INDIA'S E-TOURIST VISA POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON OVERALL FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVAL

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the largest industries of the world and has shown tremendous growth during the recent decade. As India's 3rd largest industry, it contributes 6.8% to its GDP. Despite rising share of India in Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) during the previous years, its global share was only 0.68% (PIB, 2016) while that of China was 4.9% in the year 2015. The FTAs in India during 2014, 2015 and 2016 were 7.68 million, 8.03 million and 8.89 million respectively.

As a major employment generating industry, India is making all out efforts to increase FTAs and FEE. One of the important policy measures in tourism sector is the easing of the visa regime through the execution of tourist visa on arrival enabled by electronic travel authorization (ETA). Accordingly, the Government of India launched e-Tourist Visa (e-TV) facility on November 27, 2014 and further extended it to 161 countries on 16 Indian airports till date. It further aims to extend it to 180 countries in the very near future. With this facility of e-TV, the travelers from eligible countries can obtain a visa to visit India online rather than having to visit the Indian embassy to obtain the same. The scheme received tremendous response since its inception and the absolute number of e-tourist visas issued has gone up from 14,083 in December 2014 to 152000 in January2017. Moreover, the share of travelers that obtained an e-tourist visa in the total foreign tourist arrivals (TFTAs) has also gone up from 1.61 percent in December 2014 to 15.46 percent in January 2017. Despite all this, the month on month growth rate of e-tourist visas issued has been volatile averaging at only 10.26 percent from December 2014 to January 2017. Also an average of only8.46 percent of foreign travelers to India during this period has opted for an e-visa while the remaining 91.54 percent opted for a "traditional "visa.

This working paper is a step forward towards understanding the impact of E-Tourist Visa introduced by the Government of India in November 2014 and suggests various measures to make this E-tourist visa scheme more effective and user friendly in the future.

KEYWORDS: E-Tourist Visa; Tourism; Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs); Visa on Arrival (VOA); Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE)

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has grown to be one of the world's largest industries with a growth rate of above 5% p a in the past twenty years. It contributes above 10.4% of global GDP and generates employment for more than 235 million people across the globe which is about 11% of the world employment. It is a significant generator of foreign exchange and is sensitive to world economic and political conditions.

Travel and tourism is the largest service industry in India and it has shown exponential growth in the past. Tourism is India's 3rd largest export industry after readymade garments, gems and jewelry. It is 3rd largest in the foreign exchange earnings and contributes to 6.8% of India's GDP. It contributes about 11.5% of the total employment of the country.

India has moved up 13 notches to 52nd position on a global list of countries in terms of their travel and tourism competitiveness but ranks worse than its emerging market peers like China, Brazil, Russia and South Africa. Due to long-standing infrastructure and facility gaps, India has been ranked 109th in tourism-specific infrastructure, 106th in health, hygiene and 114th in Information, Communications and Technology readiness in 2015 (TTCI, 2015).The natural and cultural resources of India were rated at a high of 12 worldwide and 96 on the parameter of prioritization of travel & tourism. It was rated 67 on the parameter of the infrastructure and 129 on safety & security parameters. However, in terms of price competitiveness, India is at 8th rank.

India's share of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) from the world during 2015 were 0.68% (PIB, 2016) while that of China was 4.9%. The FTAs in India during 2014, 2015 and 2016 were 7.68 million, 8.03 million and 8.89 million respectively. Though the growth in total foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) has decelerated to 4.4 per cent in 2015, it again bounced back to 10.7% in 2016. A total of 10,79,696 tourists arrived on e-TV in 2016 as compared to 4,45,300 in 2015 registering a growth of 142.46per cent.

Countries across the globe have started to put in place strategies that help ease in tourism. One of the important policy measures in tourism sector is the easing of the visa regime through the execution of tourist visa on arrival enabled by electronic travel authorization (ETA). The Government of India also launched e-Tourist Visa (e-TV) facility on November 27, 2014 and further extended it to 161 countries on 16 Indian airports till date.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

E-Tourist Visa is a new field in tourism and hence much of literature is not available on this subject. No thesis could be found available on this subject on the SHODHGANGA site of University Grants Commission of Govt of India. Also there is no literary book available. Only information on Ministry of Tourism web site is available to have first-hand information. Some useful articles have also been published in leading national newspapers in the recent past.

