Extraction
Climate	1.000	.671
Kindness Of Localites	1.000	.575
Kindness Of tour Operators	1.000	.680
Different Languages	1.000	.588
Local Traffic	1.000	.560
Parking	1.000	.682
Information Availability	1.000	.576
Events Souvenirs	1.000	.585
Urban Design	1.000	.680
Amenities	1.000	.695
History Heritage	1.000	.713
Cleanliness	1.000	.407
Crowdedness	1.000	.598
Landscape Beauty	1.000	.726
Environment Protection	1.000	.581
Water Quality	1.000	.609
Safety Security	1.000	.563
Bank Hours	1.000	.607
Shops Hotels	1.000	.517
Amusement Services	1.000	.677
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

### Total Variance Explained

The next item shows all the factors extractable from the analysis along with their Eigen values, the percent of variance attributable to each factor, and the cumulative variance of the factor and the previous factors. Notice that the first factor accounts for 17.150% of the variance, the second factor 12.393% and the third factor 10.320%, the fourth factor 8.032% and fifth factor accounted for 7.508%, sixth factor accounted for 6.052%; all the remaining factors are not significant.

Total Variance Explained									
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.430	17.150	17.150	3.430	17.150	17.150	2.719	13.597	13.597
2	2.479	12.393	29.543	2.479	12.393	29.543	2.565	12.825	26.421
3	2.064	10.320	39.863	2.064	10.320	39.863	1.944	9.720	36.141
4	1.606	8.032	47.895	1.606	8.032	47.895	1.765	8.827	44.968
5	1.502	7.508	55.402	1.502	7.508	55.402	1.680	8.400	53.369
6	1.210	6.052	61.455	1.210	6.052	61.455	1.617	8.086	61.455
7	.985	4.924	66.378						
8	.923	4.617	70.995						
9	.894	4.470	75.465						
10	.827	4.135	79.600						
11	.729	3.646	83.247						
12	.621	3.104	86.351						
13	.571	2.854	89.205						
14	.532	2.659	91.864						
15	.462	2.312	94.176						
16	.377	1.886	96.062						
17	.323	1.615	97.677						
18	.206	1.029	98.706						
19	.184	.921	99.627						
20	.075	.373	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									





**Scree Plot:** The scree plot is a graph of the Eigen values against all the factors. The graph is useful for determining how many factors to retain. The point of interest is where the curve starts to flatten. It can be seen from chart, that the curve begins to flatten between factors 6 and 7. Note also that factor 7 has an Eigen value of less than 1, so only six factors have been retained.

Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>						
	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Climate	.366		-.604			.413
Kindness Of Localites	.336			.350	-.376	.438
Kindness Of tour Operators	.452	-.242		.244	.519	-.292
Different Languages	.427	.570	.201			-.175
Local Traffic	.351	.218		.612		
Parking	-.427		-.334	.590		.169
Information Availability	.242			.294	-.593	-.251
Events Souvenirs		-.137	-.602	.170	-.331	-.243
Urban Design	.458	-.445	-.169		.156	.462
Amenities	-.138		.587	.542	.137	
History Heritage	-.751		.316	.148	-.157	
Cleanliness	.270	.464		-.207	.200	.165
Crowdedness	.429	-.542	.240		-.203	-.144
Landscape Beauty	-.534	.541	-.126		.358	
Environment Protection	.409	-.396	.418		.214	-.189
Water Quality	-.300	-.608	-.306	.103	.118	-.176
Safety Security	.215	.484		-.242	-.471	
Bank Hours	.737		.136	-.173		
Shops Hotels	-.271		.521	-.118		.389
Amusement Services	.412	.479	-.211	.321	.233	-.275
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						
a. 6 components extracted.						

### Component Matrix

The table beside shows the loadings of the twenty variables on the six factors extracted. The higher the absolute value of the loading, the more the factor contributes to the variable. The gap on the table represent loadings that are less than 0.5, this makes reading the table easier. We suppressed all loadings less than 0.5.

