

Dynamics of tourism in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract: The Himachal Pradesh is situated in the western Himalaya and has remained a repository of biodiversity, water and other economic system. Mountains are a significant source of vital ecosystem which contributes to sustaining the national and global environment and economy. Keeping in view its ambience and terrain, it is to be patented as green economy which aims at mitigating the environmental risk and ecological inadequacies and attaining the sustainable development without degrading the salubrious milieu of its panoramic landscape. The green economy has been gaining ground across the world. Thus, Himachal Pradesh must follow the development strategies which synergies both economic development and ecological sustainability. This paper is an endeavour to explore the possibilities of tourism industry in Himachal Pradesh and widen its scope to flourish and provide a new direction to the economy of the state. Tourism potential is only next to hydro-electric power potential in the state. There are sufficient opportunities for wildlife lovers and sportsmen. It is a paradise for trekkers, climbers and other ardent devotees of the spirit of adventure on account of its topography and terrain. The adventure sports like trekking, mountaineering, rock-climbing, and heli-skiing, hang gliding, skiing, water sports including water skiing, river-rafting, fishing, golf etc. can be perused here. These sports remained largely undiscovered by adventurers till fairly recently. Even, presently, it has been attracting some enthusiastic sportsmen from all over the world. The focus of the present study is to identify the potential of tourism industry in Himachal Pradesh.

Keywords: Himalayas, Trekking, mountaineering, rock-climbing, Topography Tourism potential



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Introduction

From the very beginning of life, travel has fascinated man. Travel and tourism have been important social activities of human beings from time immemorial. The urge to explore new places within one's own country or outside and seek a change of environment and experience has been experienced from ancient time. Tourism is one of the world's most rapidly growing industries. Much of its growth is due to higher disposable incomes, increased leisure time and falling costs of travel. As airports become more enjoyable places to pass through, as travel agency services become increasingly automated, and as tourists find it easier to get information on places they want to visit, tourism grows. The Internet has fuelled the growth of the travel industry by providing on line booking facilities. It has also provided people with the power to explore destinations and cultures from their home personal computers and make informed choices before finalizing travel plans. With its immense information resources, the Internet allows tourists to scrutinise hotels, check weather forecasts, read up on local food and even talk to other tourists around the world about their travel experiences for a chosen destination. This new trend has made the tourism job very challenging. The holiday makers want a good rate of return on their investment. They are to be lured with value additions and improved customer service. This also accentuates on the regular flow of manpower with specific skills at the appropriate levels to match and cater to global standards. The success of the hospitality industry comes from provision of quality rooms, food,

service and ambience. There is no doubt that fitness has increasingly become a larger part of everyone's life. Therefore, business and leisure travellers alike look to maintain their fitness goals while away from home. Awareness should be created about the environment and education. A collective effort and co-operation with powerful networking are the need of the hour. People should be acting as the watchdogs of the society as far as environmental issues are concerned. Eco-tourists are a growing community and tourism promotions have to adopt such eco-practices which could fit this growing community. Another growing trend in the tourism scene is the Incentive Market and the scope of the destination to attract conferences and convention traffic. Here the prospects are better for those destinations where state of the art infrastructure has been developed along with a safe and clean image.

Tourism today is much more than just developing products. It is more about quality, insightful thinking and ability to have global information about technology, partners, contacts and responding quickly to global and regional trends. The fundamental task before tourism promotion is to facilitate integration of the various components in the tourism trade as active participants in the nation's social and cultural life. There is a long road ahead. All must work towards a society where people can work and participate as equal partners. Tourism should be a vehicle for international cooperation and understanding of the various civilizations and a harbinger of peace. From the foregoing we can see how fast the face of tourism is changing and how challenging the job of travel agencies is now. There is therefore a need for proper training of the personnel working in the industry through thorough and a detailed study of the subject. An unified approach to the subject is also needed since at present people from different fields have been studying tourism from different perspectives.

