Global media and soft power representation: A comparative analysis of Indian tourism as experienced individually and represented in The New York Times and Travel Channel

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RQ: “How does India’s soft power as represented in international media, compare with India’s soft power as a visitor? Critical thematic analysis exploring Indian soft power and its representation in international media, specifically in articles from the Travel Channel and New York Times, combined with personal experiences in India.

Method and Terms

- Using a critical thematic analysis, the researcher coded for these themes in the data: art and beauty, food and drink, Indian history, and the modern versus traditional scope of Indian culture. The researcher then took each source of data and analyzed them to see whether they generally upheld or undermined India’s soft power attempts.

- Soft Power – “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction” (Nye, 2008, p. 94).

Conclusion

As a tourist, India’s soft power image of an up and coming, technologically advancing, beautiful, and culturally diverse nation were upheld. The group was taken to see magnificent architecture, beautiful cities, and put together shops, but we were not taken to run down areas or parts of India not considered beautiful. The food and activities were enjoyable, and reinforced this soft-power image. However, international media had more articles and ideas contrary to India’s soft-power image, where failings of the country were publicized. Information on gang-rapes in Delhi, rising crime in Agra, and havoc brought on by Indian tourists were everywhere. The one exception was Travel Channel, with tourist-oriented articles designed to draw people into the best parts of India. This research adds to the expanding literature on Soft power and its use, specifically in its interactions with global media. For further study, a larger sample size in terms of both countries and news outlets could be used to see the scope of the relationship between soft power and global media.