**BRANDING INDIA**

Amitabh Kant

Collins Business, Rs 499

In 2002, global tourism was in terrible shape, due to 9/11 and its aftermath.

Most tourist destinations were grimly tightening belts. It was against this gloomy backdrop that the Indian tourism ministry launched an ambitious plan.

The objective was larger than merely providing a boost. It was to change the global image of India as a tourist destination. The ministry was tasked to, first, develop a unique brand identity and then to communicate that identity and positioning effectively to the target audience of global travellers. For the first time ever, modern marketing principles, as encapsulated by management gurus like Philip Kotler and David Aaker, were applied to branding the nation.

The author, then a joint secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, was a key player in the 'Incredible India' campaign. Kant had

already stood centrestage in an earlier, successful effort to promote Kerala as 'God's Own Country'. This book recounts his learnings from both campaigns.

The evolution of Incredible India incorporated an accelerated learning curve for all involved parties. It wasn't just a problem of scale. One reason why India lacked a coherent brand was its multi-faceted, multi-destination nature – that makes it difficult to 'sell' under a single positioning.

Another reason was the disconnect between the mindsets of bureaucrats and commercial players in the tourism sector. That gap had to be bridged to tap into the marketing skills and knowledge base of the private sector, which was indispensable to Incredible India.

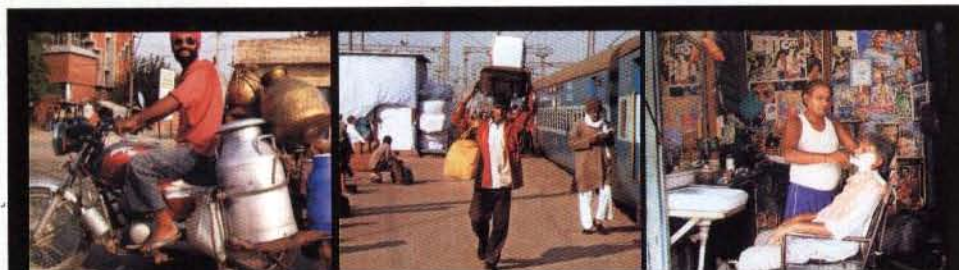
The campaign was demonstrably successful. Apart from raising global visibility through a carefully mapped campaign that made innovative use of many new channels, it reversed the trend and generated more arrivals. In 2002, 2.4 million foreign-

ers came to India. By 2008, that number had risen to 5.4 million. Earnings rose from \$3 billion (2002) to \$11.5 bn in 2008.

The book goes beyond mapping the marketing campaigns. Kant lists areas where infrastructure needs to be urgently developed, paying special attention to capacity-building in key areas like civil aviation and accommodation. He also addresses concerns about environmental impact and the sustainability of the current tourism model in the country.

Kant also makes extrapolations about the future of tourism in general apart from focussing on specific growth areas such as health tourism. The text is interspersed with photos, graphs and charts. The textual style is informal and anecdotal rather than the turgid memo-driven mess normally served up by bureaucrats. Despite presenting an uncritical and upbeat picture that glosses over rough terrain, this book has shelf-life.

Devangshu Datta

**THE INDIANS**

Sumant Batra

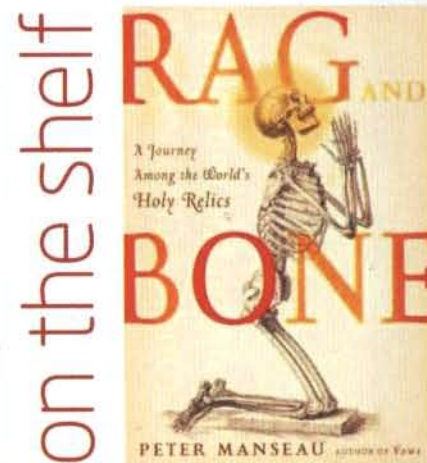
Treepie, Rs 8,500

This is a messy, carelessly thrown together coffee-table book. The writing is painfully tacky – articles go missing, there are at least twice as many commas as there should be – and the chapters are randomly defined. This is more suggestive of shoddiness than of a deliberate decision to be free-flowing. The photographs

are good but not exceptional – and are captioned selectively.

You have to feel a twinge of affection for a book that dedicates a page to the beloved road-stall drink banta, but such moments – where you feel like you're seeing something you won't find elsewhere – are rare. The rest of it feels contrived and slapdash, whether in the humdrum observations about cricket and Bollywood or the use of obviously posed photos.

Jai Arjun Singh

**RAG AND BONE**

Peter Manseau

Henry Holt

Rs 1,300

Manseau travels around the globe in search of "dismembered toes, splinters of shinbone, stolen bits of hair, burned remains of an anonymous rib cage, and other odds and ends" which belong to saints and other religious figures. He looks at the place of these relics in history and also interacts with a cast of fellow enthusiasts.





Halan Tata, Chairman Tata Group realising the book

“The book besides giving a ‘before and after effect’, delves into the future of Indian tourism”

Amitabh Kant



to travel much and not many were coming to India. “The challenge was to bring back occupancy in India and that was when ‘Incredible India’ was born. It was a focused marketing campaign based on in depth research and serious planning,” recounts Kant. A well chalked out campaign, it aimed at positioning India in the global market as the most preferred destination and penetrate the target markets of Europe, South-East Asia and America, which was still reeling under the effect of 9/11.

The result is for all to see. Inbound tourism rose like never before and foreign earnings from tourism increased commendably. From US\$ 3 billion in 2002 to US\$ 11.5 billion in 2008, the foreign exchange earnings have reached new heights in tourism. Moreover, Incredible India has been able to give a memorable experience to all who visited this land.

Kant believes that there is always much to do and moving on is his mantra in life. Even as he ends his short but fruitful stint with Industries (Kerala), he is ready to take charge of the ambitious Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Project. “This is surely going to be

a great challenge for me and for India, the project will change the face of these states,” says Kant ready to take new responsibilities head on. ■■

Rapid fire

What is your favourite destination?

Hampi in Karnataka. It is an amazing destination.

One Indian product which is yet to be discovered?

The Himalayas. Young adventure tourists from across the world haven’t been tapped yet.

Any other book in the offing?

A book on 50 people whose lives have transformed through tourism. They are taxi drivers, entrepreneurs, guides and resort owners.

Is Delhi ready for Commonwealth?

Yes, you see we Indians get a little skeptical. In the name of Commonwealth Games, changes are bound to happen. There will be better infrastructure and room occupancy will surely increase.