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## Sport Tourism in India: An Overview

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### Abstract

Sports tourism has appeared as a dynamic and rapidly growing segment within the global tourism industry. This article throws light upon the growing phenomenon of sports tourism in India, which has seen remarkable growth and offers a rich tapestry of experiences for both domestic and international travellers. India, known for its diverse culture, rich heritage, and love for sports, has become a prime destination for sports enthusiasts seeking thrilling experiences and intense engagement with various sporting events. The study highlights the key factors that contribute to India's appeal as a sports tourism destination, including its diverse sports landscape, ardent fan base and world-class sports infrastructure.

**Keywords** – tourism, tapestry, heritage, sports and destination.

### Introduction

Sports tourism refers to the phenomenon where individuals and groups travel to different destinations to view or take part in various sporting events and activities. It blends the thrill of sports with the thrill and exploration of travel, creating a unique and vibrant niche in the tourism industry. Sports tourism has gained immense popularity in recent years, as increased people recognize the value of combining their love of sport with a desire to explore unfamiliar places and cultures. The concept of sports tourism covers a wide range of activities. This can include attending major international sporting events such as the Olympics, the FIFA World Cup or the Super Bowl, where fans from all over the world come together to support their favourite teams and athletes. These mega-events often attract thousands or even millions of visitors, create a vibrant atmosphere and leave a lasting impact on the host cities. Furthermore, sports tourism is not limited to viewing sporting events only. It also includes active participation in golf, tennis, skiing, surfing, and other sports-related activities. Travelers often look for destinations that offer the opportunity to engage in their favourite sports or try new sports in stunning natural surroundings or ultramodern facilities. This type of tourism allows enthusiasts to combine their passion for sports with leisure and entertainment while exploring new destinations. Sports tourism supplies many benefits to both travellers and host communities. For travellers, it offers the chance to see iconic sporting moments, meet like-minded individuals and make lasting memories.

It promotes physical activity, personal development and cultural understanding as travellers immerse themselves in a variety of sports and local traditions. On the other hand, host communities receive help from increased revenue, job creation and better infrastructure development as they attract sports fans from around the world. Furthermore, sports tourism has a significant economic impact on destinations. It generates revenue through ticket sales, accommodation, food, transport, merchandise, and other related services. Host cities often invest in the development or improvement of sports facilities, stadiums, and infrastructure to accommodate large-scale sporting events, leading to long-term benefits and improved tourism offerings even after the event is over. Sports tourism also has the

power to enhance the global image of a destination and promote sustainable development. It highlights the sporting heritage, cultural diversity, and natural beauty of a place, which attracts a wide variety of tourists throughout the year. This can lead to the revitalization of local communities, the preservation of cultural traditions, and the conservation of natural resources.

### **Objectives Of The Study-**

1 – Find Challenges and Opportunities: Find the challenges faced by India in developing and promoting sports tourism, such as lack of awareness, limited funds, inadequate publicity, and suggest strategies to overcome these challenges.

2 – Economic Impact Assessment: Evaluate the economic benefits generated from sports tourism in India, including revenue generation, employment generation and overall contribution to the national economy.

3 – Assessment of infrastructure and facilities: Assess the existing sports infrastructure and facilities in India, including stadia, training centres, accommodation, transport, and other facilities, to find strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

**Methodological Analysis:-** This section critically appraises the methodologies adopted in earlier studies on sports tourism in India. It examines the research design, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and analytical approaches used. The purpose of the analysis is to find the strengths and weaknesses of each method and their implications for the reliability and validity of the findings.

**Common Methods:-** This subsection finds commonly used methodologies in studies on sports tourism in India, such as quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, case studies, and secondary data analysis. It discusses the advantages and limitations of each approach in capturing the complexities of the sport tourism phenomenon.

**Data Collection Techniques:-** This subsection focuses on the various data collection techniques employed in the study on sports tourism in India. It explores methods such as survey, interview, observation, and document analysis. It discusses the suitability of each technique in capturing the required data and highlights potential biases or limitations associated with them.

**Analytical Techniques:-** This subsection examines the analytical techniques used in analysing the collected data. It discusses both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods, such as statistical analysis, content analysis, thematic analysis, and discourse analysis. The subsection emphasizes the importance of choosing proper analytical techniques based on the research questions and the data collected.

**Sports tourism in India presents many opportunities and challenges. Here is an overview of both aspects:-**

**Opportunities:-** Diverse sporting culture: India has a rich sporting heritage with a wide range of traditional and modern sports. This diversity attracts sports fans from around the world, supplying opportunities to highlight and promote various sporting events.

Growing infrastructure: Over the years, India has invested in the development of ultramodern sports infrastructure including stadia, training facilities and sports academies. These facilities can host

international tournaments and training camps, making India an attractive destination for sports tourism. Large fan base: India has a large fan base for various sports, especially cricket. This fervent following creates a vibrant atmosphere during sporting events, thereby enhancing the overall visitor experience. Sports tourists can connect with local fans and immerse themselves in the unique sporting culture. Tourism potential: India is a popular tourist destination known for its historical sites, natural beauty, and cultural diversity. By combining sporting events with tourism programs such as sightseeing, adventure activities and local experiences, sports tourism can attract visitors who are interested in both sport and exploring the country.