OBJECTIVES

This paper is a step forward towards understanding the impact of E-Tourist Visa introduced by the Government of India in November 2014. The main objectives of this study is to analyze the pattern of foreign tourist arrival and foreign exchange earnings in India from Year 2000 to 2016/17 and to study the impact of E tourist visa on foreign tourist arrival during time period of 2014-16/17. The study will also suggest measures to make-Tourist Visa scheme more effective in the future.

METHODOLOGY

Inferences have been drawn from the secondary data collected from various sources like Magazines, Journals, Web sites, Reports, Brochures and Online data sources. Valuable data was also collected from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Bureau of Immigration and international publications on tourism.

INDIA'S POSITION IN THE WORLD

India ranks 41 and has a share of 0.68% in International Tourist arrivals. Its Share in International Tourist receipts is 1.62% with a rank of 15.

Details of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) and Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) from the year 2000 to 2016 with Percentage change over the previous year are tabulated as below:

Table 1: FTA and FEE in India with Percentage Change Over the Previous Year

Year	FTA In India (In Millions)	Percentage (%) Change Over the Previous Year	FEE From Tourism In India (US$ Million)	Percentage (%) Change Over the Previous Year
2000	2.65	6.7	3460	15.0
2001	2.54	-4.2	3198	-7.6
2002	2.38	-6.0	3103	-3.0
2003	2.73	14.3	4463	43.8
2004	3.46	26.8	6170	38.2
2005	3.92	13.3	7493	21.4
2006	4.45	13.5	8634	15.2
2007	5.08	14.3	10729	24.3
2008	5.28	4.0	11832	10.3
2009	5.17	-2.2	11136	-5.9
2010	5.78	11.8	14193	27.5
2011	6.31	9.2	16564	16.7
2012	6.58	4.3	17737	7.1
2013	6.97	5.9	18445	4.0
2014	7.68	10.2	20226	9.7
2015	8.03	4.5	21071	-1.3
2016	8.89	10.7	23146	9.8

Foreign Tourist Arrival (FTA) in India is growing in a fast pace but still has large scope for increase. As seen in the table above, the figures of FTA show a sharp up rise after Year 2002 which is highest in 14 years (2.73 Million). The FTA in 2003 is 14.3% higher than the previous year 2002 which was 2.38 Million though there was a negative growth in the year 2001 due to the aftermath of 9/11 in USA. After this, the FTA declined to 5.17 million in the year 2009 again due to global recession which was 2.2% less than previous year 2008 when the FTA was 5.28 Million. After this the sector showed a steady growth and in year 2010, the FTA grew to 5.78 Million or 11.8% higher than the previous year (2009). The trend continued and the year 2013 registered 6.97 Million FTAs which is 5.9% higher than previous year 2012. Year 2014 has proved to be even better when the FTA reached 7.68 Million i.e. 10.2% higher than previous year (2013).Year 2015 also received 8.03 Million FTAs at a growth rate of 4.5% which was a bit lower than the growth rate of previous year. Soon the industry started showing positive trend again and FTAs in 2016 touched 8.89 Million with a growth rate of 10.7%which is much satisfying.

As seen above, the earnings from FTAs show dip in the year 2001 and 2002 (7.6% & 3.0% respectively) as the arrival were also low. But the earnings grew to 43.8% in year 2003 to 4463 Million US Dollars as compared to 3103 Million US $ in year 2002. The earnings again shows a sharp raise of 27.5% in year 2010 as compared to 2009, in 2010 total receipt of foreign exchange from FTAs stood 14193 Million US $ as compared to US $11136 Million in Year 2009. Since then the earnings are rising in steady way. In year 2013 the FEE from FTAs has been 18445 Million US Dollars which is 7.1% higher than year 2012 (US $ 17737). Also during the year 2014, 2015 and 2016, there was a growth of

9.7%, 4.1% and 9.8% respectively over the immediate previous years. The FEE for these years has been 20226, 21071 and 23146 Million US Dollars respectively.

