competition winner

Swachh Bharath (Clean India) *Campaign and the Indian Tourism Industry: Strategic Challenges and Cultural Impediments*

By H.G. Parsa, Surabhi Singh and Vijaya "Vi" Narapareddy

Mr. Manish Gupta, coordinator of the Swachh Bharat (Clean India) Campaign, received a phone call from his associate on March 10, 2017. He was disturbed by the news. In one of the villages, local citizens were breaking down the newly installed toilets in protest. They demanded better schools and roads before public toilet facilities. It appeared that they were resisting the change. The Clean India program was facing the challenge of overcoming cultural practices ingrained in rural Indian populations over thousands of years. Gupta had limited time on hand to implement the Clean India campaign so that he could promote the tourism industry in India.

Mr. Gupta's goal was to follow the mission of Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, to make India clean by October 2, 2019, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, father of the nation. Clean India was one of the most widely promoted programs of Modi's government. The lack of personal and environmental cleanliness throughout the country had a major negative impact on the image of India and its tourism industry. The social and economic impacts on Indian tourism from the general state of uncleanliness were quite significant (Dutta, 2017). There was an urgent need to elevate tourism offerings and services to meet the changing needs of the market, thus improving tourist satisfaction. Gupta had to respond quickly to the protests and come up with an appropriate and sustainable strategy to expedite the Clean India campaign.

Indian Tourism Industry

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (2018), tourism in India has generated US$23.4 billion or 9.4% of India's GDP in 2017 and that was expected to grow to US$27.5 billion by the end of 2018 (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2018). The tourism industry created approximately 41.62 million jobs, which amounted to over 8.5% of the country's total employment. By 2028, the industry was projected to grow at an annual rate of 6.9% to US$49.0 billion, contributing 9.9% of the country's GDP (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2018). The healthy growth of the Indian economy was believed to be the primary force behind the expected rise in Indian tourism. The Indian tourism industry was ranked 11th in the Asia Pacific region and

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62nd overall in the world for attracting tourists (Tourism Ministry of India, 2017). However, as shown in Exhibit 1, India attracted only 1.2% of the international tourist market in 2016, well below developing countries like Mexico, Turkey, and Thailand.

Furthermore, as shown in Exhibit 2, the top ten India States for domestic tourism were also the top foreign tourist destinations in 2016.

The Indian government saw immense potential in improving the tourism industry. Tourism would not only be the largest service industry in India, but it would also become a catalyst in the socioeconomic development of both rural and urban areas. Tourism was often presented as a remedy for many socio-economic challenges like underdevelopment, unemployment, poverty, quality of life in rural areas, and other issues of the urban poor. Thus, the Indian government was keen on developing and promoting its domestic and international tourism. The Ministry of Tourism played a major role in formulating the tourism policies and programs and coordinated the efforts of the India States and the Union Territories, as well as the private sector. The Tourism Ministry had a public sector undertaking, the India Tourism

Exhibit 1

Share of International Tourist Arrivals in Top Countries of the World and India in 2016

| Rank	Country	Share (%)
1	France	6.7
2	USA	6.1
3	Spain	6.1
4	China	4.8
5	Italy	4.2
6	United Kingdom	2.9
7	Germany	2.9
8	Mexico	2.8
9	Thailand	2.6
10	Turkey	2.5
	India	1.2
	Other Countries	57.2
	World Total	100

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2018).

Top Ten States in India for number of foreign and domestic tourist visits (2016)

