



STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Mr. Kiron Lonchung

Assistant Professor, Department of Geography,
Dera Natung Govt. College, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India,

ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world today. It creates employment especially for guides, restaurants, hoteliers, local shopkeepers, merchants etc. and brings in foreign currency to economically marginal areas. Arunachal Pradesh, by virtue of its scenic beauty of rivers, mountains, valleys, rich flora and fauna, has the potential to be developed into a hub for tourists, both domestic and international. The present state of the tourism industry can be improvised to accommodate more numbers of quality tourists. However, to achieve the goal, key factors affecting the tourist inflow needs to be indentified and addressed. State policy for tourism should be analysed and the loopholes needs to be closed, along with proposal of new and modern tourist friendly policies. In addition to the government initiatives, many other factors play an important role in improving the overall quality of the region which includes infrastructural development, communication network, tour package for Arunachal Pradesh, coordination with other north eastern states, promotion of cross border tourism, community participation, promotion of tourist products, easy accessibility to inner line permit are some of the areas where emphasis needs to be given in order to maximize the extent of the tourism sector. However, care should be taken by promoting sustainable tourism, regulating and monitoring tourist inflow in order to prevent any undesirable effect on the society and economy of the state.

Keywords: Tourism, development, strategy, sustainable, Arunachal Pradesh

Introduction

Tourism is an increasingly essential element of economic, social and cultural development and it has become one of the largest global economic activities (Western, 1993). "Tourism is the only economic sector where developing countries consistently run a trade surplus," says Mastany. "It's especially significant in poorer countries that have fewer options: for the world's 49 so-called least developed countries, tourism is the second largest source of foreign exchange after Oil." The word 'Tourism' became popular in the early 19th century as a contemptuous synonym for traveler, but it is now used in the social sciences without colour, to describe any person whose movements fulfill two conditions. Firstly, absence from home is relatively short and secondly, money spent during absence is the money derived from home and is not earned in the places visited. Thus, tourists may be sightseers, any traveler who is well distinct from immigrants or emigrants, and intend to return home within, say, twelve months and who, as a distinct from migratory labourers, move in the capacity of consumers, not producers. From the very earliest period, travel has always been a fascination for man.

Therefore, tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world today. It creates employment especially for guides, restaurants, hoteliers, local shopkeepers, merchants etc. and brings in foreign currency to economically marginal areas. It plays an important role in the social culture and economic development of the nations, and has the potential to preserve the heritages. Tourism is not only a major social phenomenon of the modern society with enormous economic consequences but also the world's largest export industry, which accounts for about 8 per cent of the world's export, more than 30 per cent of the international trade in services, 10.7 per cent of the global work force and about 12 per cent of world GDP (Satyanarayna and Ramu, 2006).

During the early days, there are numerous accounts of foreign travelers who visited India, notably among them were Alexander the Great, Vasco-da-Gama, Columbus and Marco Polo. Reasons for their travel had been different; they may be for conquering, pleasure, knowledge or trade. It indicates that India, like many other tourist destination countries of the world, has been famous among the tourist community (Ganesh and Thomas, 2007).

The great Himalayan range and countless rivers crisscross the state of Arunachal Pradesh and the Patkai range covers the easternmost districts of the state, Tirap, Longding and Changlang, thus dividing the state into five major river valleys namely, the Kameng, the Subansiri, the Siang, the Lohit and the Tirap. Arunachal Pradesh is the largest in area among North- Eastern states of India and is the second largest forest covered state next to Madhya Pradesh, in the country. The state is already in the tourist map of India because of its unique flora and fauna, diverse people, culture, beautiful rivers and river valleys, snowcapped mountains, archaeology and mythology of ancient culture, scenic beauty, religious places like Malinithan, Parashuram Kund, etc. The state has eight wildlife Sanctuaries, two national parks and one Biosphere Reserve. The various perennial rivers of the state provide immense scope for recreational facilities. There is ample scope of a variety of eco-tourism activities such as mountaineering, trekking, birds watching, etc.

Back Ground of the Study

Basically, tourism involves traveling for a fairly long distance with a specific purpose other than for changing one's permanent residence. People-young, old men, women, rich and poor have been touring various places at different times for various reasons, since the dawn of civilization. Global trotting for knowledge (travel for discovery of truth), pleasure trips, recreational roundups are part and parcel of human journey in life. Conventionally based on the purpose for touring by the tourists, tourism is divided into various types, namely Recreational Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Historical Tourism, Ethnic Tourism, Eco- Tourism, Adventure Tourism etc.