MEANING OF E-TOURIST VISA

Visas are the current international standard to indicate that a person is authorized to enter a country. These can be documents, but in most cases is simply a stamp on the passport. Each country has its separate rules and regulations regarding the issue and suspension of visa. Some countries share reciprocal visa arrangements. A few nations allow citizens of some countries to enter without a visa. For instance, the citizens of EU member nations enjoy unrestricted Schengen Visa travel within the group. This is a passport-free zone that covers most of Europe.. It was on 14 June 1985 that an agreement known as "**Schengen Agreement**" was signed near the town of Schengen, Luxembourg, by five of the ten member states of the then European Economic Community which led to the creation of Europe's Schengen Area, in which internal border checks have largely been abolished. In 1990, the Agreement was supplemented by the Schengen Convention which proposed the complete abolition of systematic internal border controls and a common visa policy. The Schengen Area operates very much like a single state for international travel purposes with external border controls for travellers entering and exiting the area, and common visas, but with no internal border controls. It currently consists of 26 European countries comprising of • Austria • Belgium • Czech republic • Denmark • Estonia • Finland • France • Germany • Greece • Hungary • Iceland • Italy • Latvia • Lithuania • Luxembourg • Malta • Netherlands • Norway • Poland • Portugal • Slovakia • Slovenia • Spain • Sweden • Switzerland • Liechtenstein. The border-free Schengen Area guarantees free movement to more than 400 million EU citizens, as well as to many non-EU nationals, businessmen, tourists or other persons legally present on the EU territory.The implementation of the Schengen Agreements started in 1995, initially involving seven EU States. Born as an intergovernmental initiative, the developments brought about by the Schengen Agreements have now been incorporated into the body of rules governing the EU. Today, the Schengen Area encompasses most EU States, except for Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom. However, Bulgaria and Romania are currently in the process of joining the Schengen Area. Of non-EU States, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein have joined the Schengen Area.The EU has set up a common visa policy for short stays, i.e. stays up to three months, which is applied through the delivery of so-called "Schengen visas". In 2015, the present 26 Schengen States issued around 14.3 million Schengen visas.

Main Elements of the Common Visa Policy

- Citizens from some non-EU countries are required to hold a visa when travelling to the Schengen Area. The EU has a common list of countries whose citizens must have a visa when crossing the external borders and a list of countries whose citizens are exempt from that requirement. Generally, a short-stay visa issued by one of the Schengen States entitles its holder to travel throughout the 26 Schengen States for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. Visas for visits exceeding that period remain subject to national procedures.

- The second element of the common visa policy is the EU Visa Code. It sets out the procedures and conditions for issuing visas for the purpose of short stays and airport transit.

- The third element of the common visa policy is the uniform format for the visa sticker.

    The US also allows the nationals of 38 nations visa-less entry for a specific period. Similarly any citizen of the

Gulf Cooperation Council, a group of six Arab states, can enter any member state and stay as long as needed. India allows Nepal's and Bhutan's nationals free entry if they enter from their nation.

Visas typically include limits on the duration of the foreigner's stay, territory, and the number of permitted visits. Normally, a typical visa means permission to enter, with no bar on exit. However, some nations require foreigners to have an exit visa. Foreign workers in Saudi Arabia and Qatar need an exit visa, a clearance from the employer, before leaving. Any foreigner overstaying in Russia has to obtain an exit visa stating the reason of overstay.

VISA CATEGORIES

India grants 18 types of visas like Business Visa, Conference Visa, Diplomatic Visa, Employment Visa, Emergency Visa, Entry Visa, Journalist Visa, Medical Visa, Missionaries Visa, and Permit to re-enter within 2 months, Research Visa, Student Visa, Tourist Visa and Transit Visa.

Upon receipt of the Visa Application through Indian Visa Application Center or directly, the Indian Mission/ Post requires a minimum of three working days to process the case and issue a visa depending upon the nationality and excluding special cases. Services of e-Tourist Visa involves completely online application for which no facilitation is required by any intermediary / agents etc.

