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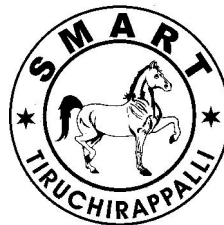
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TOURISM MARKETING - ITS ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MANIPUR

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Abstract

Tourism has emerged as an important activity of mankind with increasing demand for recreation and leisure. It has become one of the world's major industries recognized by entrepreneurs and governments of all the countries. Viewed as a natural, renewable resource industry, tourism has emerged as big business at present. It is considered as one of the important industries ensuring the best use of human resources and a catalytic agent for capital formation. Tourism has become an instrument for short-term development of the backward regions where agriculture and mining sectors are not quite significant. It is rightly termed as landscape industry, since its products comprise attractions from natural beauty, dramatic landscape and colourful heritage. This study proposes to analyze the tourist potential of the state of Manipur and the scope for improvement.

Introduction

Tourism has emerged as an important activity of mankind with increasing demand for recreation and leisure. It has become one of the world's major industries recognised by entrepreneurs and governments of all the countries. Viewed as a natural, renewable resource industry, tourism has emerged as big business at present. It is considered as one of the important industries ensuring the best use of human resources and a catalytic agent for capital formation. Tourism has become an instrument for short-term development of the backward regions where agriculture and mining sectors are not quite significant. It is rightly termed as LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY, since its products comprise attractions from natural beauty, dramatic landscape and colourful heritage.

Primarily tourism is associated with travel, temporary human migration within the country or beyond the country of residence. It is an urge to get away for an adventure or an experience, a source of knowledge and above all, relaxation. From a simple travel of yesteryears, this phenomenon today has become a very complex activity encompassing a wide

range of relationships with the rise in the standard of living among people along with fast technological revolution in transportation industry and it is now within the reach of all sections of people.

Tourism is a public utility infrastructure which consists of all the units that exist for handling tourists and it ensures the operation of facilities essential to modern life, such as health, sanitation, communication, urbanisation, administration and hospitality. Tourism is primarily a service industry and, therefore, a large number of people are actively engaged in tourism and find employment in tertiary occupation. The industry is marked by fairly distinct, seasonal rhythm of work and employment. The changing ideas and attitudes of the tourists are always the dominating factors in the industry. All the economic activities involved in tourism may be referred to as tourism industry.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- a) To examine the environmental setting of Manipur in the context of potentiality of tourism industry.

- b) To examine the present structure of tourism in the state in relation to various socio-economic and infrastructural parameters.
- c) To study the entire range of problems and prospects of the development of tourism in Manipur with emphasis on strategies for its future development and planning.
- d) To prepare guidelines for promotion of tourism in the state, and
- e) To formulate strategy for marketing and management of tourist infrastructure in Manipur.

Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data collected from various publications of the Directorate of Tourism, Government of Manipur, Tourist Information Office of the Government of India, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Economics and Statistics, Art and Culture and Census Operations and the Department of Wildlife and Forest, Government of Manipur. The study finally enunciates a strategy for promotion of tourism infrastructure and proper marketing network for the purpose.

Relevance of the Study

In Manipur, the agriculture growth is not impressive and the forest, which covers almost four fifth of the state area, contributes too little to the state domestic product. But the scenic beauty of its valleys and hills, lakes, and rivers, enchanting dances, festivals of the people and festivities and superb skills of the people manifested in intricate designs of handloom products and handicrafts can provide impetus to the tourism industry, attracting people from the rest of the country and even abroad. As such, tourism has to be developed in right perspective in the state to boost the economic strength in

terms of income generation, and employment generation for youth, besides providing impetus to cottage industries which will get a much bigger and vital market among tourists. Enhanced tourism will also provide right environment for development of tourist amenities, further employing a large number of people in this sector. The study, therefore, will be quite relevant in the present day situation in Manipur, which is reeling under a spell of poor economic growth, acute unemployment among youth, and related problems.

