

TOURISM PROMOTION IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: AN OPINION SURVEY OF FOREIGN TOURISTS

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Abstract *This paper examines the marketing strategies of tourism in Himachal Pradesh, which is a small Indian hill state. Tourism has emerged as an upcoming industry in Himachal. Having realized the importance of tourism the present work is an attempt to find out the present status of tourism promotion in Himachal and whether it justifies the tourism products of Himachal. The current paper covers the majority of the tourist destinations visited by the international tourists. This study covers the three districts of Himachal Pradesh namely Shimla, Kullu and Kangra, reason being that these districts attract maximum number of tourists in Himachal Pradesh. At least two destinations in each district have been chosen. 80 foreign tourists had been selected with respect to tourist arrival in the respective districts. Ultimate sample was selected on convenient cum random basis. The response categories were presented as Strongly Agree, Agree, No comments, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Chi-Square was attempted on the responses of the international tourists. It has emerged from the study that the State of Himachal has the potential to become a year round popular destination amongst the foreign tourists provided if it is promoted aggressively.*

Keywords *Destination Image, Marketing, Tourism Products, Tourism Promotion, Tourism Potential.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged out as an upcoming industry in Himachal Pradesh. Himachal Pradesh is a small North Indian hill state. The state is blessed with bounties of natural beauty, offering cool and comfortable climate, the serene environment, fascinating customs, fairs and festivals, breathtaking thrills of adventure. It will be appropriate to describe the state as a land of all seasons and all reasons. Tourism in the State is not evenly spread. Some parts of the State receive the majority of the tourists while there are many areas of the State which are yet to be explored by tourists. The reason for this can be cited as many. For majority of the tourists, Himachal means a visit to Shimla, Kullu-Manali, or Kangra districts. The maximum tourists have no idea as to the varied attractions of the state and the certain lesser explored and unexplored destinations of the state. In spite of the excellent facilities available to the tourists the number of foreign visitors to the state is almost negligible. The major reason for this is inadequate marketing. The tourist of today can be best understood as the equivalent of a secular pilgrim searching for and paying homage to the many varied

attractions, which represents the differentiations of society (Mac Cannell 1973, 1989). There is a need to professionalize tourism marketing in the state (Sharma 2002). It is important to understand the tourists and that how are they attracted by the real and imaginary differences in any destination. The problem for the tourism industry resides in how to market such differences credibly and effectively in a competitive situation (Dann Graham, 2000). There is no dearth of both manmade and natural attractions in the State, these attractions if properly managed and marketed, can boost tourism (Tyagi 1989, Sharma 1984).

Objectives, Need and Scope

Himachal Pradesh is a beautiful small hill state of India. The population of Himachal is 68, 56,509 (Himachal Pradesh Population Census-2011). The State receives almost three times more tourist than its population, but the number of foreign tourists visiting this hill state is negligible as compared to the domestic tourists. Himachal Pradesh has tremendous tourism potential but the foreign tourists arrival

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is more or less confined to only three districts of the State, namely Kullu, Shimla and Kangra. Therefore the main objective of this paper is to find out the reasons for this less foreign tourist arrival and also to find out the factors responsible for this uneven spread of tourism.

The districts of Kullu, Shimla and Kangra have been purposely chosen because these three districts received the maximum number of foreign tourists in Himachal Pradesh in the year 2011.

Review of Literature

There is not much literature available on tourism promotion in Himachal. However various authors have described the importance of promotion and image of a destination in the minds of the prospective tourists. Motivations also play a decisive role in selecting a tourist destination.

Table 1:

District	Tourist Arrival (2011) in top two tourist districts of Himachal Pradesh		Total Arrival in 2011
	Indians	Foreigners	
Kullu	2659527	138488	2798015
Shimla	2818270	134167	2952437
Kangra	1813686	98962	1912648
Total	14604888	484518	15089406