Electronic Visa means no label or stamp to appear in your passport. The visa is accessible for viewing by your airline, or airport, but by an electronic system managed by the Indian Government and associated agencies. This was known as Visa on Arrival (VOL). Government of India decided to initiate the process of visa on arrival in October 2103 and in Feb 2014, approval was given for introduction of visa on arrival for up to 180 countries. On 27 November 2014, India introduced a visa facility whereby travelers from eligible countries can obtain a visa to visit India online rather than having to visit the Indian embassy to obtain the same. This new policy Known as the e-tourist visa (e-TV) policy has been extended to travelers from 161 countries with a fee structure ranging from USD 0 to USD 60 and reduced bank charges to 2.5 percent of the e-tourist visa. Accordingly the manual processing of visa on arrival was discontinued in January 2015. The e-TV allows its holder to visit the country for recreation, sight-seeing, causal visits with friends or relatives, short-duration medical treatment, or casual business visit, for a period of 30 days.E-TouristVisa (e-TV) the pre-authorization of visa being given prior to arrival of foreigners. The policy has recorded impressive results from the very beginning. The absolute number of e-tourist visas issued has gone up from 14,083 in December 2014 to 152000 in January2017. Moreover, the share of travelers that obtained an e-tourist visa in the total foreign tourist arrivals (TFTAs) has gone up from 1.61 percent in December 2014 to 15.46 percent in January 2017.

Despite all this, the month on month growth rate of e-tourist visas issued has been volatile averaging at only 10.26 percent from December 2014 to January 2017. Also an average of only8.46 percent of foreign travelers to India during this period has opted for an e-visa while the remaining 91.54percent opted for a "traditional "visa.

Table 2: Performance of e - Tourist Visa Policy from Dec 2014 to January 2017

Month	Year	E-Tourist visa		Total Foreign Tourist Arrivals (TFTAs)		E-Tourist visa as a share of TFTAs (%)
		Total (number)	Year on Year Growth rate (%)	Total (number)	Year on Year Growth rate (%)	
December	2014	14083	–	877000	-	1.61
January	2015	25023	77.68	790000	-9.92	3.17
February	2015	24985	-0.15	761000	-3.67	3.28
March	2015	25851	3.47	730000	-4.07	3.54
April	2015	19139	-25.96	540000	-26.03	3.54
May	2015	15659	-18.18	511000	-5.37	3.06
June	2015	15557	-0.65	513000	0.39	3.03
July	2015	21476	38.05	633000	23.39	3.39
August	2015	22286	3.77	589000	-6.95	3.78
September	2015	31729	42.37	540000	-8.32	5.88
October	2015	56477	78.00	680000	25.93	8.31
November	2015	83501	47.85	815000	19.85	10.25
December	2015	103617	24.09	913000	12.02	11.35
January	2016	88162	-14.92	844000	-7.56	10.45
February	2016	117210	32.95	847000	0.36	13.84
March	2016	115677	-1.31	817000	-3.54	14.16
April	2016	70045	-65.14	599000	-36.39	11.69
May	2016	43833	-59.79	529000	-13.23	8.29
June	2016	36982	-18.52	550000	3.82	6.72
July	2016	68487	46.00	736000	25.27	9.30
August	2016	66097	-3.61	670000	-9.85	9.86
September	2016	68809	3.94	615000	-8.94	11.19
October	2016	105268	34.63	754000	18.43	13.96
November	2016	136876	23.09	891000	15.37	15.36
December	2016	162250	15.63	1037000	14.08	15.64
January	2017	152000	-6.74	983000	-5.49	15.46
Average		**65041**	**10.26**	**721692**	**0.38**	**8.46**

PROCEDURE OF GETTING E-TV

E-TV Application Process

All foreign nationals entering India are required to possess a valid international travel document in the form of a national passport with a valid visa obtained from an Indian Mission or Post abroad. All Individual visa seekers are requested to apply for the Indian Visa through Online application link, in order to make an application for getting the Indian visa. The duly signed physical copy of the application form completed in all respect and submitted successfully, is to be submitted at the concerned Indian Visa Application Center (IVAC) or directly to Indian Mission/ Post, on the scheduled date of interview along with the requisite supporting documents. The instructions for filling the form and scheduling the appointment can be seen at Instructions for Regular Visa Application. Important technical information for filling online Indian visa application can be referred at Technical Instructions. The status of Visa Application can be seen on the link for Visa Enquiry. The applicants can also visit website of the Indian Mission concerned for detailed information about Indian visa.