### Rotated Component Matrix

The idea of rotation is to reduce the number factors on which the variables under investigation have high loadings. Rotation does not actually change anything but makes the interpretation of the analysis easier. Looking at the table below, we can see that *climate* is substantially loaded on factor 3, *kindness of people* are substantially loaded on factor 5, *different languages known by tour operators* are substantially loaded on factor 1, *local traffic* is substantially loaded on factor 5, *parking* is substantially loaded on factor 5, *information availability* is substantially loaded on factor 5, *events souvenirs* are substantially loaded on factor 4, *urban design* is substantially loaded on factor 3, *amenities* are substantially loaded on factor 5, *history and heritage* are substantially loaded on factor 6, *cleanliness* is substantially loaded on factor 1, *crowdedness* is substantially loaded on factor 2, *landscape beauty* is substantially loaded on factor 1, *environment protection* is substantially loaded on factor 2 and *water quality* is substantially loaded on factor 6.

Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>						
	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Climate		-.105	.768	.250		
Kindness Of Localites		.228	.325		.569	-.297



Kindness Of tour Operators		.235	.128	.133		.761
Different Languages	.731		-.128		.142	.126
Local Traffic	.228				.679	.189
Parking	-.387	-.566		.166	.428	
Information Availability	.130	.341	-.237	.373	.405	-.290
Events Souvenirs	-.293			.687		-.132
Urban Design	-.144	.303	.710	-.117	.124	.184
Amenities			-.343	-.442	.590	.172
History Heritage	-.433	-.274	-.558	-.261		-.253
Cleanliness	.541	-.215	.237			
Crowdedness	-.115	.758				
Landscape Beauty	.115	-.793	-.202	-.125	-.164	
Environment Protection		.596		-.215		.418
Water Quality	-.686			.211	-.180	.246
Safety Security	.519			.203		-.494
Bank Hours	.557	.442	.307			
Shops Hotels	-.106		-.100	-.681		-.177
Amusement Services	.524	-.182		.382	.281	.379
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 12 iterations.						

## Findings

- Major chunk of the tourists (64%) are between the age group of 16 – 35 years.
- Important sources of Information dissemination about the destination are internet (18%), tourism board website (14%), friends (18%) and media (16%).
- Majority of the respondents are visiting the destination for enjoying nature and landscape (20%), historical/cultural (18%) visit and trekking and safari (18%), holiday (16%) and sports/recreation (10%).
- 82% of the tourists were satisfied with the climatic conditions of Chamarajanagar.
- 28% of the respondents were not satisfied with the kindness of the local people/tour operators, whereas 26% were neutral with respect to this aspect.
- 80% of the respondents expressed that Chamarajanagar is not crowded it is an ideal isolated place from urban menace.
- 90% of the respondents expressed immense satisfaction with respect to nature, beauty and landscape of Chamarajanagar.
- 90% of the respondents were satisfied with the sweet water available at Chamarajanagar.
- 80% of the respondents expressed their concerns about the safety and security aspects.
- 80% of the respondents expressed the inadequacy of the information availability about Chamarajanagar.

- 60% of the respondents expressed that pedestrian areas/parks/amenities and quality of the urban design is not so impressive.
- 76% of the respondents expressed their disregard towards cleanliness at Chamarajanagar.
- 88% of the respondents were not happy with the opening hours of banks and shops – convenience and accessibility is in question.
- 68% of the respondents felt there is immense scope for improvement in the areas of amusement and sporting service.

**Suggested Strategic Imperatives:**

**Imperatives are divided into four parts**

- a) Strategies to augment tourism infrastructure and experience.
- b) Internet based Destination branding strategies
- c) Trade and relationship management strategies
- d) Partnership and stewardship strategies

**a) Strategies to augment tourism infrastructure and experience**

- As majority tourist are between 16-35 years, enhance the web presence to reach them.
- Concerns were raised about kindness of localites and tour operators; hence imparting hospitality training to induce the essence of “Atithi Devo Bhava” among all is important.
- Increasing the state of safety/security through, adequate number of police outposts, trained rescue professionals, sufficient signages, guarding isolated points, emergency services.
- Adequate information availability to the tourists on air, is vital for brand building.
- Flexible working hours of the banks/shops, exclusive foreign exchange counters to be established.
- Cleanliness, parks, guest houses and other civic amenities need to be taken to the next level through sound town planning with special orientation towards incoming tourist traffic.

