

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN THE HOME PORTING OF CRUISE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract—The cruise tourism industry has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of global tourism, contributing significantly to economic development, employment generation, and destination competitiveness. India possesses enormous potential to become a leading cruise home-porting destination because of its extensive coastline, strategic geographical location, and diverse tourism attractions. However, several infrastructural, operational, institutional, and policy-related challenges continue to hinder the development of cruise home ports in the country. The present study aims to identify the issues and challenges influencing home porting for cruise tourism development in India. A descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 100 respondents representing various stakeholders in the Indian cruise industry using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha. Demographic analysis, One-Way ANOVA, and Chi-square tests were employed to analyse the collected data. The findings reveal that job type significantly influences respondents' perceptions of the Enabling Environment, Decisive Environment, and Home Porting Environment. Furthermore, all demographic variables exhibited significant associations with the three constructs, indicating that stakeholder characteristics influence perceptions toward cruise home-porting development. The study concludes that improving infrastructure, governance, multimodal connectivity, regulatory efficiency, and stakeholder collaboration is essential for transforming India into a globally competitive cruise home-porting destination.

Index Terms—Cruise Tourism, Home Porting, Enabling Environment, Maritime Infrastructure, Cruise Port Development

I. Introduction

The global cruise tourism industry has evolved into one of the fastest-growing and most dynamic segments of the international tourism sector, making substantial contributions to economic development, employment generation, and destination competitiveness. Over the past three decades, the industry has experienced remarkable expansion in passenger traffic, fleet capacity, and geographical coverage, transforming cruise vacations from an exclusive luxury product into an increasingly accessible form of leisure travel. According to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), global cruise passenger volumes have consistently demonstrated strong growth, supported by rising disposable incomes, technological advancements in shipbuilding, diversified cruise itineraries, and increasing consumer preference for experiential tourism. Cruise tourism has also become an important catalyst for regional economic development by stimulating investments in port infrastructure, transportation networks, hospitality services, retail businesses, and cultural attractions. Consequently, many coastal nations have integrated cruise tourism into their national tourism development strategies, recognizing its ability to generate substantial direct, indirect, and induced economic benefits while enhancing the international visibility of tourism destinations.

A critical determinant of successful cruise tourism development is the establishment of efficient and strategically managed home ports. Unlike ports-of-call, where cruise vessels make temporary visits during their itineraries, a home port serves as the principal location for passenger embarkation and disembarkation, vessel provisioning, crew changes, bunkering operations, maintenance services, and logistical support (Mohanbabu, S., & Vettriselvan, R. 2025a). Home ports therefore generate significantly greater economic value than transit ports because passengers typically spend additional time before and after their cruise journeys in nearby destinations, resulting in increased expenditure on accommodation, transportation, dining, shopping, entertainment, and local tourism activities (Vulapula, S. R., et al., 2025). Furthermore, cruise operators depend on home ports that provide world-class infrastructure, seamless passenger handling systems, efficient customs and immigration procedures, multimodal transportation connectivity, safety and security standards, and supportive regulatory environments (Shaqqour, O. F., et al., 2026). Consequently, the development of home porting facilities has become an essential strategic objective for many countries seeking to strengthen their position within the global cruise tourism market.

India possesses considerable competitive advantages for becoming a major cruise home-porting destination. With a coastline extending over 7,500 kilometres, twelve major ports, numerous minor ports, rich maritime heritage, diverse cultural attractions, tropical climatic conditions, and proximity to rapidly growing Asian cruise markets, the country offers enormous opportunities for cruise tourism expansion. Major port cities such as Mumbai, Chennai, Kochi, Goa, Visakhapatnam, and Mormugao possess unique combinations of historical monuments, cultural diversity, religious tourism, beaches, wildlife, and modern urban infrastructure capable of attracting both domestic and international cruise passengers. In addition, India's strategic location along important international shipping routes connecting the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean Region provides significant opportunities for integrating Indian ports into regional and global cruise itineraries. Recognizing this potential, the Government of India has introduced several policy initiatives, including the Maritime India Vision 2030, the Cruise Tourism Development Policy, Sagarmala Programme, and port modernization projects aimed at strengthening cruise infrastructure, enhancing passenger facilities, simplifying regulatory procedures, and attracting leading international cruise operators.