All types of tourism are observed more or less in the State while Cultural Tourism, Historical Tourism, Ethnic Tourism, Eco-Tourism and Adventure Tourism are very much prominent in the State. Therefore, with these distinct types of tourism what become the need of the hour is 'sustainable tourism' Tourism becomes sustainable if it becomes a part of a balanced economy, taking care of the long term needs of environment, people and their economic activities in a sensible manner. Experts on economies of tourism feel that tourism flourishes best when it fits into the context of general economic policies and programmes designed to lead to the optimum growth of the economy of a country as a whole. The state has the potentialities of all types of tourism. The virtues of the State can be summarized with the following factors:

- A unique tropical paradise of more than 25 major tribes and 110 sub-tribes.
- A salubrious climate throughout the year.
- Polite and hospitable people.
- Heritage sites that are maintained religiously.
- A diverse eco-system with scenic beauty and wide range of flora and fauna.
- Satellite and other electronic communication including air and surface communication improving progressively.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the factors responsible for Tourism Growth.
2. To find out a proper State Policy for Tourism to be implemented.
3. To investigate strategies to be developed for various tourism industries in order to attract both domestic and foreign tourists that would help to increase revenue generation.

Methodology

This research paper is based on explanatory study in scrutinizing the potentiality from the State which will maintain a vivid prospect of economic development for tourism industry. The present study is based on analysis of primary data obtained by site visitation of various tourist circuits and tourist destinations by the authors, along with secondary data collected from various published sources like books, journals, magazines, Government and NGO reports, publications, etc.

Results and Discussion

After the study, it was found that the extent of both foreign and domestic tourists visiting the state is determined by many factors. Some of these factors can be improvised upon whereas improvement of certain other factors is not very feasible. These factors were taken into consideration while developing the strategies for designing an effective state policy and development of the tourism industry in the state.

Factors responsible for Tourism Growth

The basic causes of steady growth of tourism are influenced by the economic, social and technological condition of the state. Raising per capita income, leading to higher purchasing power and an increase in discretionary incomes have made tourism accessible to a large majority of people. In developed countries, a large majority of people can afford holidays of longer or shorter duration, compared to the developing and underdeveloped countries.

In the case of more affluent members of the society, establishment of recreation homes, like counter cottages, tent and caravans, home stay etc. have become a fashion and status symbol. Many diverse types of holiday recreations are becoming popular such as rafting, riding, safari, skiing, mountaineering, boating and sports. The spectacular improvements in the means of transport, communication and infrastructural facilities are the most important factors responsible for growth in tourism.

The social cause for the rapid growth tourism is linked with new attitudes towards travel leisure. The present day tourists come from a wider social background and their tastes and ambitions are much more varied. Their leisure time is limited and they design their trips accordingly. Sports that are basically confined to rich society people usually do not attract all the sections of tourists. Other events like riding, boating, rafting, trekking, shooting, food festivals, bird watching, sightseeing etc. provides for a wider range of tourists.

The impact of the modern technology, especially in aviation field has brought about a completely new meaning to tourism. Travel to long distant destinations has now become a reality. The technological developments in transport have made it possible for millions of people to travel to far away places.

The marketing methods like the package tour and holiday trips complete with all arrangements like transport, accommodation, sightseeing and selling these on a large scale to intending public have brought down the average cost per tour significantly, which is usually much below the cost of the trip arranged individually. Opening of new travel destinations in developing countries, creation of new facilities to receive bigger inflow of tourists and increasing tourism promoting efforts by tourist service enterprises have further pushed up the tourist inflows. In the hopes of reaping the benefits that could result from

actively soliciting travelers, many Governments have been engaged in large and colourful advertising campaign in magazines, newspapers and in Televisions.

Question arises: Do the expenditures of tourists benefit the residents of the tourist destinations? Is tourism encouraging prostitution, crime and gambling? Does tourism rejuvenate the traditional arts and crafts of host cultures? Do governments direct their development priorities to satisfy the needs of tourists rather than residents? Are residents financing expensive tourist facilities through their taxes? Is tourism contributing to the destruction of the very resources which initially attracted the tourists? Are there saturation levels beyond which further growth in tourist arrivals creates more problems than benefits? What is being done to calculate these levels and to insure that they are not exceeded? An objective evaluation of the impacts of tourism is required if government agencies, planners, developers and businessmen are to appreciate the full implications of their actions. Therefore, Tourism needs proper policy and proper strategy for its development.

State Policy for Tourism: A policy of tourism for the state of Arunachal Pradesh as well as for its sister states has to be evolved on the line of National Policy of Tourism which incorporate broad guidelines to attract both domestic and foreign visitors. The general principles of four 'S's announced by the Ministry of Tourism as Soochna (Information), Swagat (Welcome), Suvidha (Facilities) and Suraksha (Security) should form the core of the strategy for Northeast tourism.

While planning for tourism, it is essential to understand the future trends and issues that will shape the future. The main influences have been summed up in the categories like Socio-Demographic characteristics, consumer behaviour and tastes, technological status, human resource development, concern for sustainable development etc.