**b) Internet based Destination Branding Strategies**

**• Tourism Website Development**

With today's consumers researching and planning more and more of their travel online, having an engaging, well-designed website is crucial for any destination's popularity. To succeed online, a website must implement the necessary strategies to be found by potential clients. Employing search engine optimization (SEO), using important key words and generating fresh content are all part of creating and maintaining a successful website. Creating interactive online mapguides encourages tourists/local residents to nominate sites, businesses and attractions that best present the destination's authentic character and appeal.

**• Content Strategy & Development(ContentMarketing)**

The Internet is the first encounter that most people will have with a tourism brand or destination. More importantly, if a tourism brand or destination does not have a content strategy that develops and distributes content regularly; it will not reach the consumer. In today's Information

Age, content is king. Consumers have learned to tune out pop-up ads, banners, and email blasts. Useful, relevant and engaging information that adds value to a target market will create leads for a business and generate traffic to a website. Team of travel writers and industry experts can help you develop and manage an effective and efficient content strategy

- **Social Media Campaigns**

Social media platforms offer many of the forums where a destination or tourism product will first be discovered. Social media campaigns can also provide insight into the competition, allowing for improved communication of brand identity. Understanding how to measure and analyze social media to find the right channels and key word strategy is important to social media success in order to increase traffic, Likes, Shares, Comments, Tweets, Friends, Tags and more—driving eyes towards destination website.

- **Blogs**

Blogs are one of the primary ways people learn about travel options. Blogging is about people sharing their personal experiences and insights and engaging others in thoughtful conversation. Blog readers seek out this kind of expertise and interaction; compared to advertising that tends to get tuned out.

- **Facebook.**

With over 900 million people on Facebook, if a destination doesn't have a Facebook page, it is greatly narrowing its potential web visibility. There are, on average, over 3.2 billion comments made on Facebook each day, spreading valuable word-of-mouth marketing for the businesses that are managing their Facebook presence correctly.

- **Twitter**

It helps destinations expand their brand reach and build relationships with tourists through open conversations. Twitter content must respect key word strategies to increase click through rates and increase search engine optimization.

- **Linked In**

It is the professional's social media group, geared more for networking than socializing. More and more business-to-business relationships are formed via LinkedIn through forums under the Groups and Answers applications. In the tourism industry, LinkedIn can be especially useful for linking lodges and inbound operators to outbound operators and corporate clients.

- **Flickr**

It is hub for image storage and management, with over 40 million users and heavily indexed search engines. Photos to be properly titled, tagged, described, linked and shared with relevant groups on Flickr, the photos, and destination, become more visible.

- **YouTube**

How better to market to tourists than by giving them a glimpse into what they can experience? YouTube is now the number one area for growth in social media marketing. Creating meaningful videos for YouTube can be an investment and must be properly planned and executed.

**c) Trade and Relationship Management Strategies**

- **Tourism Public Relations**

With the speed at which news travels today, having a team of professionals to manage destination brand's public image is more important than ever before. Tourism businesses and destinations need public relations professionals that can manage media relationships, news coverage, crisis management, and more.

- **Trade Marketing**

One of the best ways to market and sell a destination is through the travel trade which includes which includes tour operators and travel agents etc. trade marketing and sales strategy focuses on both electronic and physical channels in order to reach their target clientele, through social media outlets, online booking sites, niche industry events, travel agent representation etc.

- **Relationship Management**

Well-executed relationship management helps to win and retain tourists. The highly service oriented tourism industry is even more sensitive to relationship management intricacies compared to others. Maintaining detailed customer databases, conducting in- depth client analysis and providing the highest levels of customer service are all vital for success in tourism. The implementation of the new technologies to conduct relationship management will result in improved service and decreased costs.

