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Savoring Success: How India is Building a Food Tourism Nation

*Gangashree Ganganalli, Pooja V and Varsha S C

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

*Corresponding Author's email: gangashreeganganalli21@gmail.com

Food tourism in India is gaining momentum as a powerful tool for economic growth, cultural promotion, and sustainable development. Recognizing its potential, the government has introduced various initiatives and schemes to promote local cuisines, improve food safety, and create employment opportunities. From developing themed tourism circuits to promoting hygienic food streets and supporting innovation in the hospitality sector, these efforts are transforming India's rich culinary heritage into a vibrant tourism experience.

Government Initiatives Related to Food Tourism

Swadesh Darshan Scheme



It is Central Sector scheme, launched in the year 2014-2015 by ministry of tourism.

Objectives

- ✓ Development of indigenous tourism
- ✓ To promote employment through active involvement of local communities.
- ✓ To aware the local communities about the importance of tourism.
- ✓ To promote local art, handicraft, culture, cuisine to generate livelihood in indentified areas

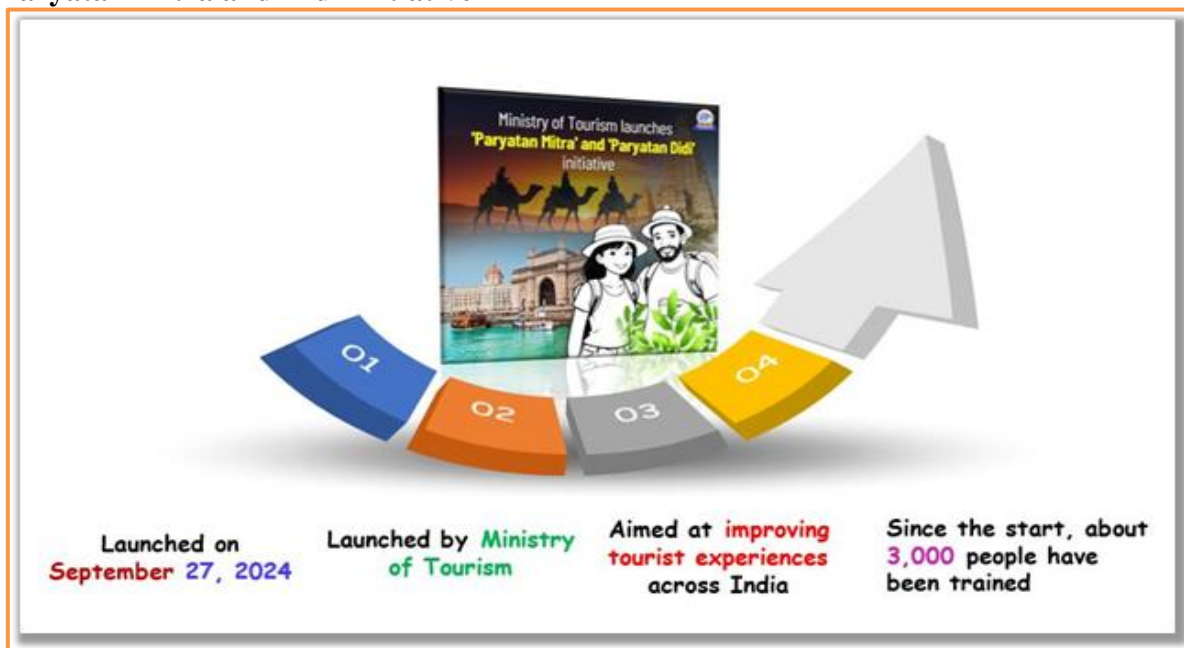
Which has the 15 theme-based circuits, many of its circuits promote local cuisines and culinary experiences

- ✓ Buddhist circuit – Showcases vegetarian cuisines from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, including traditional offerings in Bodh Gaya and Sarnath.
- ✓ North-East circuit – Promotes indigenous tribal cuisines, including bamboo shoot dishes, smoked meats, and fermented foods from states like Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh.
- ✓ Himalayan circuit – Highlights Tibetan and Ladakhi food, such as momos, thukpa, and butter tea.