Tourism industry is a celestial cow of the economy of Himachal Pradesh. The Himalayas are found in Himachal Pradesh. The Shivalik Range and mid- Himalayas are found here. The highest peak is Reo Purgyal with a height of 6,816m in Kinnaur. Furthermore, there are some reservoirs and rivers in Himachal Pradesh which are tourist hotspots due to water port activities, sacred importance to Hindus, bird watching and have health centres around them. Ravi, Chenab, Sutlej, Beas are four major river which perennially flowing to enhance the panorama of hilly state. The rivers Sutlej and Beas are the major resource of hot springs such as Tattapani, Manikaran, and Vashist temple. Himachal Pradesh is India's favourite outdoor adventure destination. Spread across hills and valleys and crisscrossed by magnificent rivers, the region abounds in natural beauty. It has a vast forest area and is considered one of the richest reservoirs of biological diversity. Apart from adventure seekers, Himachal Pradesh is popular with nature lovers, wildlife enthusiasts, pilgrims and history buffs.

Tourism is a large contributor to the state economy. In 2018, Himachal Pradesh was visited by 16.09 million domestic and 356,000 international tourists. This tourist friendly state has over 5,000 properties that cater to the needs of domestic and international tourists. This includes government-run properties and can be categorized as luxury hotels, heritage resorts, star hotels, budget hotels and campsites. Many of these hotels are in popular tourist destinations such as Shimla, Kasauli, Kullu, Dalhousie, Dharamshala, Khajjiar, Chamba and Manali . According to World Travel Organization, "Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes."

- The term "usual environment" is intended to exclude trips within the place of residence, trip to the usual place of work or education and daily shopping and other local day-to-day activities.
- The threshold of twelve months is intended to exclude long-term migration.
- For the distance travelled there is no consensus. It varies from at least 40 KMs to at least 160 KMs away from home one way for any purpose other than commuting to work.

Objectives

1. To analyse the scope of tourism industry in Himachal Pradesh
2. To study the growth and performance of tourism industry
3. To study the trend of foreign tourist arrival in India
4. To identify the problems of tourism industry in India and suggest remedies

Inventory of Tourist Attractions

Cultural: Sites and areas of archaeological interest, Historical buildings and Monuments, Places of historical significance, Museums, Modern Culture, Political and Educational institutions, Religious Institutions.

Traditions: National Festivals, Arts and Handicrafts, Music, Folklore, Native life and Customs

Scenic: National Parks, Wildlife, Flora and Fauna, Beach Resorts, Mountain Resorts.

Entertainment: Participation and Viewing sports, Amusement and Recreation Parks Zones, Cinemas and Theatres, Night Life and Cuisine.

Others: Climate, Health resorts or Spas, Unique characteristics not available elsewhere.

However, the attractions of tourism are, to a very large extent, geographical in character. Physical space may be thought of as a component for those who seek the wilderness and solitude. Scenery or landscape is a compound of landforms; water and the vegetation have an aesthetic and recreational value. Climate conditions, especially in relation to the amount of sunshine, temperature and precipitation are of special significance. Animal life may be an important attraction, firstly in relation to bird watching or viewing game in their natural habitat and secondly, for sports purposes fishing and hunting are the major attractions. Man's impact on the natural landscape in the form of his settlements, historical monuments and archaeological remains is also a major attraction. Finally, a variety of cultural features-ways of life, folklore, artistic expressions, etc. provide valuable attractions to many.

Accessibility of Tourist Sites

It is a means by which a tourist can reach the area where attractions are located. Tourist attractions of whatever type would be of little importance if their locations are inaccessible by the normal means of transport. A Tourist in order to get to his destination needs some mode of transport. This mode may be a motor car, a coach, an aero plane, a ship or a train which enables him to reach his predetermined destination. If tourist destinations are located at places where no transport can reach or where there are inadequate transport facilities, they become of little value. The tourist attractions, which are located near the tourist-generating markets and are linked by a network of efficient means of transport, receive the maximum number of tourists. The distance factor also plays an important role in determining a tourist's choice of a destination. Longer distances cost much more in the way of expenses on travel as compared to short distances. An example can be that of Bhutan. About forty thousand tourist arrivals for a country of the size of Bhutan may look rather unimpressive. However, if one looks at certain factors like the country's distance from the affluent tourist markets of the world such as the United States, Europe, Canada, Japan and Australia, one may conclude that the long distance is one of the factors responsible for low arrivals. It costs a visitor from these countries, quite a substantial amount, to visit Bhutan for a holiday. Europe and North America continue to be the main generating and receiving areas for international tourism, accounting for as much as 70% and 20% respectively, of international tourist arrivals. Easy accessibility thus is a key factor for the growth and development of tourist movements.