Source: Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, Himachal Pradesh

Tourists indulge in travel and tourism activities to satiate their desire for exploring new destinations and culture. Different individuals have varied needs. Motivational factors play a vital role by motivating/influencing individuals to undertake trips. To satisfy wanderlust, sun lust, adventure lust or his inquisitive nature to know about other cultures, customs or to cater to his commercial/business needs human beings undertake travel. They are always on the lookout for such destinations, which will satisfy these needs to some extent. This is when marketing plays main role. Through marketing people are made aware about the existence of a particular product, which is capable of satisfying their particular needs. People have been indulging in travel and tourism even in the ancient time. The motivations for travel arise from the needs of the traveler. Maslow's (1954) hierarchy model of human needs and recreational and tourist motivation still remains the basic model for understanding different levels of needs influencing an individual's behavior or motivating him to indulge in certain acts. It is important to differentiate destinations in the language of tourism (Dann, Graham, 2000). It is only when a logistic paradigm is adopted that

it can be more clearly seen that the problem for the tourism industry resides in how to market such differences credibly and effectively in a competitive situation. Peculiarity of tourism industry is that brand loyalty is not intense. People would not like to visit same destination time and again. To encourage tourists for repeat visit to the same destination, marketers must highlight promotional difference. Mostly tourists are avid pursuers and collectors of increasingly novel objects and gazes that activity transcends the humdrum provision of placelessness (Relph, 1983), standardized landscapes and themed attractions. It is very important for marketers to promote differences or to highlight U.S.P. of a tourist product. Cohen (1983) responds to the problem of promoting difference by examining some of the advertisements of the hill tribes of Thailand. Gartner (1986) has found that the image of a region, demonstrated some perceptual change even over a short term period. Tourists undertake leisure and travel related activities to break their monotonous routine of life. There are the contrasts between everyday life and the holiday. There is a dream and the appeal to the transformation of self on awakening (Bruner 1991). Images of holiday destinations also seem to change over time and as a result of experience. Image matters a lot in marketing (Davidoff, 1994). It will be appropriate to say that the entire marketing revolves around image a particular product has in the minds of consumers – both actual and potential.

Himachal Pradesh has been endowed with abundant natural beauty. The state has a lot of tourism potential. Tyagi (1989) has conducted her study entitled, "Development and Potential of Tourism in Himachal Pradesh". She has tried to identify tourism potential of the state. Using Peter's Inventory Model, she has described various tourist attractions such as cultural traditions, scenic beauty, entertainment and other attraction. She concluded that these attractions if properly managed and marketed, can boost tourism. Mahajan (1992) has surveyed "Tourism in Kangra Valley: Development, Potential and Problems". He is of the view that Kangra Valley has vast potentialities for a successful implementation of an ambitious programme for promoting tourism. Valley has the potential to become a vibrant holiday destination. Kumar (1992) has conducted a study on "Tourism in Himachal Pradesh – A case study of Kullu and Manali." The main objective of his study is to identify the purpose of visit to the places surveyed, to study the existing facilities available for the tourists, to analyze the tourism potential in these tourist places. McKay and Fesinmaier (1997) have sought to investigate aspects of the promoted and perceived image of destinations. They concluded that personal factors (such as demographics, culture and familiarity) and also attributes of the object being perceived (such as physical features) have been found pertinent to an understanding of image assessment.

In today's era of technology, along with conventional marketing methods, web marketing has also come into existence, which means using computer as an effective mode of marketing tourism product. The Web has affected the way business reaches customers. It has cut out supply chain intermediaries. Web has come out as a strategic marketing tool. Web has distinct advantages over other media (Berthon et al, 1996). It has been proposed that the marketing paradigm itself will evolve towards interactive web marketing due to its efficient and cost-effective integration of advertising, marketing and distribution. (Rayport and Sviokle, 1994, 1995, Hoffman and Novak, 1996b; Deighton, 1997; Wigand, 1997; Brannback, 1997; Peterson et al, 1997). The Web is the cheapest most convenient and efficient way to address potential international customers and can be an effective communication tool for tourism business (Arlt, 2002).

In tourism industry positive image of a destination can be created in the minds of the tourists with the help of various promotional techniques. Himachal Pradesh presents itself as one such destination which is very varied, in term of its customs, climate and natural and man-made attractions that it can be aptly said that the state has something for everybody.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the research is to find out the opinions of the foreign tourists visiting Himachal Pradesh on the marketing efforts of the State. This would be helpful for framing suitable marketing strategies. Following objectives were set for the study:

1. To conduct an opinion survey of foreign tourists regarding marketing of tourism products of Himachal Pradesh.
2. To study the existing marketing strategies of tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

Research Question

Based on the above objectives the following research question led the study

“In view of the existing tourism trends and existing industry structure prevalent in the state, how is tourism marketed by Himachal?”

Null Hypothesis H_0

In the light of overall objectives of the study and after review of existing researches on the subject, the following hypothesis has been developed for the purposes of testing.