Share of Top ten States/UT in India in number of Foreign Tourist Visits in 2016
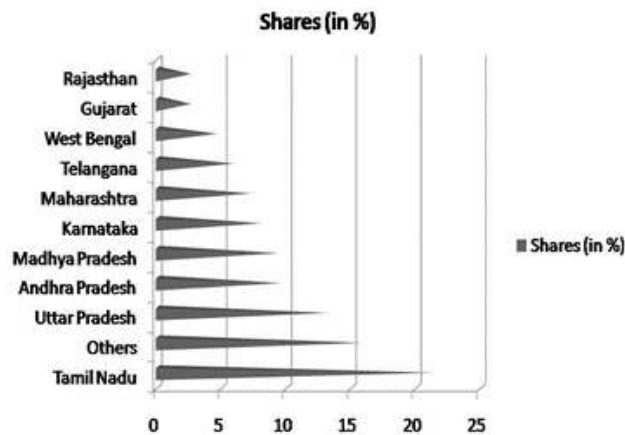
Share of Top ten States/UT in India in number of Domestic Tourist Visits in 2016
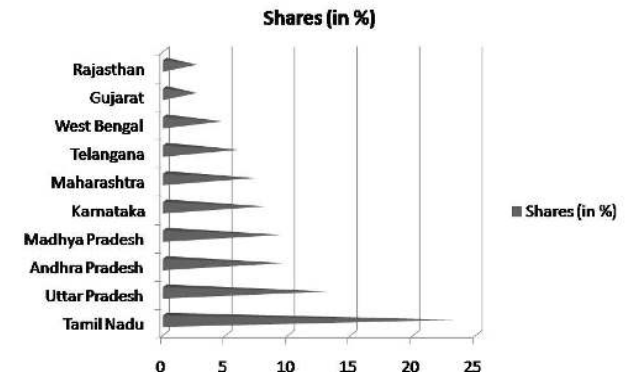
Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2018

Development Corporation, to promote tourism in India.

Political and Cultural Roots of Poor Public Sanitation in India

With over 5000 years of history and culture strongly rooted in agriculture, the Indian society remained semi-urban and rural for centuries. As described by Greek travelers such as Megasthanes, India enjoyed a flourishing economy with one of the highest standards of living comparable to Greeks and Persians, which attracted Alexander III of Macedonia to invade India for its riches. India had the first residential university in the world in the City of Nalanda which taught Buddhism to monks and scholars from all over Asia and the middle east (Bihar Tourism, 2018). Unfortunately, between the 12th and 20th centuries, India was under constant attacks from outsiders and was ruled by invaders from Central Asia and Persia for about 800 years. During those tumultuous foreign occupation years, the Indian economy was shattered, national monuments were destroyed, universities were dismantled, libraries were burned, and the socio-cultural fabric was devastated. Despite these volatile factors, according to Harvard University Reports, India enjoyed one of the highest GDPs in the world until 18thcentury (Williamson and Clingingsmith, 2005). Then, Britain entered India and defeated the last rulers of the great Maratha empire and Moghul kings and established their rule for about 200 years until 1947. During this period, unfortunately, the British implemented their colonial policies of deindustrialization of India (Williamson and Clingingsmith, 2005), which further devastated the Indian economy, especially the manufacturing sector.

Nearly 1000 years of constant battles and foreign occupations resulted in the destruction of the Indian economy as well as its social fabric and infrastructure. The primary victims of this social upheaval were the Indian culture and industrial production sectors. India gained independence from the British on August 15th, 1947. The division of India into two countries (India and Pakistan) was a condition for gaining independence from British rule and has led to five wars between the neighboring countries (1947, 1963, 1965, 1971 and 1999). These wars and internal conflicts strained India's resources to a breaking point and deprived nearly 1.2 billion Indian people of their basic needs. Consequently, several Indian governments placed more emphasis on basic needs such as agriculture production, major irrigation projects, public transportation, energy, education, manufacturing, and defense. Unfortunately, areas such as tourism, public sanitation, waste management, pollution, urban and rural planning, and drainage systems were totally neglected, and this was even more true in rural areas. The continued neglect of the public sanitation sector over several hundred years has led to major pollution and public health problems in India (Kumar et al., 2011). In addition, like most other developing economies, India also experienced its share of public corruption and neglect of human needs. Nearly 70 years after gaining independence from the British, Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi took a firm stand against corruption and championed the cause of public sanitation under the banner "Swachh Bharath (Clean India)."

Importance of the *Clean India* Campaign for Indian Tourism

Indian tourism contributed to three priorities of the Indian government: income generation, employment generation, and environmental sustainability. The importance of a clean India was increasingly necessary for boosting tourism, a key factor in economic

development and employment generation. A critical issue impacting Indian tourism was public hygiene, which had become a major hurdle in fully realizing the contributions of tourism in solving socioeconomic challenges. Cleanliness and public hygiene were universally regarded as indispensable norms for promoting tourism. Lack of modernized personal and public cleanliness facilities at tourist destinations and along highways were two of the major challenges in promoting the image of India as a world class tourism destination choice.