Manipur

Manipur has been described as “ the Jewel of India”, “ A Little Paradise on the Earth”, “A Flower on Lofty Heights”, “ Kashmir of the Eastern India” and “ Switzerland of the East”. Bound on the north by Nagaland, Myanmar on the east and southeast, Assam on the West and Mizoram on the southwest, the state is situated almost halfway between the tri-junction of India-Myanmar-China in the north and India-Myanmar- Bangladesh in the south.

Physical Layout

The state, on the basis of its structure and topography, can be divided into three major landform divisions- the Manipur Hills, the Manipur Valley and the Barak Basin. The Manipur eastern hills form a compact and continuous chain along the Indo-Myanmar frontier for 200 km and attain an average height of 1500meters. Khayangbung (2833 m.), Siroi (2568m), and Kachubung (2498m) are its important peaks.

The Manipur western hills comprise of parallel ridges and valleys with rugged relief resulting from the erosion activities of river Barak and her tributaries. Tenipu (1994 m), Koubru (1652 m), Iso (2460 m), Laikot (1831 m) and Tamphaba (2664 m) are the main peaks

of these hills. The Barak basin, dotted with low sandstone hillocks, is an extension of the Surma valley of Assam.

Climate

Climate plays a vital role in the planning of recreational tourism. The factor of climatic comfort determines the overall tourist traffic including its destination, volume and direction. Topographical varieties within short distances result in rapid climatic changes in the state. The Barak basin and the lower foothills of the Manipur eastern hills have a warmer climate than the central valley and the surrounding hills. The tourists prefer to come to the state during the first and the last quarters of the year. About 30 per cent of them arrive during January and March, and about 50 per cent during October to December. The inhospitable rainy season hampers free and comfortable movement of the tourists.

Flora and Fauna

Perhaps no part of India has such varied and beautiful flora as Manipur. For her lush-green flora with maximum diversity, the state is considered as one of the richest bio-diversity regions of the country. Manipur has a rich variety of fauna, which include the famous brow antlered deer (Sangai) found at Keibul Lamjao National Park in the southern part of the Loktak Lake. Large portions of this park are actually floating islands of aquatic plants, which can be approached only by boats. Himalayan black bear and the common Indian sloth bear are found in the hills to the north of the central valley. Game birds found in the state include common wood partridge, the black partridge, the red jungle fowl and the spur fowl, and several species of quail, snipe, duck and teal. The Loktak Lake during the winter months becomes a paradise for hunters. The shooting of these birds has now been regulated.

Population

According to the 2001 census, Manipur had a population of 23,88,634 persons, of whom 12,07,338 were males and the remaining 11,81,296 were females, who lived in the densely peopled central valley districts and the Barak basin. However the state population increased by 30.02 per cent since the last census.

Tourist facilities

The tourist facilities include information about the places of tourists' interest, availability of accommodation in such places, programmes of internal tours and arrangement of transportation for the purpose, arrangement for leisure and recreational activities, and facilities for shopping and marketing. With enhanced facilities for tourists, the region can earn better revenue from tourism.

Tourist Information

The State Tourism Department, through its publications and publicity materials, provides tourist information services. India Tourism Department disseminates such information through their offices.

Manipur can be visited by foreign tourists only with Restricted Area Permit (RAP), which can be obtained from the Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi or from the Indian Missions abroad, or from the Resident Commissioners of the state posted at New Delhi, Kolkata and Guwahati. Travel agencies organising foreigners' tours in the state have to provide the detailed programme of such groups in advance to the State Government so that they can arrange a liaison officer to accompany them during their visit.

Transport and Tourism

Transport is an integral element of tourist activity. It helps tourists to reach attractive destinations. The network of efficient

transport generates a tourist market and determines a tourist choice of destination. As tourism is considered to be the movement of people from the place of usual residence to various destinations by choice, the first and foremost aim of a tourist is always for comfortable transport preference. The economic growth of a region helps in accelerated expansion of transport facilities, which in turn, accelerate the growth of tourism. The transport system serves the needs of the tourists and gives stimulus to further development of a place and its people.

Tourists in Manipur have the choice of three types of travel- by air, by surface, and by waterways. Imphal, the capital city, is well connected by air services with Silchar and Guwahati in Assam, Aizawal in Mizoram, and Kolkata and Delhi. Majority of the tourists avail surface transport for visiting Imphal and various destinations within the state. Surface transport remains cheap, easy to get and quick with flexibility in halt. The lake side settlements are accessible by country boats and canoes.

