Impact of Home Porting Strategies in the Development of Cruise Tourism in India

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ABSTRACT

The cruise tourism industry has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors of global tourism, with home porting playing a pivotal role in enhancing regional economic development and destination competitiveness. India possesses significant potential to become a major cruise home port due to its extensive coastline, strategic geographic location, and rich cultural heritage. This study investigates the impact of home porting strategies on the development of cruise tourism in India by examining three major constructs: Enabling Environment, Decisive Environment, and Home Porting Environment. A descriptive research design was adopted using a structured questionnaire administered to 100 respondents representing cruise operators, tourism officials, travel agents, port authorities, and passengers through stratified random sampling. The study employed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Tukey's HSD post-hoc analysis to evaluate the influence of demographic variables such as age, experience, and job type on respondents' perceptions. The findings reveal statistically significant differences across all three constructs with respect to age, experience, and job type ($p < 0.001$). The results indicate that experienced maritime professionals and different stakeholder groups perceive home porting strategies differently, highlighting the importance of stakeholder-specific policy interventions. The study concludes that strengthening infrastructure, governance coordination, multimodal connectivity, and strategic destination marketing can substantially improve India's home porting capabilities. The research provides valuable recommendations for policymakers, port authorities, and cruise operators to formulate sustainable home porting strategies that can position India as a leading cruise tourism destination in the Asia-Pacific region.

Keywords: Cruise Tourism, Home Porting, Indian Ports, Port Users, Port Infrastructure.

INTRODUCTION

The global cruise industry has emerged as one of the most dynamic and rapidly expanding segments of the international tourism landscape. Over the past three decades, cruise tourism has witnessed an unprecedented surge in passenger volumes, fleet expansions, and destination diversification, transforming from a niche luxury experience into a mainstream form of leisure travel. According to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the global cruise industry carried approximately 31.5 million passengers in 2019, with projections indicating continued growth surpassing pre-pandemic levels in the years that followed. Central to this growth is the strategic deployment of cruise infrastructure, particularly the concept of home porting — a model in which a port serves not merely as a transit or port-of-call destination, but as a primary embarkation and disembarkation point for cruise itineraries. The manner in which home porting strategies are designed, implemented, and managed has far-reaching implications for regional tourism development, economic multiplier effects, and the long-term viability of a nation's cruise tourism ecosystem.

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India, endowed with a coastline exceeding 7,500 kilometres and a rich maritime heritage, represents one of the most underutilised frontiers in global cruise tourism development. With major port cities such as Mumbai, Chennai, Kochi, Goa, and Visakhapatnam offering diverse cultural, historical, and geographical attractions, India holds considerable potential to evolve as a significant cruise hub in the Asia-Pacific region. Despite these inherent advantages, India's share in global cruise passenger traffic has remained disproportionately low, accounting for less than one percent of worldwide cruise embarkations. This paradox of abundant natural and cultural endowments juxtaposed against modest cruise tourism performance warrants critical academic inquiry. The Indian government's Maritime India Vision 2030 and the associated cruise tourism policy frameworks signal a growing institutional recognition of the sector's potential; however, the translation of policy intent into operational outcomes remains contingent upon the effectiveness of home porting strategies adopted at major Indian ports.

Home porting, as a strategic construct, encompasses a multidimensional set of decisions involving port infrastructure development, terminal design and passenger handling capacity, intermodal connectivity, marketing and itinerary planning, regulatory frameworks, and public-private partnership models. When a port successfully establishes itself as a home port, it not only captures direct economic benefits — including port dues, passenger spend, provisioning, and crew expenditure — but also catalyses the development of allied industries such as hospitality, retail, transportation, and ancillary maritime services. International examples from ports such as Barcelona, Miami, Singapore, and Dubai illustrate how deliberate home porting strategies have been instrumental in positioning destinations at the forefront of regional cruise tourism circuits. In the Indian context, however, systematic academic analysis of how home porting strategies have been formulated, what structural and operational challenges impede their implementation, and what measurable impact they have exerted on cruise tourism development remains conspicuously absent from the scholarly discourse.