- ✓ Coastal circuit – Encourages seafood tourism along coastal states like Goa, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.
- ✓ Heritage circuits – Covers traditional royal cuisines of Rajasthan, Awadhi cuisine of Uttar Pradesh, and temple food traditions in Tamil Nadu and Odisha.

Under Swadesh Darshan, food can become a key cultural attraction, drawing travelers to explore India's diverse culinary traditions. Some circuits, like the Spiritual Circuit, could incorporate prasad tourism in temple towns, while the Eco-Tourism Circuit can focus on farm- to-table experiences.

Paryatan Mitra and Didi Initiative



The program was piloted in six tourist destinations:

1. Orchha, Madhya Pradesh
2. Gandikota, Andhra Pradesh
3. Bodh Gaya, Bihar
4. Aizawl, Mizoram
5. Jodhpur, Rajasthan
6. Sri Vijaya Puram, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Participants receive training in:

- ✓ Tourism-specific skills: food tours, homestays, and nature treks.
- ✓ Hospitality and sustainability: In line with the philosophy of 'Athithi Devo Bhava'.

Healthy and Hygienic Food Streets



To Modify 100 selected existing Street Food Hubs in the country to serve healthy and hygienic recipes in a well-defined and organized geographical area with proper infrastructure and other supporting facilities.

Recently, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has requested states/UTs to develop 100 food streets in 100 districts across the country

- ✓ Implementation: It will be implemented through National Health Mission (NHM) in convergence with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs & with technical support from Food Safety and Standards Authority of India.
- ✓ The financial assistance for the initiative to States/UTs in the form of Rs.1 crore per food street/district will be given to fill up critical gaps.
- ✓ This assistance will be provided under National Health Mission (NHM) in the ratio of 60:40 or 90: 10 with the condition that standard branding of these food streets will be done as per FSSAI guidelines.

Aim of the initiative:

- ✓ To modify 100 selected existing street food hubs in the country to serve hygienic food products
- ✓ Promote hygienic recipes in a well-defined area with proper infrastructure and supporting facilities for food safety
- ✓ To promote traditional recipes, such as millet-based recipes
- ✓ To create direct/indirect employment for the community
- ✓ To promote food tourism

Objectives of the initiative

- ✓ Upliftment
- ✓ Regulation
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Livelihood
- ✓ Trust
- ✓ Infrastructure