- d) **Partnership and Stewardship Strategies**

- **Partnerships for Destination Stewardship**

Our partnership for destination stewardship strategy focuses on building strong community alliances with the local individuals and organizations that are most familiar with the unique environmental, cultural, historical and scenic assets of a destination.

- a. Bringing stakeholders together for accomplishing shared goals for a destination;
- b. Branding premiere sustainable destinations through innovative marketing solutions and network building.
- c. Increasing the number of—and length of stay by—conscientious travelers to the destination;
- d. Providing a mechanism for regional tourism businesses to better cooperate to achieve key goals that will increase profitability and manage local challenges; and
- e. Equipping local stakeholders with the tools to ensure the preservation of the destination's cultural and environmental landscape while bolstering the capacity of local businesses to utilize sustainable operations.

- **Partnerships for Economic Growth**

Tourism is in most cases a viable and profitable industry for developing countries to promote. Tourism is a globally linked industry where a single consumer's purchase can rely upon a supply-chain that spans the globe. Market-based partnerships have a profound effect on the economic growth of tourism industries in developing countries.

- **Partnerships for economic growth:**

- a. Generating new sales contracts for local tourism, craft and agriculture SMEs to provide services and products to tourists;
- b. Diversifying product offerings for destinations to help them become more competitive;
- c. Promoting sustainable tourism destinations in developing countries to source markets around the world, generating end-consumer demand for these products along the entire booking and value-chain; and
- d. Creating cause-marketing platforms where private companies can easily increase their support and link to community SMEs and sustainable tourism initiatives.

- **Partnerships for Biodiversity Conservation**

Tourism can have a profound impact on the environment. With the growing ramifications of climate change and biodiversity threats, conservation of natural resources and implementation of environmentally friendly practices are more important than ever.

**Partnerships for biodiversity conservation and tourism by:**

- a. Creation of policy that enables and incentivizes better environmental practices by the tourism industry including carbon offsetting, LEED certification, renewable energy use, biodiversity conservation, among others
- b. Creating and disseminating tourism criteria and standards such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria that measure companies and destinations by how well they implement environmentally friendly practices
- c. Designing corporate social responsibility program whereby the private sector partners leverage their access to the end client to generate funds for conservation through travel philanthropy campaigns
- d. Supporting protected area authorities in creating more sustainable strategies by implementing stronger tourism management plans.
- e. Helping community entrepreneurs implement their own sustainability initiatives at the grass roots such as tree planting, conservancies, wildlife protection, awareness raising, constituency building, research and monitoring.

- **Partnerships for Linking Agriculture and Tourism**

Smallholder farmers struggle to integrate their production chains, due to higher transaction costs and lack of market access making it difficult to compete in global markets. In more developed countries, small farmers have found ways to diversify by integrating tourism services and accessing tourism markets to supplement their incomes and make their farms sustainable.

- **Partnerships for agriculture and tourism:**

- a. Working with smallholder farmers create tourism experiences at their farms and marketing these agri-tours to the greater tourism industry;
- b. Analyzing and impacting the food demands of a tourism destination with market surveys, sustainable local cuisine promotion and innovative menu design to link local supply to local demand;
- c. Creating linkages and distribution channels between smallholder farmers and hotels;

- d. Advising destinations on creating local agricultural marketplaces and festivals to draw local and international tourism markets to purchase from the source; and
- e. Branding and marketing local foods, turning commodities into specialty goods thereby increasing revenues.

**Conclusion:**

Destination branding it order of the day, destinations are being forced to adopt market perspective towards their product and consumers and need to effectively communicate and promote their competitive advantages. This requires development of full marketing plan and roll out program to sell the destination to whatever audience it may be seeking to attract ex: investors, tourists, potential citizens etc. moreover journey to excellence in tourism and travel industry is not a quick fix. It is continuum of improvement. Above all the tourism flourishes on prime concept of hospitality that is: “*ATITHI DEVO BHAVAH*”

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