Regular Visa Application

All Individual visa seekers are requested to apply for the Indian Visa through online application link. Or can apply by typing the URL: https://indianvisaonline.gov.in in the address bar of web browser, in order to make an application for getting the Indian visa. In either case, no hand written application form is accepted by any of the Indian Mission/ Post, where-ever online Visa facility has been implemented. The application form completed in all respect and submitted successfully, is submitted at the concerned Indian Visa Application Canter (IVAC) or directly to Indian Mission/ Post in absence of IVAC, on the scheduled date of interview along with the requisite supporting documents. The instructions for filling the form and scheduling the appointment can be referred at Instructions for Regular Visa Application. Important technical information for filling online Indian visa application can be referred at Technical Instructions. If you have already applied online for Indian Visa online and want to know the status of your application, please follow the link for Visa Enquiry. Further details / description shall be available on the Visa Enquiry page.

ELIGIBILITY FOR E-TV

- International Travellers whose sole objective of visiting India is recreation, sightseeing, casual visit to meet friends or relatives, short duration medical treatment or casual business visit.

- Passport should have at least six months validity from the date of arrival in India. The passport should have at least two blank pages for stamping by the Immigration Officer.

- International Travellers should have return ticket or onward journey ticket, with sufficient money to spend during his/her stay in India.

- International Travellers having Pakistani Passport or Pakistani origin may please apply for regular Visa at Indian Mission.

- Not available to Diplomatic/Official Passport Holders.

- Not available to individuals endorsed on Parent's/Spouse's Passport i.e. each individual should have a separate passport.

- Not available to International Travel Document Holders.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR E-TV

- Applicants of the eligible countries/territories may apply online minimum 4 days in advance of the date of arrival with a window of 30 days. Example: If you are applying on 1st Sept then applicant can select arrival date from 5th Sept to 4th Oct.

- Recent front facing photograph with white background and photo page of Passport containing personal details like name, date of birth, nationality, expiry date etc. to be uploaded by the applicant. The application is liable to be rejected if the uploaded document and photograph are not clear / as per specification.

- E-tourist Visa fees is country/Territory specific (min $00 and max $60). Bank transaction charges of 2.5% will be charged additional on applicable e-Tourist Visa fees. The fee must be paid at least 4 days before the expected date

of travel otherwise application will not be processed.

- E-TV fee once submitted is non-refundable as the fee is for processing of the application and is not dependent on either Grant or Rejection of VISA.

- Applicant should carry a copy of E-TV along with him/her at the time of travel.

- Biometric details of the applicant will be mandatorily captured at Immigration on arrival in India.

- The validity of visa will be 30 days from the date of arrival in India.

- E-TV is valid for **entry** through 16 designated Airports i.e. Ahmadabad, Amritsar, Bengaluru, Chennai, Cochin, Delhi, Gaya, Goa, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Tiruchirapalli, Trivandrum & Varanasi. However, the foreigner can take **exit** from any of the authorized Immigration Check Posts (ICPs) in India.

- This facility is in addition to the existing Visa services.

- E-Tourist Visa (e-TV) is allowed for a maximum of two visits in a calendar year.

- E-Tourist Visa (e-TV) once issued on arrival is **only single entry**, non-extendable, non-convertible & not valid for visiting Protected/Restricted and Cantonment Areas.

- Applicants can track the status of their application online by clicking visa status.

- Applicants shall be careful while making payment of the e-TV fee. If the number of unsuccessful attempts is more than three (03), then the application id would be blocked and the applicant would be required to apply afresh by filling the application form again and regenerating a new application id.

- The Visa fee payment status updating may take up to 2 hours due to technical reasons/network delays. Applicants should wait for 2 hours before payment of Visa fee again. In cases, where Visa fee has been deducted but status is not updated, the applicants are advised to verify their payment status by clicking on 'Verify Payment/Pay Visa Fee' tab or by clicking on the link Verify Payment.

- Before re-applying, the applicants should wait for 4 hours for payment status updating, after final submission of the application form and payment of the fee. The payment status updating may take up to 4 hours.

- Nationals of Yellow Fever affected countries must carry YELLOW FEVER VACCINATION CARD at the time of arrival in India; otherwise they may be quarantined for 6 days upon arrival in India. They should visit Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare latest guidelines regarding yellow fever countries.