"India has become only the third country in the world to improve its Travel and Tourism Competitive Index by double digits in a single year. Ranked 52nd in 2015, India climbed up by a healthy 12 places to be ranked 40th in 2018. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call for a Swachh Bharat has not only improved India's rural and urban sanitation scenario, but seems to have had a positive effect on India's ranking in the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index as well. The rankings, released by the World Economic Forum, map sustainable developments of countries in the travel and tourism sector and show how the sector contributes to the overall development of the country."(Dutta, 2017).

In 2012, a Clean India action plan was finally translated into a tourism policy. Traditionally, the tourism policy remained a major concern of both central and state governments of India. Surprisingly, the new Clean India policy was developed (Baken & Bhagavatula, 2010), implemented, monitored, and revised effectively by the central government of India. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism had taken many initiatives to execute the Clean India's objectives in several tourist destinations across India and this helped to improve India's global ranking as a destination for tourists. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism also launched the Swachh Paryatan (Clean Travel) mobile app to maintain cleanliness around cultural and heritage monuments. The app provided alerts on unclean conditions in different parts of various cities. Dutta, (2017) noted that India would like to become the choice destination for tourists by emphasizing public sanitation and clean environments throughout the nation. ().

Launch of the *Clean India* Project

Mahatma Gandhi, father of the nation, led India's freedom movement and he had many dreams for an independent India including good public sanitation and overall cleanliness (Times of India, 2018). A clean India would be the best tribute the country could pay to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary in 2019. Thus, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan (Clean India Mission) with the intention of promoting Indian tourism as well. This campaign was aimed at cleaning up the streets, roads, and infrastructure in India's cities, smaller towns, and rural areas. The day Clean India was launched was a historic day as Prime Minister Modi physically joined the community in sweeping the streets, as shown in Exhibit 3. The popular Indian movie actor, Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, became the face of this program

(see Exhibit 4). The effectiveness of Clean India was critical for the long-term success of the Indian tourism industry. It was launched with universal support from all over India, including businesses, local communities, major international corporations, Bollywood actors, celebrities, UNICEF, the Gates Foundation, and many other NGOs.

This mass movement has motivated and mobilized 125 million Indians into action to promote the Clean India campaign. Specific objectives of Clean India included abolishing poor public and personal sanitation practices through the construction of household-owned and community-owned toilets, creating access to clean drinking water, and establishing a mechanism for accountability to keep Indian clean. The project's goal was to accomplish this by October 2nd, 2019 on the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. This goal was to construct 90 million toilets in rural India at a projected cost of US$30 billion. This critical mission included 3 million Indian residents including: govern-

Exhibit 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally involved in Swachh Bharat activities

Exhibit 4

Billboards with Swachh Bharat Brand Ambassador and Indian Movie Celebrity Mr. Amitabh Bachchan

(Source: http://www.swachhbharaturban.in/sbm/home/#/SBM)

ment employees, school students, and college students from all over India and across 4,041 cities, towns, and associated rural areas.

Mr. Gupta's Challenges

Mr. Gupta reflected on the tasks before him. A serious challenge was the very old habit of poor public sanitation, which was mainly prevalent in rural communities. Despite the capital provided under this program to build toilets, local residents (especially villagers in rural areas), preferred to use remote yet public areas away from village homes as public toilets. Additionally, there were no appropriate waste management facilities in rural communities. While the Clean India program placed a lot of emphasis on collecting waste in cities, it failed to give adequate attention to waste management in rural areas. As a result, people carelessly threw their paper, plastic and food waste onto roads. Furthermore, there were no proper mechanisms to channel funds into rural areas for the construction of toilets or improving sanitation facilities.