**Economic Impact:** Sports tourism has the potential to generate significant economic benefits. This can encourage local businesses including hotels, restaurants, transport services and retail outlets. Hosting international tournaments and events can also contribute to employment generation and revenue generation.

**Challenges:-** Infrastructure development: Although India has made progress in developing sports infrastructure, it still needs further investment and improvement. Upgrading existing facilities and building new facilities can be costly and time-consuming, posing a challenge for hosting large-scale international events. Access and Connectivity: India's sheer size and diverse geography can pose challenges in terms of access and connectivity. Developing transport networks and improving connectivity to remote sporting venues can be important in attracting sports tourists.

**Safety and Security:** Ensuring the safety and security of sports tourists is of paramount importance. Adequate measures need to be implemented to address the concerns like crowd management, emergency response system and general security arrangements to create a friendly environment for the visitors. **Marketing and Promotion:** It is essential to effectively promote sports tourism in India to attract international tourists. Investing in marketing campaigns, using digital platforms, and collaborating with international sports organizations and travel agencies can help generate awareness and attract a global audience.

**Use of infrastructure:** After hosting major sporting events, it can be a challenge to effectively use sporting infrastructure and keep their sustainability. It is important to ensure long-term planning for the use of facilities beyond specific events to maximize return on investment.

Overall, by using its sporting heritage, investing in infrastructure, and addressing challenges, India has the potential to become a leading sports tourism destination, offering unique experiences to sports enthusiasts across the globe.

**Economic impact of sports tourism in India-** Sports tourism has appeared as a significant contributor to the Indian economy in recent years. India's rich cultural heritage, diverse geography and growing sports infrastructure have set up the country as an attractive destination for sports enthusiasts from across the world. The economic impact of sports tourism in India can be seen in several aspects:-

**Revenue Generation:** Sports tourism generates substantial revenue for the Indian economy. Tourists visiting India for sporting events contribute to the local economy by spending on accommodation, transport, food, shopping, and other tourism-related activities. This spending has a direct positive impact on various sectors such as hospitality, transportation, retail, and entertainment. **Employment Opportunities:** The growth of sports tourism in India has created employment opportunities in various

sectors. The influx of tourists during major sporting events requires added staff at hotels, restaurants, transportation services and event management companies. This, in turn, helps in reducing unemployment and improving overall socio-economic conditions in the host cities.

**Infrastructure development:** Hosting international sporting events often requires the development and upgrading of sporting infrastructure such as stadia, training facilities and accommodation options. Investment in infrastructure not only enhances the host city's ability to attract future sporting events but also supplies long-term benefits by improving the overall sporting ecosystem. This includes development of grassroots sports, talent identification programs and sports academies, which can contribute to the country's sporting success.

**Branding and Promotion:** Hosting major sporting events in India attracts international attention while highlighting the country's cultural heritage, tourism potential and sporting capabilities. The performance enhances the image of India as a favourable tourist destination, which attracts tourists apart from the event itself. Positive media coverage and increased awareness contribute to the growth of the tourism industry, which helps various sectors of the economy. **Support services:** In addition to direct spending by sports tourists, several support services benefit from sports tourism. These include travel agencies, tour operators, event management companies, souvenir shops, local guides and other service providers catering to the specific needs of sport tourists. These businesses generate added revenue and employment opportunities.

**Regional Development:** Sports events held in different regions of India contribute to the development of those regions. Hosting sporting events in less developed regions has been shown to spur economic development, improve infrastructure and help reduce regional disparities. It promotes tourism in offbeat destinations, encouraging tourists to venture beyond traditional tourist hotspots. To fully use the economic impact of sports tourism, India needs to continue hosting high-profile sporting events, invest in sports infrastructure and focus on promoting sports-related activities and experiences. By doing so, India can attract more sports tourists, boost its tourism industry, and realize the associated economic benefits.

**Contribution of sports tourism to India's GDP-** The contribution of sports tourism in India is slowly being realized and it is contributing to the country's GDP. However, it should be realized that the exact contribution of sports tourism to India's GDP varies over time and is influenced by several factors such as period development, hosting of great sporting events and tourism policies. Sports tourism includes a variety of activities. Such as being present during sporting events, sports related travel, sports training camps and adventure sports. The growing promotion of greatness of sports like cricket, football, tennis, kabaddi etc. in India has given a boost to sports tourism. India has hosted great sporting events such as the Cricket World Cup, Commonwealth Games, Indian Premier League (IPL) and Pro Kabaddi League, which have attracted international and domestic tourists.