The opinion of foreign respondents regarding marketing of state are equally distributed.

Methodology

The current paper covers the majority of the tourist destinations visited by the international tourists. This study covers the three districts of Himachal Pradesh namely Shimla, Kullu and Kangra, reason being that these districts attract maximum number of tourists in Himachal Pradesh. At least two destinations in each district have been chosen. 80 foreign tourists had been selected with respect to tourist arrival in the respective districts. Ultimate sample was selected on convenient cum random basis. The response categories were presented as Strongly Agree, Agree, No comments, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Chi-Square was attempted on the responses of the international tourists. It was conducted on the responses with respect to each statement to see the variance from the mean response and to ascertain whether the most frequent response also has a tendency of being taken as the general trend regarding the marketing statement.

Table 2: Profile of Foreign Respondents according to their Origin

Sr. No.	Country	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Australia	07	08.75%
2	Austria	02	02.50%
3	Canada	03	03.75%
4	France	02	02.50%
5	Germany	03	03.75%
6	Hong Kong	02	02.50%
7	Israel	07	08.75%
8	Italy	06	07.50%
9	Japan	07	08.75%
10	New Zealand	01	01.25%
11	Norway	02	02.50%
12	Singapore	03	03.75%
13	Spain	07	08.75%
14	Sweden	04	05.00%
15	Switzerland	02	02.50%
16	U.K.	13	16.25%
17	Ukraine	01	01.25%
18	U.S.A.	08	10.00%
	Total	80	100

Source: Primary Data

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis and Interpretation

A set of questionnaire containing eleven statements was administered to know the responses of the foreign tourists.

Table 3: Opinion Survey of Foreign Tourists
on Marketing

Sr. No	Statement	Responses					Expected N	Tabulated Value at degrees of freedom (df)		Chi Square Value
		SA	A	NC	D	SD		df	Tabulated Value	
1	St.1	19	33	20	5	3	16.0	4	18.5	37.8
2	St.2	1	6	41	24	8	16.0	4	18.5	67.4
3	St.3	0	16	52	11	1	20.0	3	16.3	74.1
4	St.4	0	0	23	27	30	26.7	2	-.*	.93
5	St.5	0	13	21	35	11	20.0	3	16.3	17.8
6	St.6	3	50	25	2	0	20.0	3	16.3	76.9
7	St.7	13	38	29	0	0	26.7	2	13.8	12.0
8	St.8	23	38	19	0	0	26.7	2	7.4	7.5
9	St.9	25	43	11	0	0	26.7	2	13.8	19.2
10	St.10	22	49	9	0	0	26.7	2	13.8	31.2
11	St.11	26	36	18	0	0	26.7	2	5.9	6.1

The variable which is dealt with is marketing and the tourists' opinions regarding the marketing of various components of tourism have been taken into account. Majority of them are of the opinion that the government should develop unexplored places for tourism since the state has a lot of tourism potential. This would in turn help in spreading the tourism evenly in the state. The majority seem to agree with the statement that the visited destination in Himachal has the potential to become a year round popular destination amongst the tourists.

St.1 : There is lack of adequate tourist information facilities in Himachal Pradesh

St.2 : Official website of Himachal Tourism is quite informative

St.3 : Government is playing a key role in marketing HP as an interesting blend of adventure, culture, pilgrimage, fairs and festivals

St.4 : Tourists' awareness about the various art and handicrafts of Himachal is good

St.5 : Himachal is regularly advertised as a tourist destination

St.6 : Tourism in the State can be promoted by opening more Tourist Information Centers

St.7 : Starting of cultural shows and sound and light shows in the State can give tourism a facelift

St.8 : Government needs to develop some more hitherto unexplored places in Himachal

Pradesh to spread tourism evenly and to stop congestion

St.9 : Celebrating Himachali ethnic cuisine festival can appeal to tourists' palate

St.10 : Himachal should try to develop activities oriented tourism

St.11 : The visited destination has the potential to become a year round destination

-.*: No significant value

Chi-Square attempted on all the foreign tourists on statement 1, revealed that the calculated value 37.8 is higher than the tabulated value which is 18.5 at .001 level of significance showing that the responses depict significant evidence of variance. From the opinion of the respondents it is evident that the foreign tourists coming to Himachal think that there is a lack of tourist information facilities in the state (19 agree and 33 strongly agree). As many as 33 tourists have agreed and 19 have strongly agreed that there is lack of adequate information facilities for foreign tourists. Chi-Square attempted on the second statement on foreign tourists revealed that the calculated value is 67.4 which is higher than the tabulated value 18.5. Thus null hypothesis of no variance is rejected. As many as 24 tourists have disagreed that website is very informative and 8 have strongly disagreed with this statement. Chi Square attempted on foreign tourists on the third statement revealed that the calculated value 74.1 is much more than the tabulated value which is 16.3 at .001 level of significance at 3 degrees of freedom suggesting that the responses show significant evidence of variance, thus null hypothesis of no variance is rejected.