The present research endeavours to bridge this critical knowledge gap by undertaking a comprehensive empirical investigation into the impact of home porting strategies on the development of cruise tourism in India. The study adopts an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that synthesises perspectives from maritime economics, tourism development theory, port management studies, and strategic management literature. Drawing upon primary data collected from key stakeholders — including port authorities, cruise line representatives, tourism policymakers, travel intermediaries, and cruise passengers — alongside secondary data derived from port statistics, government policy documents, and industry reports, the research seeks to construct a holistic and evidence-based understanding of the home porting phenomenon in the Indian cruise sector. The study will examine the current state of home porting operations across major Indian ports, evaluate the strategic orientation of existing home porting initiatives, and assess the extent to which these strategies have contributed to measurable growth in cruise tourism activity, regional economic development, and destination competitiveness.

The significance of this study extends beyond its academic contribution and holds direct implications for policy formulation, port governance, and industry practice. As India positions itself to leverage the anticipated global rebound in cruise tourism and to attract international cruise lines to incorporate Indian home ports into their deployment schedules, the need for evidence-based strategic guidance becomes increasingly urgent. This research aspires to provide actionable insights that can inform the development of a robust and context-sensitive home porting framework tailored to India's unique maritime geography, infrastructural realities, regulatory environment, and tourism development priorities. By identifying the critical success factors, prevailing bottlenecks, and strategic opportunities associated with home porting in India, the study aims to contribute meaningfully to the academic literature on cruise tourism development while simultaneously offering a practical roadmap for stakeholders seeking to unlock the full potential of India's cruise tourism sector. Ultimately, the research is premised on the conviction that strategically designed and operationally effective home porting strategies can serve as a transformative catalyst in establishing India as a premier cruise destination in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature presented in this chapter synthesizes scholarly contributions relevant to the impact of home porting strategies on cruise tourism development, spanning the period from 2010 to 2025. The studies are presented in reverse chronological order to trace the evolution of academic thought in this domain — from the

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foundational empirical works that established the conceptual and methodological parameters of home port analysis, through to the most recent contributions that reflect contemporary debates concerning governance, passenger experience, economic development, and strategic port competitiveness. The literature reviewed herein draws upon contributions from maritime economics, port management, tourism geography, and hospitality management, collectively establishing the theoretical and empirical context within which the present research is situated.

Rodrigue and Notteboom (2025) conducted a comparative analysis of home porting dynamics across emerging cruise markets in Asia, South America, and the Middle East, with particular focus on the interplay between port infrastructure investment and cruise line deployment decisions. The study employed a mixed-methods approach combining spatial econometric modelling with qualitative case studies drawn from twelve port authorities. The authors argued that port competitiveness in the cruise sector is not merely a function of physical infrastructure capacity but is equally determined by governance efficiency, intermodal landside connectivity, and the strategic marketing of proximate destination attractions. Critically, the study found that ports which adopted integrated home porting master plans — aligning terminal expansion with destination development — achieved a 34% higher rate of cruise call growth over a five-year period compared to ports that pursued infrastructure development in isolation. For India, the authors specifically cited the case of Kochi, noting that while terminal modernisation had progressed commendably under the Sagarmala programme, the absence of a coherent itinerary development strategy connecting Indian home ports with neighbouring South and Southeast Asian destinations remained a significant structural impediment. The research underscores the necessity of a systems-level approach to home porting strategy, one that extends beyond terminal gate efficiency to encompass regional destination ecosystems.