Road Transport

The road transport is comparatively a better mode of transport for speedy, regular and greater mobility. The present day road system has brought a significant change in tourism activity by linking distant places by road. The road density in the state is 32.12 kms per 100 sq.kms as against all India density of 62.8 km. Manipur has only 19.82 kms of surfaced roads per 100 sq.kms which is one of the lowest in the entire country.

The National Highway 39, 53 and 150 connect the state with the neighbouring states of Nagaland, Assam and Mizoram, and the neighbouring Myanmar. The State Highways connect the district headquarters with Imphal,

while the major and other district roads provide connectivity between the district headquarters and the block and sub-divisional headquarters. The inter-village roads connect the villages with each other and join the nearest district roads and state highways.

Management of Tourism

The state witnessed an intermittent flow of tourists in the last decade, which included a meagre number of foreign tourists (Table- 1). The maximum arrival of domestic tourists was in 1989-90, while the largest number of foreign tourists arrived in the state during 2000-01.

The deteriorating law and order situation in the state is perhaps the most important factor affecting the flow of both the domestic and foreign tourists. Tourism and insurgency do not go hand in hand in any region. Though tourism has been declared an industry in the state, it has not been able to make much headway due to growing insurgency and counter insurgency operations by the armed forces.

Tourism administration in the state is in shambles. With lack of development of this sector, the state government has never appointed a full-fledged director of tourism to look after this growing sector of economy. In any programme of development, there has to be a proper set-up to look after the planning, propagation and management of tourism related activities and programmes. It is, therefore, proposed to make tourism a major department with proper staff to look after the tourists, their requirements of travel, transport and comfortable stay in the places of their interest.

To make tourism a special economic venture providing all necessary infrastructures for its development at a faster pace, there is need for appointment of a regular director for the

department assisted by two deputy directors-one for the hills and the other for the valley.

The tourist officers in each district and care takers at each and every place of tourist importance should look after the needs and requirements of the tourists, under the overall supervision of the directorate of tourism and this will bring a positive feeling of being looked after among the visitors and tourists.

Marketing Practices

The number of tourists visiting the state is abnormally low in the absence of proper marketing programmes undertaken by the tourism department. At present, both the State Tourism and India Tourism provide just their publicity materials to the visiting tourists. There is need for more active involvement in disseminating tourist information, besides providing facilities to the visitors coming to have a glimpse of this beautiful tract of the country.

As part of the tourism marketing practices in the state, following steps can be taken up to strengthen this sector:

- a) A balanced aviation policy that encourages more passengers to visit the state at a competitive cost.
- b) An efficient, courteous and inexpensive scheme of granting visas and permits for domestic tourists.
- c) An integrated information system within the country and for the overseas markets.
- d) Augmentation of facilities for the tourists on arrival and during their travel within the state.
- e) Improving the law and order situation and providing tourists police protection to bring in added security for the tourists.

- f) Creating tourism awareness at all levels in the state.

Tour operators running luxury coaches for the domestic tourists from Guwahati, Dimapur, Shillong and Silchar can go for more effective publicity about the tourist spots and travel facilities in the state to attract them to various scenic destinations. There is need for market research studies to be conducted at regular intervals to ascertain the choice of facilities needed by the tourists, accommodation, catering, sight seeing and entertainment facilities to make the tourists' stay and visit pleasurable.

Tourism Planning

Tourism planning is concerned not only with the physical planning of tourist facilities but also of the natural and cultural resources, which are presented to the tourists. Thus, a major function of the tourism planning is to protect, conserve and develop both natural and man-made environment. Tourism planning also includes the development of infrastructure facilities, provision for basic necessities like water supply, electricity, accessibility, accommodation and recreation.

SWOT Analysis

In analysing the strengths and weaknesses of tourism industry and the opportunities and threats posed by it, following aspects are of utmost importance:

Strengths

1. Location of hotels mostly in the city centres providing comfort, safety and easy movement to various tourist attractions in the state.
2. A large number of tour operators to facilitate movement of tourists with safety and comfort.

