

Chapter 5

Strategic Competency Development in Indian Tourism: Harnessing Digital Transformation, Sustainability, and Human Capital

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ABSTRACT

The Indian tourism sector is experiencing a significant transformation influenced

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by technology, sustainability, and changing consumer expectations. This chapter examines how competency marketing can enhance the industry's competitiveness, particularly in digital transformation, sustainability, and human capital development. Drawing on global tourism leaders, it highlights the use of digital tools like big data, AI, and ML to offer personalized experiences. The chapter underscores sustainability as a marketing competency and the importance of continuous professional development. It advocates for industry-academia partnerships and regional training programs to support mid-career professionals. India is poised to lead in digital tourism marketing by aligning competencies with emerging technologies and sustainability goals. Key performance indicators such as digital literacy and sustainable tourism engagement are proposed to guide the sector's growth over the next decade.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Indian Tourism Industry

The Indian tourism industry is a pivotal contributor to the country's economy, celebrated globally for its extraordinary cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and vibrant traditions. As one of the fastest-growing sectors, tourism contributed 9.2% to India's GDP in 2023, supporting over 42 million jobs, accounting for approximately 8.1% of total employment (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023). The industry is enriched by varied segments including cultural tourism, medical tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, heritage tourism, and emerging paradigms such as neo tourism (Choudhary & Vijaya, 2022).

India's tourism offerings encompass iconic UNESCO World Heritage Sites like the Taj Mahal, the historical forts and palaces of Rajasthan, Kerala's tranquil backwaters, and the spiritual essence of Varanasi. These attractions collectively attract millions of domestic and international tourists annually, establishing tourism as a cornerstone of India's service economy. Recent strategic initiatives such as the "Incredible India" campaign have effectively promoted India as a globally renowned destination, significantly boosting its international visibility and brand identity (Ministry of Tourism, 2024).

Nevertheless, despite substantial progress, India continues to face intense competition from global tourism powerhouses like Thailand, Spain, and Costa Rica, which excel in digital transformation, sustainable practices, and seamless technological integration (Singh, 2024). Thailand has successfully leveraged its medical tourism through targeted digital marketing, while Spain maintains global leadership in cultural and ecotourism by utilizing advanced digital platforms and sustainable

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