- For any assistance, they can call 24 * 7 Visa support centre at +91-11-24300666 or send email to indiatvoa@gov.in

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

The Documents Required for E-Tourist Visa (Etv) are

- Scanned First Page of Passport. (Format –PDF, Size : Minimum 10 KB, Maximum 300 KB)

The Digital Photograph to be Uploaded Along with the visa Application Should Meet the Following Requirements

- Format – JPEG

- Size(Minimum 10 KB, Maximum 1 MB)

- The height and width of the Photo must be equal.

- Photo should present Full face, front view, eyes open.

- Centre head within frame and present full head from top of hair to bottom of chin.

- Background should be plain light coloured or white background.

- No shadows on the face or on the background.

- Without borders.

TOP 10 TOURIST GENERATING COUNTRIES IN INDIA (2015-16)

Following are details of the % share of e-tourist visa from top 10 countries right from December 2014 to January 2017. As per the table the tourists applied for the Electronic tourist visa has shown growth year after year. The maximum number of e visa issued in 2016 were to UK where as in 2015it was to USA. Similarly in the year 2014, South Korea begged the maximum number of e visa from India.

Table 3: Major Country's availing e-Tourist Visas 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017(Jan)

Sr No	Country Month	UK	USA	Russia	China	Australia	France	Germany	South Africa	Canada	Republic of Korea	Ukraine	Spain	Thailand	Nether Land	UAE	Malaysia	Switzerland	New York	Japan	Singapore	Philippines	Israel	Mexico	Thailand
1	Dec-2014		24.26	15.06		7.98		4.05			11.01	8.16							5.08	4.30	4.27	3.10			
2	Jan-2015		23.71	14.06		8.83		6.53			18.26	9.99				1.77			2.57		1.69		1.79		
3	Feb-2015		31.01	14.76		8.47		11.90			7.68	6.05				1.82			1.83	2.09			1.82		
4	Mar-2015		33.25	13.13		8.37		14.64			6.39	4.21								1.91	1.99		1.68	2.93	
5	Apr-2015		31.83	12.27		11.42		7.37			4.67	4.36							2.67	2.37				2.93	3.56
6	May-2015		37.82	5.85		8.95		9.37			4.30	3.01				3.53				2.89	2.43			3.16	
7	Jun-2015		41.71	2.53		9.67	3.38	7.21		4.86	4.29					2.70					2.73			2.47	
8	Jul-2015		33.67	2.29		7.74	7.13	6.80		6.30	5.57					6.71					2.38			2.80	
9	Aug-2015		25.93	2.37		7.20	8.76	10.00		6.39	4.23					8.92				3.41	2.22				
10	Sep-2015	9.24	18.71		6.36	8.50	5.22	7.22		4.54										2.83			3.61	2.66	
11	Oct-2015	22.80	16.70	3.99	2.93	5.53	7.09	7.02	4.39			2.14	2.11												
12	Nov-2015	23.93	16.33	8.17	3.26	4.82	7.64	5.60		4.71			2.03			1.75									
13	Dec-2015	23.81	19.59	9.33	3.10	5.44	4.44	4.86		4.40		1.83	1.67												
14	Jan-2016	25.37	15.17	9.58	3.96	5.25	6.00	4.23	4.1	3.72			2.86												
15	Feb-2016	27.86	13.85	6.21	4.91	3.64	8.08	4.92		4.21		2.15	2.00												
16	Mar-2016	27.74	13.41	7.04	4.49	3.79	6.55	5.18		3.89			1.66	1.99											
17	Apr-2016	18.82	14.08	8.16	6.31	4.67	7.12	4.32		3.70					2.09	1.93									
18	May-2016	15.63	18.52	2.79	8.17	4.50	5.16	4.91		4.49									3.01	2.12					
19	Jun-2016	14.16	23.22		6.91	5.59	4.10	4.03		4.02						2.40				2.53	2.62				
20	Jul-2016	17.70	16.20		5.40	3.90	6.70	3.50		3.40						4.00		2.90	5.90						
21	Aug-2016	19.40	13.20		6.70	3.70	6.40	4.60		3.50			2.40			6.10			5.50						
22	Sep-2016	15.50	12.40		9.00	6.00	4.30	4.80		3.10						3.60			2.60	2.60					
23	Oct-2016	22.90	12.10	5.60	5.80	4.50	6.60	5.50		3.60						2.30			2.10						
24	Nov-2016	22.30	12.90	8.70	6.10	4.10	6.30	4.60		3.60			1.80			1.80									
25	Dec-2016	22.40	16.40	7.70	5.30	4.60	4.10	4.00	3.7	3.70		2.00				1.60				2.15					
26	Jan-2017	22.90	13.60	8.30	6.30	4.40	5.60	4.10		3.60		3.20	2.20			1.60			3.15	2.15					