Fig 2: Key stakeholders involved in initiative

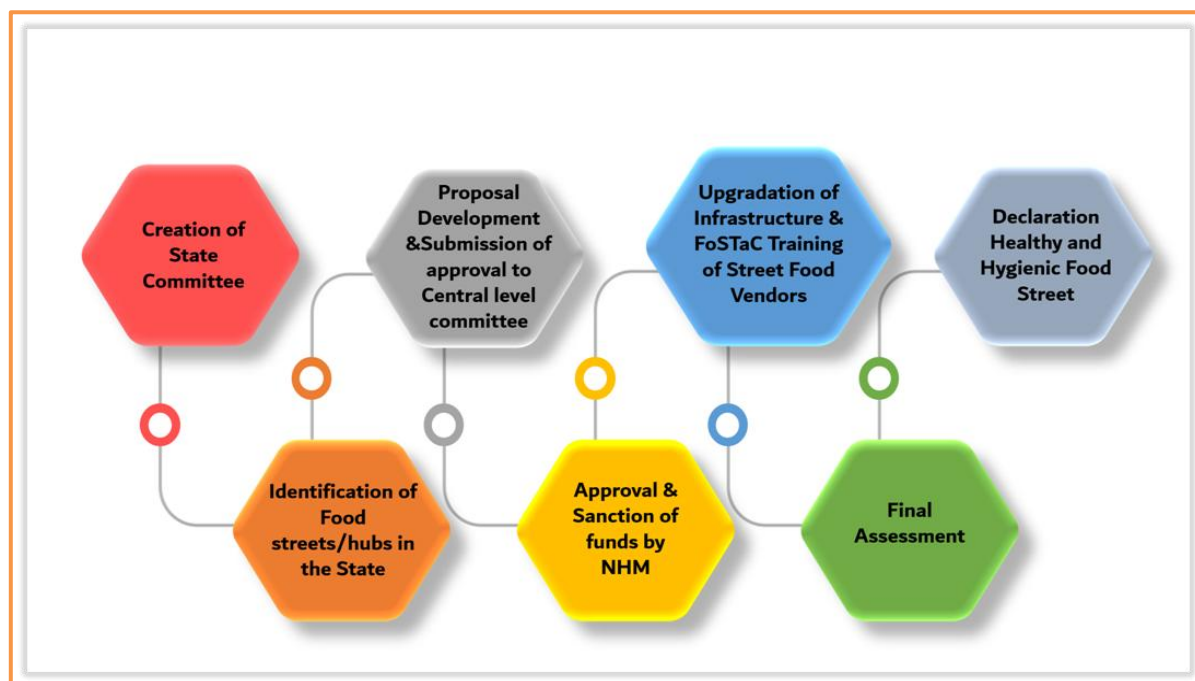


Fig 3: Implementation Plan

National Dialogue on “Innovative Food for Hospitality Industry

The Intellectual Property and Technology Management (IP&TM) Unit of ICAR virtually organized a “*National Dialogue on Innovative Food for Hospitality Industry*” on 22nd June, 2021 at New Delhi.

The main objective of the programme:

- To look for the opportunity for transferring the food processing technologies to the Public and Private Organizations
- To discuss and analyze the gaps leading to a roadmap to fulfil the need of the hospitality industry

National Restaurant Association

The National Restaurant Association Show is the Western Hemisphere's most influential foodservice event showcasing industry innovations and trends

- The Show had over 58,000 foodservice professionals from the U.S. and 124 countries
- The Show saw a 6% increase in total attendance with 22% international growth compared to last year, 2023
- The exhibit space also expanded by 9% compared to 2023.



Other initiatives

- Union Health Minister, Dr Mansukh Unveiled the India's First Hygienic Food Street ‘Prasadam’ which is located in Ujjain, MP, which mainly promoting pure and clean food for devotees. The main AIM is to connect the common citizens across the nation with pure and safe local and traditional food.
- Ministry of Tourism organized 6day mega event “Bharat Parv” at Red Fort Lawns as a part of Republic Day celebration from 26th to 31st Jan 2023.

The major components of “Bharat Parv” event

- Food court
- Stalls by state government
- Stalls by the food vendors

- Food demonstrations (focused on yr of millets)
- Chandigarh unveils the Indian 1st **Pizza ATM** in the yr 2024, which prepares pizzas in 3 min it shows,
- A Paradigm shift in dining experience
- Embracing innovation
- A symbol of progress
- Indian Railway launches WhatsApp Food Delivery Facility **ZOOP**, which is a e catering service through whatsApp communication, mainly through the e-catering website of IRCTC. Appx 50,000 meals are served through IRCTC, it saves the time of travellers.
- CFTRI has developed **Smart Cart**, which is a mobile infrastructure of kitchen to produce and deliver safe and hygienic food by street food vendors.

Government initiatives are playing a crucial role in shaping and strengthening food tourism in India. By improving infrastructure, ensuring food safety, encouraging innovation, and supporting local communities, these programs are creating a strong foundation for growth. As food tourism continues to expand, it not only enhances travel experiences but also contributes to economic development, cultural preservation, and sustainable livelihoods across the country.