

Holiday for Mr Young

Youth tourism proved more resilient than general tourism during the global slowdown. In India, the youth segment forms a strong 27% of overall tourism

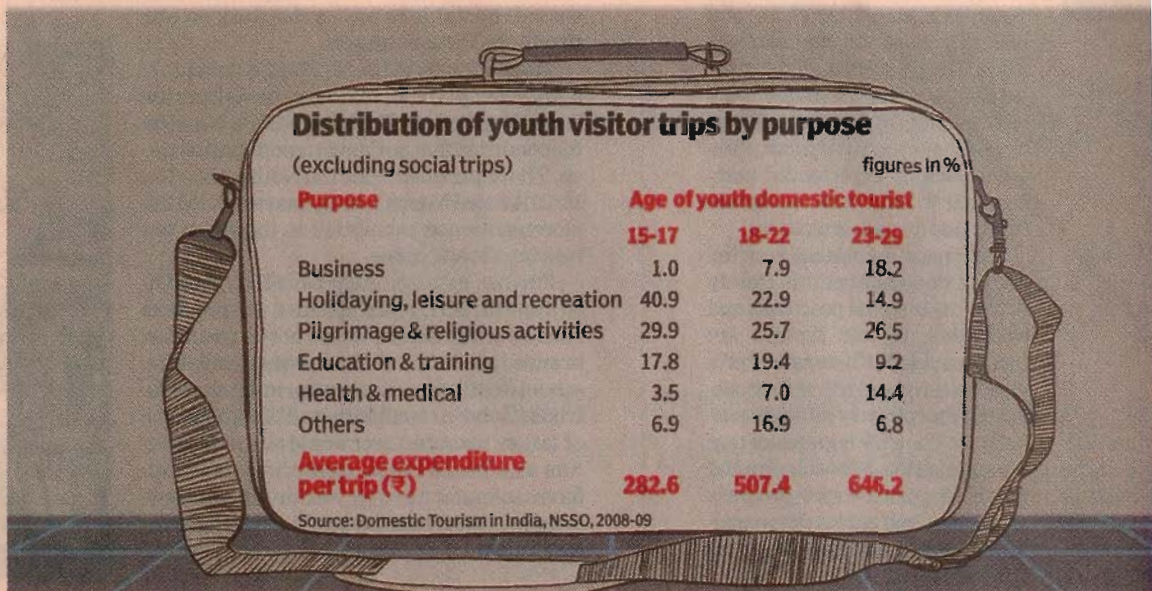


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Youth tourism, across the world, is gaining immense importance as more and more young people have begun to travel, not just more frequently but also for longer durations. According to a World Travel Organisation's (WTO) report on youth travel—*Youth Travel Matters* (2008)—one-fifth of all the international tourist trips are made by the youth. The average number of trips made by young tourists rose from 6.2 in 2002 to 7.3 in 2007. The demand generated by this tourism segment can thus be of great importance to any economy.

Interestingly, while the overall tourism activity suffered a setback as most economies were gripped in the clutches of the economic crisis that started in 2008 and many of them are still struggling to get out of it completely, youth tourism remained a rather resilient segment. This is indicated by a tad 0.3% fall in the youth travel industry in 2009, compared with a much sharper 4.2% fall in the global travel industry for the same year, as suggested by the Youth Travel Industry Monitor.

In India, we don't have enough coherent data on youth tourism. Nonetheless, certain aspects of it can be obtained from the Domestic Tourism Survey, conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in 2008-09. According to the survey, of the total estimated 784 million domestic overnight tourists, 27% belonged to the youth segment, of the age group 15-29 years. With



respect to overnight visitor trips too, this proportion stood at 27% of the total 2,117 million trips, given an estimated 2.7 trips per person.

Tourism statistics at the international level suggest that leisure or education are the main motivations for youth travel. However, in India, social trips (visits to friends and relatives, attending social ceremonies etc) dominate all other types of trips that include business, leisure/recreation, religious, health-related and shopping trips. Social trips account for as much as 76% of the total overnight trips. And this is true for all categories of tourists. This is also true in the case of youth tourists. This proportion, at 69%, was the lowest in the case of senior citizens who beat the rest of the age-segments when it came to taking religious and health-related trips.

In order to have a better understanding of the youth tourism activity for purposes other than social, particularly those taken for leisure, we analyse the remaining 24% (non-social trips) of the total 574 million youth trips, that work out to be 139 million trips. Further, in the context of India, where children of

any age are usually accompanied by other household members, mostly parents and family members, a trip taken by a youth when he/she travels without the accompaniment of any other household member should ideally be categorised under youth trips. Hence, we filter the sample to have only such cases. This brings the estimated number of tourist trips down to 52 million in the reference year. Nonetheless, it is considerable enough to give some insights into the pattern of youth tourism across purposes. The youth segment is further divided into three age groups: 15-17 years, 18-22 years and 23-29 years.

The data suggests that of the total youth trips, excluding social trips, leisure trips account for the most (41%) in the 15-17 years age group—probably travel with friends or educational institutions. People in the 18-22 years age group travelled mostly for pilgrimage and leisure (26% and 23%, respectively). Those in the 23-29 years age group took most of their trips for pilgrimage (26%) followed by business purposes (18%).

With respect to average expenditure per trip, however, the youngest segment spent the least and expendi-

ture rose with rise in age. On an average (taking all types of trips together), the 15-17 years age group spent only ₹283 per trip while the 18-22 years age group spent almost twice that at ₹507. The 23-29 years age group spent a little higher, at ₹646. This translates to an average youth (15-29 years) tourism expenditure of ₹540 per domestic overnight trip. Given that the total domestic overnight trips (unaccompanied by any other household member) undertaken by the youth of India were 176 million in the reference year this segment spent ₹9,500 crore on tourism. This is certainly significant enough to attract the attention of the government and private corporates. Innovative marketing campaigns, plus accessible and affordable travel opportunities should be created for the Indian youth to travel more and explore more. This will also aid in generating more income and employment opportunities.

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