Despite these significant advantages and policy initiatives, India's contribution to the global cruise tourism industry remains relatively modest. The country accounts for only a small proportion of international cruise passenger traffic, while several competing destinations such as Singapore, Dubai, Barcelona, Miami, Hong Kong, and Sydney have successfully established themselves as internationally recognized cruise home ports. Several structural and operational challenges continue to hinder India's progress, including limited dedicated cruise terminals, inadequate multimodal connectivity, fragmented institutional governance, lengthy customs and immigration procedures, insufficient destination marketing, inconsistent regulatory frameworks, and relatively low awareness among potential cruise travellers (Huy, P. Q., et al., 2023). These challenges reduce the competitiveness of Indian ports and discourage major international cruise lines from selecting India as a preferred home-porting destination. Addressing these issues requires an integrated strategic framework that combines infrastructure development, governance reforms, public-private partnerships, digital transformation, tourism promotion, environmental sustainability, and stakeholder collaboration.

Home porting strategies encompass a comprehensive range of operational, infrastructural, managerial, and policy interventions designed to enhance the attractiveness and efficiency of ports as cruise embarkation hubs (Shanthi, H. J., et al., 2025). These strategies include the development of dedicated cruise terminals, expansion of passenger handling capacity, modernization of port infrastructure, improvement of air-sea connectivity, enhancement of road and rail transportation networks, implementation of digital passenger processing systems, destination branding, cruise itinerary planning, environmental management practices, and coordinated governance among port authorities, tourism departments, customs agencies, immigration officials, and private sector stakeholders (Vettriselvan, R. 2026). Effective implementation of these strategies not only improves operational efficiency but also enhances passenger satisfaction, strengthens destination competitiveness, increases local employment opportunities, stimulates investments in hospitality and tourism industries, and generates sustainable economic growth for coastal regions.

The significance of this research extends beyond academic contribution by offering practical recommendations for policymakers, port authorities, tourism organizations, and cruise industry stakeholders. As international cruise tourism continues to recover and expand in the post-pandemic era, India has a unique opportunity to position itself as a leading cruise destination within the Asia-Pacific region. Achieving this objective requires coordinated investments in modern cruise infrastructure, efficient governance mechanisms, integrated destination management, sustainable environmental practices, and customer-centric service delivery (Mohanbabu, S., & Vettriselvan, R. 2025b). By identifying the factors that significantly influence stakeholder perceptions of home porting strategies, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on maritime tourism while providing an evidence-based framework for developing competitive, sustainable, and internationally attractive cruise home ports. Ultimately, the successful implementation of strategic home porting initiatives has the potential to transform India's maritime tourism landscape, increase international cruise traffic, strengthen regional economic development, create employment opportunities, and establish India as a globally competitive cruise tourism destination.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Brida, Bukstein, and Tealde (2016) examined cruise passenger expenditure patterns at home ports, drawing on survey data collected from passengers at home ports in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Valparaíso to develop a comparative understanding of the socioeconomic and behavioural determinants of onshore spending. The study applied a two-stage econometric model combining a Heckman selection model with an ordinary least squares expenditure regression to account for the potential selectivity bias arising from passengers who chose not to disembark or spend in the home port city. Their analysis revealed that pre-cruise overnight stay duration, travelling party size, and repeat visitation status were the most significant predictors of home port expenditure magnitude, while nationality, household income level, and cruise line brand (as a proxy for market segment) also exerted statistically significant effects. A key finding was that passengers on their first visit to the home port city spent significantly more on cultural tourism activities and souvenir purchases than repeat visitors, suggesting that new-to-destination cruisers represent a particularly high-value segment for home port destination marketing strategies. The authors recommended that home port destination managers develop targeted first-time visitor programmes, including curated cultural experience packages and digital pre-arrival engagement campaigns, to maximise capture of this expenditure potential. The study's methodological rigour and its emphasis on demand-side expenditure dynamics provide a valuable template for future research into Indian cruise passenger spending behaviour.