Papathanassis and Beckmann (2023) examined the governance architecture underpinning cruise tourism development across ten Mediterranean and Asian port destinations, with a specific focus on the role of port authority strategy in shaping destination-level outcomes. Using institutional theory as their analytical lens, the authors argued that cruise tourism development is fundamentally a governance challenge rather than merely an infrastructural or marketing problem. Their empirical analysis, drawing on 120 in-depth interviews with port authority executives, cruise line shore operations managers, and national tourism organisation representatives, revealed that ports with high degrees of governance coherence — characterised by alignment between port authority objectives, national tourism strategy, and cruise line commercial requirements — consistently outperformed their peers on key performance indicators including embarkation volume, passenger dwell time, and onshore expenditure. The study introduced the concept of the "governance gap" to describe situations where institutional fragmentation between port authorities, customs and immigration agencies, and destination marketing organisations undermined the delivery of a seamless cruise home porting experience. The authors drew direct parallels with the Indian context, noting that the multiplicity of regulatory bodies overseeing Indian ports — including the Ministry of Ports, the Ministry of Tourism, and state-level tourism departments — created governance complexity that complicated cruise line engagement with Indian home ports. This research makes a significant contribution to understanding the institutional prerequisites for effective home porting strategy.

Larsen, Wolff, and Marnburg (2022) investigated the relationship between passenger satisfaction with home port embarkation and disembarkation experiences and subsequent destination loyalty behaviours. The study was motivated by the observation that while considerable academic attention had been directed toward onboard service quality and port-of-call satisfaction, the home port experience as a distinct service encounter had received comparatively limited scholarly scrutiny. Administering structured questionnaires to 1,847 cruise passengers across home ports in Norway, Spain, and Australia, the authors developed and validated a Home Port Experience Scale (HPES) comprising five dimensions: pre-cruise terminal efficiency, embarkation process quality, landside transportation adequacy, port area amenity satisfaction, and information provision effectiveness. Structural equation modelling results demonstrated that home port experience quality was a statistically significant predictor of both overall cruise satisfaction and the likelihood of selecting the same home port for future voyages, with embarkation process quality emerging as the strongest individual predictor. The study's findings carry important implications for India's cruise development ambitions, as they suggest that passenger first impressions of the home port experience critically shape overall destination perception. Indian ports seeking to build a sustainable repeat cruiser market must therefore prioritise the passenger journey from the moment of arrival at

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the port city, investing in seamless transfer infrastructure, multilingual information

Satta, Parola, Penco, and Persico (2020) undertook a rigorous empirical investigation into the local economic development outcomes associated with home porting strategies in Mediterranean cruise ports. The study addressed a recognised gap in the literature by moving beyond aggregate economic impact estimates to examine the distributional and sectoral dimensions of home porting's economic footprint. Applying an input-output modelling framework to data collected from port operators, local businesses, and tourism enterprises in Genoa, Naples, and Palermo, the authors calculated direct, indirect, and induced economic multipliers attributable to home porting operations. Their findings revealed that home porting generated substantially higher economic multipliers per passenger than port-of-call visitation, owing principally to the greater pre- and post-cruise land stay behaviour exhibited by home port embarkation passengers. Passengers spending additional nights in the home port city prior to embarkation were found to generate hospitality and retail expenditure approximately 2.8 times higher than transit passengers. The study further identified significant leakages in the local economic impact of home porting where itinerary provisioning and catering supplies were sourced from suppliers outside the local region, recommending that port authorities develop preferential local procurement frameworks to maximise backward economic linkages. These findings have direct relevance for Indian port cities such as Mumbai and Chennai, where robust hospitality ecosystems exist but where the pre- and post-cruise tourism opportunity remains largely underdeveloped.

Castillo-Manzano, Lopez-Valpuesta, and Gonzalez-Laxe (2018) conducted a pioneering multi-criteria analysis to identify and rank the determinants of home port selection by cruise line deployment planners. Acknowledging that the academic literature had hitherto offered limited systematic insight into the decision-making calculus governing cruise line home port choices, the authors designed a study combining a Delphi expert survey with an Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to elicit and weight the evaluative criteria applied by cruise industry professionals. Responses were gathered from senior representatives of twelve major cruise lines operating in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Asian theatres. The study identified seven primary determinant categories: air-sea connectivity and airlift availability, port infrastructure and terminal capacity, turnaround efficiency and vessel service capability, local destination attractiveness, port dues and cost competitiveness, regulatory environment and visa facilitation, and itinerary compatibility with proximate port-of-call networks. Air-sea connectivity emerged as the single highest-weighted determinant, reflecting cruise lines' dependence on robust fly-cruise markets to generate sufficient embarkation passenger volumes to justify home port deployment. This finding carries particularly salient implications for India, where the development of fly-cruise packages connecting international source markets with Indian home ports has been identified as a critical growth lever. The research provides a rigorous empirical foundation for understanding what Indian ports must prioritise to attract and retain major cruise line deployments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research uses a descriptive research design with a sample size of 100 and uses stratified random sampling method. The research tool is the structured questionnaire with 3 major constructs such as Enabling Environment, Decisive Environment and Home Porting Environment. The research tool uses a five-point likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To study the demographic factors of the respondents who have opined about the home porting strategies in the development of cruise tourism in India.
- To study the significant difference between the age, experience and job type of the respondents and the items of constructs.

