

Chapter 11

Strategy for Developing Spice Tourism: A Study of the State of Maharashtra (India)

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ABSTRACT

Spices are always considered an integral component of the cultural heritage of the place. They provide historical, cultural, social, and geographical identities to the region. These identities are helpful in the development of tourism based on the special interest in experiences, consumption, and purchase of spices. The phenomenon can be formally named 'spice tourism'. The emerging area of spice tourism needs to be well-researched as very limited research is observed, specifically in the Indian context. Thus, identifying its dimensions, industry stakeholders, and industry framework is the need of the hour. Thus, through the case study approach, the researcher tried to design and develop destinations of Maharashtra state based on the available strengths, opportunities, and needs of potential customers. The researcher aimed to identify, develop, and promote spice tourism destinations in the state. Further, challenges of climate, spice production, global competition, and community issues were discussed for appropriate planning.

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INTRODUCTION

Spices are not only meant to be utilized in food preparation but in many countries especially, Asian countries such as India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia they are used as part of cultural rituals and Festivals. It is considered an element of social and cultural life (Hettiarachchi et al., 2021). Since the time of the ancient Silk Route, spices have secured their role in history and supported the development of global trade (Ariwibowo et al., 2022). In Vedas, as early as 6000 BC, shreds of evidence are available regarding the properties and use of various spices (Dhoke et al., 2020). They acted as the link between eastern and western countries. Spices are linked to the geographical characteristics of the region as they grow in very specific climates and atmospheres. Thus, spices can be considered as one of the elements providing historical, cultural, social, and geographical identities to the place (Ariwibowo et al., 2022; Jolliffe, 2014; Nair and Mohanty, 2021; Rama et al., 2021). These identities support the development of tourism in the region (Malkanathi et al., 2015; Zilihona and Mamboya, 2018).

Spices can be employed as a cultural heritage attraction, designated by United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), for the promotion of tourism. Therefore, it can play a key role in fostering cultural heritage tourism (Ariwibowo et al., 2022; Rama et al., 2021). Being important ingredients in many regional dishes, spices are an important pillar of the food tourism industry. It is also counted as part of rural and farm tourism (Hakim and Yanuwadi, 2016). Adding to this, nowadays, specifically after the COVID-19 pandemic, spices are getting recognised widely for their medicinal benefits, resulting in providing a new identity in the health and wellness tourism sector (Shenoy, 2020; Szabo et al., 2010). The cumulative result of all this can be identified as the development of a special interest form of tourism related to spices, named 'spice tourism' (Hettiarachchi et al., 2021).

The emerging area of spice tourism needs to be explored well as very limited research is available on the topic (Hakim and Yanuwadi, 2016; Hettiarachchi et al., 2021; Nair and Mohanty, 2021). Additionally, it is expected that after COVID-19, to avoid crowds, early travellers will seek out 'off-the-beaten-path' nature-based and outdoor destinations (Spenceley, 2021; World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 2020). Thus, identifying its new dimensions, industry stakeholders, and industry framework is needed. Designing and developing destinations based on the available strengths, opportunities, and needs of potential customers will lead the path towards success in the special interest area. Further, challenges of climate, spice production, global competition and community issues should be well-addressed through appropriate planning.

There is a need of identifying more spice routes and geographical mapping of them which will facilitate research. In this vein, the present research will take

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