AIRPORTS HAVING FACILITY OF E-TV AND THEIR % SHARE

Govt of India has extended the facility of e-TV arrival at the following 16 airports:

Ahmedabad	Delhi	Jaipur	Mumbai
Amritsar	Gaya	Kochi	Thiruvananthapuram
Bengaluru	Goa	Kolkata	Tiruchi
Chennai	Hyderabad	Lucknow	Varanasi

The percentage shares of top 15 ports in tourist arrivals on e-Visa during January, 2017 were as follows: New Delhi Airport (36.5%), Mumbai Airport (20.5%), Dabolim (Goa) Airport (16.2%), Chennai Airport (7.0%), Bengaluru Airport (5.1%), Kochi Airport (4.2%), Kolkata Airport (2.7%), Trivandrum Airport (2.0%), Hyderabad Airport (2.0%) and Ahmedabad Airport (1.7%), Amritsar Airport (0.8%), Jaipur Airport (0.5%), Tirchy Airport (0.4%), Gaya Airport (0.2%)and Lucknow Airport(0.1%).

LIST OF COUNTRIES ELIGIBLE FOR E-TV

E-Tourist Visa facility was introduced by Govt of India on 27th November 2014 initially for 43 countries. Later one country each was included in the month January 2015 and March 2015. Again 31 more countries were added to the list in April 2015 which was followed by another three countries in July 2015. Govt of India with its bold decision added another 36 countries making it available for 131 countries at 16 airports. On February 25th, 2016, another 37 more countries were added and thus extending its e-TV facility to 150 countries. Recently in November 2016 and December 2016, 5 and 6 more countries were respectively added to list raising it to a total of 161 which comprise of thefollowing countries/territories.

Albania, Andorra, Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Aruba, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Cayman Island, Chile, China, China- SAR Hongkong, China- SAR Macau, Colombia, Comoros, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Cote d'lvoire, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, East Timor, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Laos, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Montserrat, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niue Island, Norway, Oman, Palau, Palestine, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago, Turks & Caicos Island, Tuvalu, UAE, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA, Vanuatu, Vatican City-Holy See, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

CONCERNS AND SHORTCOMINGS

Although as seen above, growth rate of e-tourist visas and share of e-tourist visas in TFTAs are not that encouraging but still e-tourist visa facility is a major factor in uplifting and modernising the tourism industry of India. The current system is limited to major tourist destinations and international airports only.

The issues like validity of visa for 30 days from the date of arrival in India and allowing e-tourist visa (e-TV) for a maximum of two visits in a calendar year and "e-tourist visas once issued on arrival being only single entry, non-extendable, non-convertible and not valid for visiting protected/restricted and cantonment areas is a matter of concern which need to be addressed immediately. All these factors force a traveller to prefer traditional visa whose conditions are more relaxed. The cost of e-visa is also a factor for some of the countries. For a US citizen, an e-tourist visa for 30 days costs US$ 120 (for two visits) in visa fees where as a traditional tourist visa with multiple-entry cost US$ 100 in visa fees. Moreover, the period of stay for each visit is generally a maximum of up to six months from the date of entry. Moreover, there is no restriction with regards to having a gap of at least two months between two separate visits to India; there is also no requirement for a re-entry permit.

Despite having mentioned clearly in the instructions that "Applicant should carry a copy of e-TV along with him/her at the time of travel", it has also been mentioned that "e-tourist visa issued on arrival." This raises two important questions: First, is the policy one of 'e-tourist visa' or that of 'visa on arrival enabled through electronic travel authorization'? Second, given the discrepancies in the practice, it is not clear whether the granted electronic copy of the e-tourist visa gives discretion to the Immigration Officer to not issue the same to the traveller when he/she arrives at the designated airport.