Mr. Gupta was aware that the total funds allocated for constructing community toilets were $724.32 million, but the funds actually released were only $390.06 million, as shown in Exhibits 5 and 6. The central government had allocated $724.32 million to be spent between October 2nd, 2014, when the project was launched, and the deadline for completing the construction of individual household and community toilets was set for October 2nd, 2019. With this deadline quickly approaching, Mr. Gupta had to overcome established socio-cultural challenges in implementing the program. The tension between local communities and government employees escalated when villagers felt that government officials responsible for the construction of toilets in villages disrespected and harassed the locals. Corruption was rampant in the local offices and this often resulted in inadequate government funds being available to build the toilets for the people in need. The villagers complained that officials were non-cooperative in building appropriate waste management, dumping, and sanitation facilities. Additionally, there was a need for more toilets on national highways, roadways, and tourist destinations (Sambyal, 2018), but none were built yet.

Mr. Gupta remained calm amidst the tempest. He researched similar 'clean campaigns' that had been implemented by countries like Singapore, Bulgaria, Egypt, and New Zealand (see Appendix A for a summary). Gupta appreciated Prime Minister Modi's efforts to clean-up India and raise its status on the map of global tourism. Since gaining independence from British rule in 1947, Prime Minister Modi was the only other national leader who had taken up the cause of providing toilets to all Indians with a project completion goal of 2019. He even discussed this issue with Mr. Barack Obama, former President of the USA. Modi's mission to provide clean water and sanitation facilities throughout the country and his ambitious deadline for doing so showed his courage, leadership, vision, and initiative (Sulabh Swachh
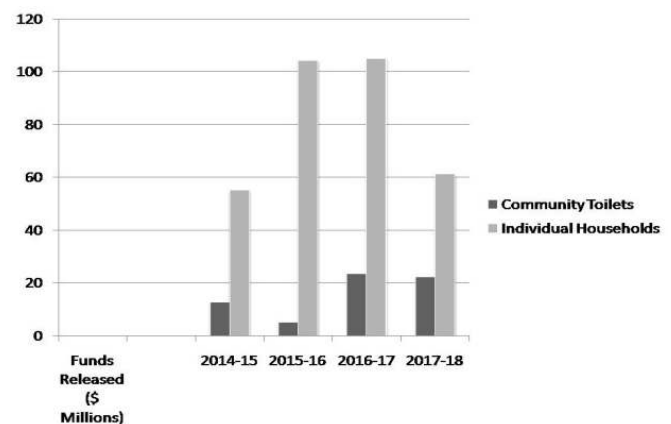
Exhibit 5

**Fund Allocation Budget
(in $ millions)**
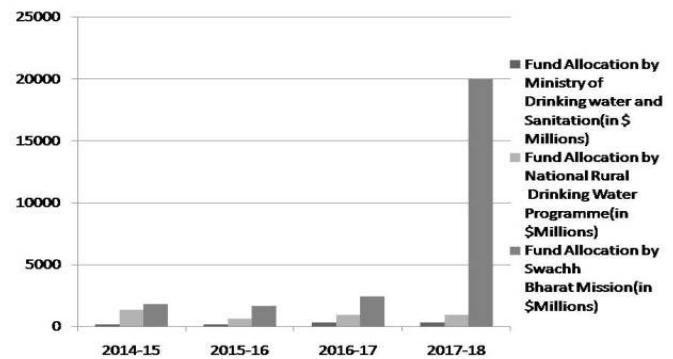
Source: Government of India, Swachh Bharat statistics

Exhibit 6

Funds released for community toilets and individual households (in $ millions)

Source: India Spend

Bharat, 2017). Mr. Gupta was unwavering in his support for making this project successful despite all odds.

Mr. Gupta had read the Bruntland Report (2017) and learned that sustainable development was defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. He was determined to make it happen in spite of the daunting challenges he faced. He pondered the following three choices for effective and timely completion of the Clean India project:

1. Should he expedite the process by involving more local business organizations using government released funds and invite major Indian corporations and celebrities to implement the national agenda in the rural sector?

2. Should he divide the project into urban and rural areas? Then, he could build urban programs by relying more on UNICEF (UNICEF, 2018) aid since they have access to international expertise and technology and financial resources. The ruralprograms could be implemented by local NGOs, communities, and local businesses since they are most familiar with the geography, local politics, and cultural values of these areas.

3. Should he continue the current practice of working with local politicians and NGOs at the current less-than-desired pace because of local conflicts of interests between public sanitation needs versus educational and healthcare needs? Would this garner the much-needed local support and meet the national goals for the Clean India campaign?