It should also be kept in mind that tourism is not an end in itself, rather only a means to an end, which is human welfare. Therefore there should be greater concern about the ill effects of unsustainable tourism practices. Tourism is a serious business which needs professional planning and management. If we want to revolutionize tourism, our strategy for product development, marketing and infrastructure development must take into account. Tourism does not require much public investments directly, it can be promoted through the private sector and its net import content is also very minimal for it.

Strategy for Development of Tourism

The action plan for tourism development should start with a policy, which puts tourism on higher priority. The policy must be (a) futuristic and imaginative; (b) considering the multi-disciplinary nature of tourism, the policy must not be just a sectoral policy of the tourism department but a policy of the government as a whole. For getting maximum effectiveness, tourism development in Arunachal Pradesh must be an integrated one where it should act in coordination with the other north eastern states. The recent announcement by the Indian Airlines about a connectivity network for the NE is a very welcome development. The governments of the states and the private sector should now quickly capitalize on this and draw up marketing strategies so that the airlines operations become economically viable. The tourism policy must be translated into concrete action plans within a definite time frame. As the resources are scarce, our pragmatic approach should be three pronged: a) Selective planning; b) Coordination with other departments; and c) Partnership with the private sectors.

The tourists can be broadly classified into three types-international, domestic i.e. national tourists from outside the state and purely local and regional tourists. The available tourism products should be identified and classified according to their importance for each of these categories. Planning should also start from the lowest level. Every district should draw up a benchmark survey of tourism potential of the area. Thereafter, those attractions, which satisfy primarily local requirements, should be included in the district development plans. The regional attractions should be taken care of by the State plan schemes and schemes of national and international importance should be taken up with the help of national and international agencies. Thus the available resources will be able to cover a wider area.

Modern tourism marketing is characterized more by IT driven micro marketing than macro descriptions. Tourists ask for specific information on their specific areas of interest. Tourism managers must be trained and equipped to handle this new competition. Tourists look for a friendly and efficient service without hassles, clean sheets and toilets in place of accommodation, good wayside amenities, clear road signage, proper information and guidance- things that are eminently doable without very huge resources. The Malinithan temple and other such historical places could be developed as a centre of attraction of national and international visitors.

The above mentioned objectives could be attained by adhering to the following actions, which will create a positive impact on the development of tourism in the state.

Infrastructural Support: To attract tourists, there must be dissemination of information, infrastructural facilities, adequate transportation facilities, affordable and reliable communication, clean and hygienic food and accommodation. Majority of the places of tourist attractions are not by side of the national highways and approach roads are in awful condition. This is a strong discouraging factor which works against a good inflow of the visitors in the region. There is a palpable lack of coordination among several agencies like department of tourism and department of archaeology in handling demands of the tourists in place of both historic and religious importance. There is almost little coordination among different public bodies and private sectors such as tea industry, oil and coal on one hand, and directorate of tourism on the other, in the efforts towards initiating eco and tea tourism in the region. As a result, stagnation has been striking marks of the status of tourism in eight sister states of North-eastern part of India. The above stated departments must work in coordination with the tourism department in order to improve and provide congenial atmosphere to the tourists.

Communication Network: Efforts should be made to coordinate with agencies in road construction to improve the condition of the approached roads to tourist spots on priority basis. Each spot should have at least minimum speed of communication network for facilitating the visitors to get connected with rest of the world.

Development of Tourism Products: Marketing Northeast tourism across the globe requires comprehensive strategic planning and development of a variety of tourism products. The annual report of the Ministry of Tourism: 1999-2000 states that tourists invariably seek “a pleasant and delectable experience on their trips”. Hence, the most desired tourism product in this regard should consist of an environment of peace and stability, an assurance of safety and security, an affable host society, a government that provides a requisite service with a smile, absence of extortion and hostility, an accessible tourist attraction and an affordable tour package.

Effort for organizing Cross Border Tourism: Indian economy welcomes to widening the area of operation from all fronts. But Northeastern region especially Arunachal Pradesh seems to be an exception to this. The region has international borders with Myanmar, China, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh paving a way to become a ‘Gateway to Southeast Asia’. Unfortunately, there is hardly any specialized tour organizer for promoting tourism with neighboring South East Asian nations.

Trained and skilled Guides: The state virtually does not have much trained and skilled guides placed in important places of tourist attraction. Though department of tourism initiated a programme to train a few professional as tourist guides, the effort did not yield a remarkable result for the purpose.

Publicity Drive: Information about tourism in Arunachal Pradesh as well as in Northeast should be made available to the foreign embassies in New Delhi and other diplomatic offices located in major Indian cities. The tourism websites should be updated in regular manner giving all details of information on tourism related services.