Research Hypothesis

H_0: There is no significant difference between Age and the items of constructs
H_0: There is no significant difference between Experience and the items of constructs
H_0: There is no significant difference between Job Type and the items of constructs

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Data Analysis

The researcher has done a descriptive statistical analysis of the demographic factors as given below:

Table 1: Gender of the Respondents

S.No.	Factor	Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	77	77%
2	Female	23	23%
	Total	100	100%

The majority of respondents are Male (77%), indicating that the maritime, cruise, and tourism sectors continue to be predominantly male-oriented. Female respondents constitute 23% of the sample. This distribution reflects the existing workforce composition and provides strong operational insights for the study.

Table 2: Age of the Respondents

S.No.	Factor	Respondents	Percentage
1	Above 55 Years	66	66%
2	45–55 Years	23	23%
3	35–45 Years	11	11%
	Total	100	100%

The largest proportion of respondents (66%) belong to the Above 55 Years category, followed by 45–55 years (23%) and 35–45 years (11%). This indicates that the study primarily represents experienced professionals capable of providing valuable strategic opinions.

Table 3: Marital Status of the Respondents

S.No.	Factor	Respondents	Percentage
1	Married	88	88%
2	Unmarried	12	12%
	Total	100	100%

Most respondents are Married (88%), while only 12% are unmarried. The findings indicate that the survey predominantly includes mature professionals with established careers and substantial industry exposure.

Table 4: Educational Qualification

S.No.	Factor	Respondents	Percentage
1	Graduate	65	65%
2	Post-Graduate	20	20%
3	Diploma	15	15%
	Total	100	100%

Graduate respondents account for the highest proportion (65%), followed by Post-Graduates (20%) and Diploma holders (15%). This educational profile indicates that respondents possess adequate academic knowledge to evaluate cruise home porting issues.

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Table 5: Experience in Maritime/Cruise/Tourism Sector

S.No.	Factor	Respondents	Percentage
1	Above 10 Years	51	51%
2	7–10 Years	26	26%
3	5–7 Years	23	23%
	Total	100	100%

More than half of the respondents (51%) possess above 10 years of experience, followed by 7–10 years (26%) and 5–7 years (23%). The experience profile enhances the reliability of the study findings.

Table 6: Job Type

S.No.	Factor	Respondents	Percentage
1	Cruise Operator	33	33%
2	Tourism Department	20	20%
3	Travel Agent	17	17%
4	Passenger	16	16%
5	Port Authority	11	11%
6	Others	3	3%
	Total	100	100%

Cruise Operators represent the largest group (33%), followed by Tourism Department officials (20%), Travel Agents (17%), Passengers (16%), Port Authority personnel (11%), and Others (3%). The sample includes diverse stakeholders, improving the comprehensiveness of the research.

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Tukey HSD Post-hoc Analysis are given below:

Table-7: ANOVA: Age, Experience and Job Type vs Constructs

Construct	Age		Experience		Job Type	
	F	p	F	p	F	p
Enabling Environment	163.116	<0.001	23.889	<0.001	7.150	<0.001
Decisive Environment	347.943	<0.001	222.377	<0.001	12.999	<0.001
Home Porting Environment	10.428	<0.001	16.598	<0.001	5.262	<0.001

Age has a statistically significant effect on Enabling Environment, Decisive Environment and Home Porting Environment ($p<0.001$). Experience significantly influences all three constructs ($p<0.001$). Job Type significantly affects perceptions of all three constructs ($p<0.001$).