3. Hospitable people who are helpful to the tourists.

Weaknesses

1. Lack of promotional activities to popularise tourism industry in the state.
2. Absence of proper marketing plans and marketing research activities.
3. Poor financial position of the state affecting creation of infrastructure in the places of tourist interest.
4. Absence of customer focused tourism department.
5. Poor condition of fleet of transport vehicles and boats at tourist resorts.
6. Lack of proper training facilities for the employees of tourism department and tourism related organizations.

Opportunities

1. Scenic spots, both natural and cultural, in the hills and valley and in and around Imphal.
2. The historic legacy of Loktak and its environs comprising ancient temples, memorials and structures.
3. Unique flora and fauna and spots of adventure tourism.

Threats

1. The continued unlawful activities and threats to the visiting tourists. Lack of proper security measures creating fear psychosis among the tourists.

In the light of the strengths and opportunities available for promotion of tourism in the state, attempts have to be made to ameliorate the weaknesses and threat perception to give a boost to the growth of this sector.

Strategic Management of Tourism

The State Department of Tourism has no proper plans and policies for the development of tourism. There is need for a proper tourism policy providing vision and direction for its growth and development. Tourism Department alone may not do much for its development. As such, there is need for getting co-operation and co-ordination from other departments like electricity, forest, science and technology, finance, etc. for augmenting this sector. The state, by its topographical nature, has chronic problem of transport and communication. Hence, making an easy access to the state and its tourist spots is of utmost importance. For promotion of tourism in the state, a different strategy has to be adopted. The state government may take up initiatives to promote tourism by assisting tour operators, travel agents and tour facilitators. It is they who finally sell the tour packages to the prospective tourists. Hotel business in the state should be accorded the status of an industry and should be provided the facilities given to the industrial units.

Tourist marketing approach in the state should eye for not only the domestic tourists but also the foreign tourists. Help of foreign embassies, both within and outside the country, can be sought in this regard to motivate and impress the tourists to visit the state. Most of the tour organisers do not avail the facilities offered by the IT sector like Internet to provide necessary information to the visiting tourists. Information technology can provide added and competitive advantage over other media in this regard.

At present, the tourist market in the state is gradually expanding. As such, the survival and growth of tourism will entirely depend on its strategic management.

Recommendations

The natural and cultural environment of the state offer a variety of attractions for the tourists and visitors alike. As such, the highly potential sites and centres should be declared as Tourism District or Special Tourism Area and developed as major tourist sites.

Restricted and Protected Area Permit systems may be abolished, or regulated in such a manner that the flow of tourists is not hampered by such regulations. Manipur, being trekkers' desired destination, younger people and even domestic tourists should be encouraged by offering low budget tours.

To increase the involvement of investors in private sector, promotional advertisements through organising fairs and festivals, awareness campaigns and participation of travel associations and tour operators have to be encouraged.

While planning to boost the tourism industry, the state government has to augment supply of enough electricity and water to tourism related activities with necessary incentives for at least a period of 10 years at industrial rates, and tariff must be frozen for the same period.

In promotion of tourism, the government should not only take up micro-projects, but also comprehensive infrastructure development programmes for this sector.

Finally, the development of tourism should not spread pollution, both environmental and social, in the state. To promote the quality of life for the people, there has to be efficient management of resources. Tourism and other socio-economic aspects of the cultural landscape are bound to bring desired transformation in the life of the people and economy of the state. Tourism planning has to be a people oriented programme by involving them in each step of

planning and development of this sector of economy.

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Table- 1
Flow of Tourists in the last decade in Manipur

Sl. No.	Year	Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total
1	1989-90	1,19,602	78	1,19,680
2	1990-91	90,685	185	90,870
3	1991-92	91,664	374	92,038
4	1992-93	62,374	221	62,595
5	1993-94	72,980	350	73,330
6	1994-95	82,789	370	83,168
7	1995-96	84,025	288	84,313
8	2000-01	1,03,854	409	1,04,263
9	2002-03	81,930	215	82,145

Source: Tourists Statistics, Directorate of Tourism, Government of Manipur.