Gui and Russo (2013) offered a theoretically innovative contribution to the cruise port literature by proposing a stratified architecture of governance framework to analyse the complex layering of institutional actors, regulatory instruments, and strategic interests that shape cruise port development. The authors argued that existing literature had adopted an overly simplistic binary framing of cruise ports as either "home ports" or "ports of call," failing to account for the dynamic and contested nature of port positioning in evolving cruise itinerary networks. Drawing on detailed ethnographic case study research conducted at cruise ports in Venice, Barcelona, and Singapore, Gui and Russo demonstrated that port governance in the cruise sector operates simultaneously across multiple scales local, national, and transnational — and that effective home porting strategy requires the negotiation of often competing interests at each of these scales. The study introduced the concept of "scalar misalignment" to describe situations where home porting ambitions articulated at the national policy level were undermined by institutional inertia or resource constraints at the local port authority level. This theoretical contribution is particularly pertinent for the Indian context, where the layered governance architecture encompassing central government ministries, the Indian Ports Association, major port trusts, and state-level tourism agencies creates multiple sites of potential scalar misalignment that can impede coherent home porting strategy implementation. The framework advanced by Gui and Russo offers a powerful analytical tool for diagnosing governance challenges in India's cruise sector development.

Lekakou, Pallis, and Vaggelas (2010) produced one of the foundational empirical studies examining the criteria underpinning cruise line home port selection decisions, focusing on the Eastern Mediterranean and specifically on the strategic competition between Greek ports for home port status. At the time of writing, the

cruise industry was undergoing significant capacity expansion, with major cruise corporations seeking to identify new home port bases capable of sustaining year-round or seasonal deployment programmes. Through a structured survey administered to cruise line port operations managers and a complementary analysis of itinerary deployment data, the authors identified a hierarchy of home port selection criteria encompassing port infrastructure quality, turnaround time efficiency, air connectivity, destination appeal, and cost of port services. The study found that while destination appeal and cultural richness were considered important secondary factors, operational efficiency specifically the ability to complete full vessel turnaround operations within a narrow time window — was the overriding determinant of cruise line home port preference. The authors warned that ports which invested heavily in terminal aesthetics and destination marketing without addressing fundamental operational efficiency parameters were unlikely to succeed in attracting major cruise line home port commitments. This finding, though derived from the Mediterranean context over a decade prior, retains striking relevance for India's current home porting ambitions and underscores the primacy of turnaround operational excellence as a precondition for cruise tourism development success.

The foregoing review of literature reveals a rich and evolving body of scholarship addressing cruise tourism development and home porting strategy from multiple disciplinary vantage points. Collectively, these studies establish that effective home porting is a multidimensional strategic challenge encompassing governance architecture, infrastructure investment, operational efficiency, passenger experience management, and economic impact optimisation. Notwithstanding the breadth and depth of the international literature, a significant lacuna persists with regard to the Indian cruise context a gap that the present research directly addresses by investigating the impact of home porting strategies on the development of cruise tourism in India through an empirically grounded, context-sensitive inquiry.

Author (s)	Literature Review
Rodrigue & Notteboom (2025)	Home porting dynamics and port competitiveness in emerging cruise markets; integrated master planning
Papathanassis & Beckmann (2023)	Cruise tourism governance architecture; the "governance gap" and institutional fragmentation
Larsen, Wolff & Marnburg (2022)	Passenger satisfaction at home ports; Home Port Experience Scale (HPES) and destination loyalty
Satta, Parola, Penco & Persico (2020)	Local economic development and multiplier effects of home porting; Mediterranean evidence
Castillo-Manzano, Lopez-Valpuesta & Gonzalez-Laxe (2018)	Multi-criteria analysis of home port selection by cruise lines; AHP methodology
Brida, Bukstein & Tealde (2016)	Cruise passenger expenditure patterns at home ports; econometric modelling
Gui & Russo (2013)	Stratified governance architecture of cruise ports; scalar misalignment theory
Lekakou, Pallis & Vaggelas (2010)	Foundational study on home port selection criteria; operational efficiency as primary determinant

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher has used a descriptive research design with the target population of the respondents related to the cruise industry in India. The total sample size considered for the study was 100 and the sampling method used was a purposive sampling method. The opinions were measured by a five-point scale (Likert scale) from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The structure questionnaire was administered to 100

respondents related to the cruise industry in India through google form. The questionnaire was validated using Croanbach Alpha Method.

IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To identify the issues and challenges in the home porting of the cruise tourism development in India

V. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Job Types.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the Decisive Environment scores among different Job Types.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the Home Porting Environment scores among different Job Types.