Legal formalities and other complication are there in the entire system of Electronic Visa. It has been mentioned under eligibility criteria that international travellers whose sole objective of visiting India is recreation, sight-seeing, casual visit to meet friends or relatives, *short duration medical treatment or casual business visit can avail e-tv facility but for* persons coming for medical treatment, there is a special category of Medical Visa. Also If a person holding 'tourist visa' is found to be involved in business activities, action may be taken for visa violations". These issues need to be clarified so that travellers holding an e-tourist visa can engage in activities such as short duration medical treatment or casual business visit without being held up for visa violations without any fault of theirs.

Instruction 13 on the official website states: "Please be careful while making payment of the e-TV fee. If the number of unsuccessful attempts is more than three (03), then the application id would be blocked and the applicant would be required to apply afresh by filling the application form again and regenerating a new application id." The payment gateways need to made more customer friendly as many international travellers face difficulties in making the online payment, soon finding their application blocked. No doubt many travellers have been able to do it with ease but still issue needs to be addressed. Further the Fee of Electronic Visa is payable in US Dollars only, which is an important short coming.

Sufficient Electronic checking system need to be developed by Govt of India for large E tourist visa applications as the present system is insufficient. Trained Staff should be deployed at various airports and other important destinations who are adequately trained enough. The security and other issues should not be compromised.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are some of the suggestions which can be considered to improve the Electronic Tourist Visa system in India-

- The current system is limited to major tourist destinations and international airports only. It should be made wide and spread largely to other destinations also.

- Number of countries covered under electronic Tourist visa facility should be increased.

- Fee payment should be made in multiple currencies and not in US Dollar only.

- Trained staff should be deployed at theses destinations to deal with e-TV related issues. The documentation and verification should be made easy and quick.

- There should be strict security system in place so that the misuse and threat to national security cannot be compromised

- Successful models of E tourist visa from around the world should be studied to develop a more tourist friendly visa scheme.

- Issues like mentioning simultaneously in the instructions "Applicant should carry a copy of e-TV along with him/her at the time of travel", and "e-tourist visa issued on arrival" should be do away with by clearly stating that email print will be exchanged for a visa stamp which will be placed in your passport at designated arrival airports in India.

- In order to encourage short duration medical treatment or casual business visit, 'e-tourist visa' can be renamed to 'e-visa' to avoid frequently asked questions. Travellers can be provided with options like Tourist e-visa, Business e-visa, Medical e-visa etc. However, to continue with the name, 'e-tourist visa', it should reduce the scope of activities to 'recreation, sight-seeing, and casual visit to meet friends or relatives'.

- Length of stay of 30 days should be increased to 90 days or allow visa extension while travellers are in India or a combination of both with a maximum stay of 180 days in India. Also multiple entries should be permitted with no requirements for a re-entry permit.

- The window for e-Tourist visa application now open 30 days before the tour needs to be increased to 180 days as all airlines ask upfront payment for making any travel booking and last minute booking is costly.

- E-tourist visas are single entry visas and need to be made multiple entry for allowing travellers to combine their trips to India with other neighbouring countries as part of some package tours.

- Biometric facility at Indian seaports need to be in place where big cruise ships come with large number of tourists at a time. In major ports where cruise tourists arrive, biometric facility could be made available which can help cruise passengers to get e-TV and return if necessary from some other airport or seaport.

- There is delay to bio-metric process at airport for e-tourist visa holders resulting in taking hours for a tourist to

come out of immigration and find the baggage removed from the belt and kept elsewhere. This need to be streamlined by increasing the counters for e-tourist visa holders.

CONCLUSIONS

In the era of globalisation, the movement of people is not only important for the ever-expanding tourism industry, but also, for economies in general. There is need for improving e-tourist visa process by extending window to 180 days instead of 30 days before the tour at present; need for multiple entry e-TV instead of single entry e-TV at present; extension of duration of stay to 60 days under e-TV instead of the 30 days at present; making available biometric facility in major ports to help cruise passengers get e-TV; need for proper display at e-TV counters; increasing the counters for e-TV tourists to avoid delays; extending e-TV facility for medical tourists; and streamlining the biometric process in overseas missions by having more biometric locations.. With such bold and clear steps the number of tourist is bound to increase in years to come. The system has contributed positively in attracting tourists from all over the world to India.

Government of India is also taking very serious strategic decisions with regard to relaxations in the e-TV policy to increase the current growth of tourism by attracting more and more foreign tourist to India. Government should address short comings immediately and make the policy effective and user friendly.

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