The increased number of travellers due to these sporting events has led to a steady increase in tourism income, including their spending on accommodation, transportation, food, entertainment, and merchandise, thereby contributing to the overall GDP. In addition, the opportunity for sport can be a catalyst for India's GDP, thanks to the tourism industry increasing the local economy, employment opportunities and revenue for businesses. This can help promote a positive image of the country internationally and attract future investments. Importantly, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the

tourism industry globally, including sports tourism. The sector's growth has been hampered by travel restrictions, cancellation of sporting events and lack of tourism demand. However, once the situation improves and normalcy returns, sports tourism in India is expected to recover, contributing positively to the country's GDP.

**Sports Tourism Infrastructure and Sports Facilities in India-** India has recently made significant investments in sports tourism infrastructure and sports training to promote sports and attract international events. India has a rich sporting culture and has hosted several notable events in recent years, such as the Commonwealth Games in 2010 and the FIFA U-17 World Cup in 2017. Here are some important sports tourism infrastructure and sports practices:

**Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi:** It is a multi-purpose stadium and is one of the largest sports grounds in India. It has a seating capacity of over 60,000 and hosts major sporting events such as athletics, football, and cricket. **Eden Gardens, Kolkata:** It is one of the oldest and premier cricket stadiums in the world. It has a seating capacity of approximately 66,000 and has hosted the final match of the ICC World Twenty20 in 2016. **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Stadium (Motera Stadium), Ahmedabad:** This recently renovated cricket stadium is now the largest cricket stadium in the world with a seating capacity of 132,000. It has modern facilities and has hosted international cricket matches.

**Salt Lake Stadium, Kolkata:** It is the second largest football stadium in the world with a seating capacity of over 85,000. ("Top Ten Largest Football Stadiums in the World - Total Football ...") The stadium has hosted important football events such as the final of the 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup. **Buddha International Circuit, Greater Noida:** It is a Formula 1 racing track that hosted the Indian Grand Prix from 2011 to 2013. It is a resource with ultramodern facilities designed as per international standards and attracts motorsport fans. Worldwide.

**Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, New Delhi:** It is a multi-sport stadium dedicated to field hockey and has a seating capacity of around 16,000. It has hosted international hockey tournaments and serves as the home ground of the Indian national hockey team. **Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Hyderabad:** It is a major cricket stadium with a seating capacity of over 33,000. The stadium has hosted several international crickets matches and Indian Premier League (IPL) matches.

Apart from these special places, India has invested in the development of sports infrastructure across the country. The government has launched initiatives such as the "Khelo India" program to promote sports at the grassroots level and develop sports tourism infrastructure to host major sporting events in the world. Stadiums and sports structures have been built or upgraded in various cities to supply excellent facilities for sportspersons and to host national and international events.

In addition, India is actively bidding to host important sporting events such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup and the Commonwealth Games in the future. These efforts reflect the spirit of developing the country's sports tourism infrastructure and promoting sports through tourism and highlighting India's capabilities on the global platform.

**Conclusion and Discussion on Sports Tourism in India-** Sports tourism in India has seen significant growth and has the potential to become a major contributor to the country's tourism industry. This conclusion is supported by many factors and discussions about sports tourism in India.

First, India has a rich sports culture and followers of various sports are admirable. The country has produced world class players in sports like cricket, hockey, badminton, tennis, kabaddi etc. Major sporting events such as Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket, Pro Kabaddi League, and Indian Super League (ISL) football have become extremely popular. Popular domestically and internationally. These events attract many visitors, including tourists, which has a significant impact on the tourism sector. Second, India has made significant investments in sports infrastructure. Ultramodern stadiums and sports organizations have been developed across the country, giving India the ability to host major international competitions and events. Cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Chennai have world-class facilities that can host sporting events on a large scale. This infrastructure not only enhances the hosting ability but also attracts international players, teams, and spectators from all over the world.

In addition, the Government of India has recognized the potential of sports tourism and has taken initiatives to encourage it. The "Incredible India" campaign launched by the Ministry of Tourism has contributed significantly to promoting sports tourism. The government has supplied favourable policies and incentives to attract international sporting events and encourage sports-related investment in the country.

Sports tourism not only brings economic benefits, but also promotes cultural exchanges and cross-border events. International sportspersons and spectators coming to India for sporting events get an opportunity to experience the country's diverse culture, heritage, and hospitality. It helps in setting up a mutual exchange of ideas and experiences, thereby strengthening international relations, and helping in building a positive image of India on the global stage. However, there are some challenges which need to be addressed to further increase sports tourism in India. There is a need to develop better facilities near sporting venues with a focus on improving transport, access, and accommodation options. In addition, it is important to ensure the safety of tourists, especially international tourists, to build trust and attract more visitors.

In conclusion, sports tourism in India has immense potential and can contribute significantly to the tourism industry of this country. With a strong sporting culture, world-class infrastructure, government support and the ability to host international events, India is well-positioned to attract sports fans from around the world. By meeting the challenges and continuously promoting sports tourism, India can set up itself as a leading destination for sports related travel and experiences.

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