Accommodation

The accommodation and other facilities complement the attractions. Accommodation plays a central role and is very basic to tourist destinations. World Tourism Organization in its definition of a tourist has stated that he must spend at least one night in the destination visited, to qualify as a tourist. This presupposes availability of some kind of accommodation. The demand for accommodation away from one's home is met by a variety of facilities. The range and type of accommodation is quite varied and has undergone considerable change since the last half century. There has been a decline in the use of boarding houses and small private hotels. Larger hotels are increasing their share of holiday trade, especially in big metropolitan areas and popular spots. In more traditional holiday and sea-side resorts in Europe and elsewhere, big hotels are keeping their share of holiday resorts. In recent years, some changes have been reflected in the type of accommodation. There has been an increasing demand for more non- traditional and informal types of accommodation. The latest trends in accommodation are holiday villages. In recent years there has been an increase in the popularity of such accommodation. Accommodation may in itself be an important tourist attraction. In fact, a large number of tourists visit a particular destination or town simply because there is a first class luxury hotel or resort which provides excellent services and facilities. Some countries like Switzerland, Holland, France, Austria, and

Belgium has gained a reputation for providing excellent accommodation with good cuisine. Many hotel establishments elsewhere in various countries, especially the resort hotels, have gained a reputation for their excellent cuisine, services and facilities. The French government for instance, paved the way for tourist development of Corsica by launching a big hotel development programme.

Availability of basic amenities

Facilities are a necessary aid to the tourist centre. Facilities like dancing, recreation and other amusements are important for every tourist centre. Amenities can be of two types; natural, e.g. opportunities for climbing, trekking, viewing, etc. and man-made, e.g. various types of entertainment and facilities which cater to the special needs of the tourists.

Nowhere in the world is found, such a Majestic panorama, different and diversified climate, flora and fauna, belief in religion, dialects, dressing patterns, life style and rituals are found barring Himachal Pradesh. "Tourism is one of the world's most booming industries, generating approximately \$4 trillion annually worldwide. Over 550 million international tourists, visit different parts of the world every year in order to satiate their desire to know the world. International tourist arrivals reached 1.035 billion in 2012, up from over 983 million in 2011, and 940 million in 2010.¹ It is generally the middle class, with their limited resources has contributed a lot for this increase in tourism turn over. When the India earns a lot through the tourism, the share of Himachal Pradesh is very small, which gives an alarm for tapping the last potential available in this business.

Conclusion

For many centuries, World is fascinated with the panoramic beauty and medicinal environment of Himachal Pradesh. It is a "Hidden holy land", valley of Medicinal Herbs, and "the Lotus Garden of the Gods which is a known as a abode of numerous deity of gods . It is a spectacular destination for tourists in entire tourism industry of the world. "High value and low volume" and *Athiti devo bhab* are a main plank of tourism industry in H. Royal government restricts large influx of tourists by imposing high tourist tariff. Himachal Pradesh 's main tourism attractions are its traditional culture and way of life, its religious festivals, historic monuments and its pristine environment. Himachal Pradesh has received much international applause for its cautious approach to development that places a high priority on conserving the nation's natural and cultural

¹ "UN WTO World Tourism Barometer "(World tourism organisation) 11 (1) January 2013.

heritage. It is not allowing more tourists lest they should spoil its immaculate environment and social values. The benefits of tourism has remained confine to rich people only, whereas the involvement of poor people is more in preserving cultural values and conserving environment; however, they are not earning more from the arrival of tourists. Eco- tourism is the only source of tourism industry in Himachal Pradesh because it has not succeeded so far to diversify its products to attract more tourists. Tourism industry could not make access to remote as well as rural areas because of poor transport connectivity. The tourism industry would not experience boom if the transport connectivity is not expanded in entire territory of Himachal Pradesh.

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