Chi Square test did not test significant for the fourth statement. Raw data revealed that tourists were not aware about the native art and handicrafts. On the fifth statement Chi Square was attempted on foreign tourists and it revealed that the calculated value 17.8 is higher than the tabulated value which is 16.3 at .001 level of significance at 3 degrees

of freedom, showing that the responses depict significant evidence of variance. Thus null hypothesis is rejected. Sixth statement revealed that the calculated Chi Square value 76.9 is more than the tabulated value which is 16.3 at .001 level of significance at 3 degrees of freedom suggesting that the responses show significant evidence of variance, thus null hypothesis of no variance is rejected. Responses of the maximum tourists fall under agree zone implying that foreign tourists are in favour of opening tourist information centers. Chi-Square attempted on foreign tourists on the seventh statement revealed that the calculated value 12.0 is less than the tabulated value which is 13.8 suggesting that the responses do not show evidence of variance, thus null hypothesis of no variance is accepted. Raw data has revealed that as many as 13 tourists have strongly agreed and 38 have agreed to the statement that starting of sound and light shows can uplift tourism.

Chi-Square attempted on foreign tourists on eighth statement revealed that the calculated value 7.5 is marginally higher than the tabulated value which is 7.4 showing that the responses depict some evidence of variance. As many as 23 tourists have strongly agreed and 38 agreed that tourism should be evenly developed to stop congestion. Ninth statement revealed that the calculated value 19.2 is higher than the tabulated value which is 13.8 at .001 level of significance showing that the responses depict significant evidence of variance. Majority of the tourists responded favourably to the statement. Tenth statement revealed that the calculated value 31.2 is higher than the tabulated value which is 13.8 at .001 level of significance showing that the responses depict significant evidence of variance. Raw data has revealed that foreign tourists were unanimous in their opinion that activities oriented tourism should be developed in Himachal.

Chi Square attempted on foreign tourists on eleventh statement has revealed that the calculated value 6.1 is higher than the tabulated value, which is 5.9. Raw data has revealed that the maximum responses are in the agree and strongly agree zone. Though most of the respondents have visited Himachal during peak season, but after visiting the state they are of the firm opinion that the state has the potential to become a year-round favorite destination for the tourists.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Tourism has emerged out as one of the most important industries of the world. India too, has realized the importance of tourism although we still have to tap the potential to the maximum. Himachal Pradesh is blessed with natural beauty, peaceful environment, thick forests, wild life, sacred shrines, and historical monuments. Himachal Pradesh is a land of faith, religion and Mysticism. There are certain areas

of Himachal, which have customs and events, which are unique and peculiar to that particular region. These events if promoted properly have the potential to attract large number of national and international tourists. All these attractions make Himachal a state with varied products and attractions. In spite of having endowed with such gems of products, Himachal is not doing very well in terms of foreign tourist arrivals. The state receives a dismal number of foreign tourists. One of the main reasons for this poor performance is lack of effective marketing strategy. People undertake travel and tourism activity to have a change from the day-to-day monotonous routine so that they can rejuvenate themselves. The tourist has to select a destination, which can be any place in the world. Here comes the role of marketing of tourism. Himachal can be made more enjoyable for tourists by developing activity-based tourism. The state has great potential for adventure sports. Adventure tourism is fast emerging as a popular sport among youngsters and foreign tourists. Efforts are needed to step up measures to promote adventure tourism more aggressively, so as to tap its potential to the maximum. At present, tourism industry of Himachal suffers from seasonality factor. What is required is a proper planning to diversify tourism products in other seasons as well. There is a dire need to spread tourism to the lesser-known areas of the state. Planners should try to focus attention and research on marketing and promoting the new emerging concepts in tourism like time-share concept, concept of village tourism, agri-tourism etc.

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