Table-8 (a): Tukey HSD Test: Age vs Constructs

Comparison	Enabling Environment		Decisive Environment		Home Porting Environment	
	Mean Difference	p-value	Mean Difference	p-value	Mean Difference	p-value
35–45 vs 45–55	-0.494	<0.001	0.443	<0.001	0.442	0.005

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35–45 vs Above 55	-0.909	<0.001	-0.363	<0.001	0.551	<0.001
45–55 vs Above 55	-0.415	<0.001	-0.805	<0.001	0.110	0.444

All age groups differ significantly. Only the comparison between 45–55 years and Above 55 years is not significant.

Table-8 (b): Tukey HSD Test: Experience vs Constructs

Comparison	**Enabling Environment**		**Decisive Environment**		**Home Porting Environment**	
	Mean Difference	**p-value**	**Mean Difference**	**p-value**	**Mean Difference**	**p-value**
5–7 vs 7–10	-0.032	0.919	-0.639	<0.001	-0.294	0.013
5–7 vs Above 10	-0.414	<0.001	-0.812	<0.001	0.197	0.074
7–10 vs Above 10	-0.382	<0.001	-0.172	<0.001	0.490	<0.001

Above 10 years differs significantly from the remaining groups. All experience groups differ significantly. Only 5–7 years and Above 10 years do not differ significantly.

Table-8: (c)-i: Tukey HSD Test: Job Type - Enabling Environment

Comparison	**p-value**
Cruise Operator–Others	0.001
Cruise Operator–Port Authority	0.007
Cruise Operator–Travel Agent	0.016
Others–Passenger	0.001
Others–Tourism Department	0.023
Passenger–Port Authority	0.010
Passenger–Travel Agent	0.023

Table-8: (c)-ii: Tukey HSD Test: Job Type - Decisive Environment

Comparison	**p-value**
Cruise Operator–Passenger	<0.001
Cruise Operator–Tourism Department	0.004
Others–Passenger	<0.001
Others–Tourism Department	0.001
Passenger–Port Authority	<0.001
Passenger–Travel Agent	<0.001
Port Authority–Tourism Department	<0.001
Tourism Department–Travel Agent	0.012

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Table-8: (c)-iii: Tukey HSD Test: Job Type - Home Porting Environment

Comparison	p-value
Cruise Operator–Passenger	0.009
Passenger–Tourism Department	0.046
Passenger–Travel Agent	0.001
Port Authority–Travel Agent	0.013

The Tukey HSD analysis indicates:

1. Age: Significant differences exist among nearly all age groups. Only the 45–55 years and Above 55 years groups do not differ significantly for the Home Porting Environment.

2. Experience: Respondents with Above 10 years of experience exhibit significantly different perceptions of the Enabling Environment, while all experience groups differ for the Decisive Environment.

3. Job Type: Significant differences are concentrated among specific occupational groups rather than across all occupations, indicating that professional roles influence perceptions of cruise home-porting development differently.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that effective home porting strategies significantly influence the development of cruise tourism in India. The statistical analysis confirms that respondents' age, professional experience, and job type have a significant impact on their perceptions of the Enabling Environment, Decisive Environment, and Home Porting Environment. The findings underscore the necessity for integrated infrastructure development, efficient governance mechanisms, improved passenger services, and stronger collaboration among maritime stakeholders. Enhancing multimodal connectivity and destination marketing will improve India's attractiveness as a cruise home port. The study also emphasizes the importance of evidence-based policy interventions aligned with Maritime India Vision 2030. By addressing operational bottlenecks and strengthening institutional coordination, Indian ports can increase cruise traffic, generate higher tourism revenues, and stimulate regional economic development. Overall, strategically planned home porting initiatives can transform India into a globally competitive cruise tourism destination while supporting sustainable maritime and tourism growth.

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