Tourism Package for Arunachal Pradesh: Tourism in Arunachal Pradesh cannot be viewed in isolation. The state is the gateway of ASEAN in the North-East Region which is a reservoir of natural beauty with great variety. Many tourists visiting Arunachal Pradesh to see a number of places like Tawang, Bomdila, Tezu, and Miao. There should be an integrated approach to promote tourism in the region with an attractive package of nature, eco, tea, and adventure tourism media.

Community participation: It plays an important role both in promotion of tourism and in sharing its benefits, is of great importance. Since the adoption of “Our Common Future” as an agenda of common action by the world community, and the Rio Declaration, local Agenda 21 have been adopted by numerous communities around the globe for positive action for sustainable development. We should encourage the local communities to take part in tourism by forming such Local agenda 21 and by involving the people locally through advisory or implementation committees.

Sustainable tourism: Tourism is not worthwhile if it destroys the very roots on which it grows. It must not affect the cultural and natural heritage that the present generation has inherited and is obligated to leave behind for the next generation. Also needed is a combined strategy of the government, industry and the people to implement what is commonly called “the Global Code of Ethics” in tourism. Sustainable tourism depends on an awareness and understanding, both of the tourists and the host community. The training of all categories of tourism managers at the cutting edge level who interact with the tourist should be an integral part of long-term strategy. Wherever mass movement of tourist takes place, an orientation center to give a first hand knowledge about the place should be established. The training programme should include the tour operators, the travel agents, guides, taxi divers, hotel boys etc.

Entry into the State: To enter Arunachal Pradesh from any part of the country an inner line permit is required to produce at check gate. Inner line permit is issued by the Secretary (Political), Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, respective Deputy Commissioner and Additional Deputy Commissioner of the districts. Interested person may also contact the Resident Commissioner, New Delhi, DRC Kolkata, DRC Guwahati, DRC Shillong, DRC Tezpur, DRC Mohanbari, DRC North Lakhimpur of Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

For entry permits, foreign national from abroad may contact Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi or Commissioner Home, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar or Commissioner Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, or Resident Commissioner, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, New Delhi (Directorate of Information, Public Relations & Printing, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Naharlagun, 2005). Nowadays, ILP can be obtained online by visiting the website of Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh.

Favourable institutional arrangement promotes economic progress whereas un-favourable arrangement may act as a factor impeding economic development. The development of market depends on the institutional reforms where government can play a positive role in developing institutional arrangements for private investment which may be private domestic investment or Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

Easy accessibility to Inner-Line Permit and provision of infrastructural facilities can boost up the tourism sector of the state profoundly. This single industry could be capable in transforming the State's economy significantly. It is also important to provide a congenial atmosphere by providing security to life and property of the tourists.

Conclusion

Various factors such as infrastructural facilities, road connectivity, communication network, development of tourism products, accessibility to Inner-Line Permit, quality human resources for catering the tourists, entrepreneurial skill and incentive, establishment of free trade zone and growth centre of tourism plays an important role in the development of tourism in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

To strengthen the economy of the State, the Government should provide sufficient support to the tourism sector. Various other departments, which influence the tourism sector,

should work in coordination with each other to create a congenial atmosphere for the tourists. At the same time, a number of changes in policy should be incorporated which includes easy accessibility to Inner Line System, administrative regulation and improving law and order problems so as to encourage for free flow of domestic and foreign tourists. All these changes will be directed towards flourishing of tourism sector of the state. Tourism industry can play a vital role in Arunachal economy. It is a labour-intensive industry and a large number of unemployed persons can be employed by this industry. The Central and State Governments should take necessary steps for development of the industry by allocating sufficient funds and support.

References

1. Bezbaruah, M. P. (2002): "Tourism and Economic Development of Assam", Napoleon Hazarika Memorial Lecture, organized by NEEA, Guwahati.
2. Ganesh, A.B. and Thomas,J.(2007), "Backwater Tourism: A Case Study in Alappuzha" Southern Economist, June 15, Vol.46, No.4, p.37.
3. Raghavan,V. P. (2006): "Economy of Ecotourism in Kerala a Perspective". Kurukshetra A Journal on Rural Development, Vol.55 No.2, December, P. 23.
4. Rusi, Z. F. (2006): "Importance of Tourism Related Issue to the Host Country".Southern Economist, Vol.45, No, 3, June 1, P. 29.
5. Satyanarayna, G. and Ramu, M.R. (2006): "Sustainable Tourism: a case study of Chittoor". Southern Economist, Vol.45, No.14, November 15.
6. Western, D (1993): Defining Ecotourism, in Lindberg, K. and Hawkins, D.E. (eds), Ecotourism: a Guide for planners and Managers, *NatrajPublishers, Dehradun, India*,Vol.1.