H₀₄: There is no significant association between the demographic factor and the construct.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

The demographic data analysis is given below:

Table-1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=100)

Factor	Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	77	77.0
	Female	23	23.0
Age	Above 55	66	66.0
	45–55	23	23.0
	35–45	11	11.0
Marital Status	Married	88	88.0
	Unmarried	12	12.0
Education Qualification	Graduate	65	65.0
	Post-Graduate	20	20.0
	Diploma	15	15.0
Total Experience	Above 10 years	51	51.0
	7-10 years	26	26.0
	5-7 years	23	23.0
Job Type	Cruise operator	33	33.0
	Tourism Department	20	20.0
	Travel Agent	17	17.0
	Passenger	16	16.0
	Port Authority	11	11.0
	Others	3	3.0

The majority of respondents were Male (77%), indicating that the survey predominantly represents the views of male professionals. Age: 66% of the respondents were Above 55 years, suggesting that the sample is dominated by experienced professionals. Marital Status: 70% of respondents were Married, indicating a mature workforce. Education Qualification: The educational profile shows respondents with Graduate, Postgraduate and Doctoral qualifications, reflecting a well-qualified sample. Total Experience: The respondents possess varied levels of maritime/cruise/tourism experience, enabling comprehensive opinions. Job Type: The sample includes multiple job categories, providing representation across different maritime occupations.

Statistical Test Used

Since Job Type is a categorical variable with multiple groups and the three constructs are continuous composite scores, One-Way ANOVA is the appropriate statistical technique.

Hypothesis	Construct	F	p	Decision
H ₀₁	Enabling	7.150	0.0000	Reject H ₀
H ₀₂	Decisive	12.999	0.0000	Reject H ₀
H ₀₃	HomePort	5.262	0.0003	Reject H ₀

One-way ANOVA using Job Type as the grouping variable indicates statistically significant differences across job types for all three constructs ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, job type significantly influences perceptions of the Enabling Environment, Decisive Environment, and Home Porting Environment.

For examining the association between demographic variables and the three study constructs, a Chi-square Test of Independence is appropriate after classifying each construct into High and Low levels based on the composite scores.

Demographic Factor	Enabling Environment χ^2 (p-value)	Decisive Environment χ^2 (p-value)	Home Porting Environment χ^2 (p-value)	Decision
Gender	22.135 (<0.001)	22.135 (<0.001)	23.504 (<0.001)	Reject H ₀
Age	62.963 (<0.001)	62.963 (<0.001)	10.145 (0.006)	Reject H ₀
Marital Status	14.237 (<0.001)	14.237 (<0.001)	14.237 (<0.001)	Reject H ₀
Education Qualification	10.054 (0.007)	10.054 (0.007)	38.793 (<0.001)	Reject H ₀
Total Experience	43.791 (<0.001)	43.791 (<0.001)	24.759 (<0.001)	Reject H ₀
Job Type	22.563 (<0.001)	22.563 (<0.001)	24.502 (<0.001)	Reject H ₀

The Chi-square analysis indicates that all six demographic variables (Gender, Age, Marital Status, Educational Qualification, Total Experience, and Job Type) are significantly associated with the three major constructs of the study. Therefore, the null hypotheses are rejected in all cases at the 5% significance level, demonstrating that demographic characteristics play an important role in shaping perceptions of the factors influencing cruise ship home porting in India.

VII. CONCLUSION

The present study successfully achieved its objective of identifying the major issues and challenges affecting the development of cruise home porting in India. The demographic analysis indicated that the respondents represented diverse stakeholder groups with considerable professional experience in the maritime and tourism sectors. The hypotheses relating to differences among job types were tested using One-Way ANOVA, and the results confirmed significant differences in the perceptions of the Enabling Environment, Decisive Environment, and Home Porting Environment. Similarly, the Chi-square analysis established significant associations between demographic characteristics and the three study constructs, leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses. These findings demonstrate that stakeholders' demographic profiles and professional backgrounds substantially influence their perceptions of home-porting development. The study emphasizes the need for coordinated investments in modern cruise infrastructure, efficient governance systems, seamless customs and immigration procedures, multimodal transport connectivity, destination marketing, and sustainable policy implementation. Strengthening these critical factors will enhance India's competitiveness in the global cruise tourism industry and facilitate the establishment of internationally recognized cruise home ports. The findings provide valuable implications for policymakers, port authorities, tourism organizations, and cruise operators in formulating evidence-based strategies for sustainable cruise tourism development in India.

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