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TOURISM IN SIKKIM: A SWOT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

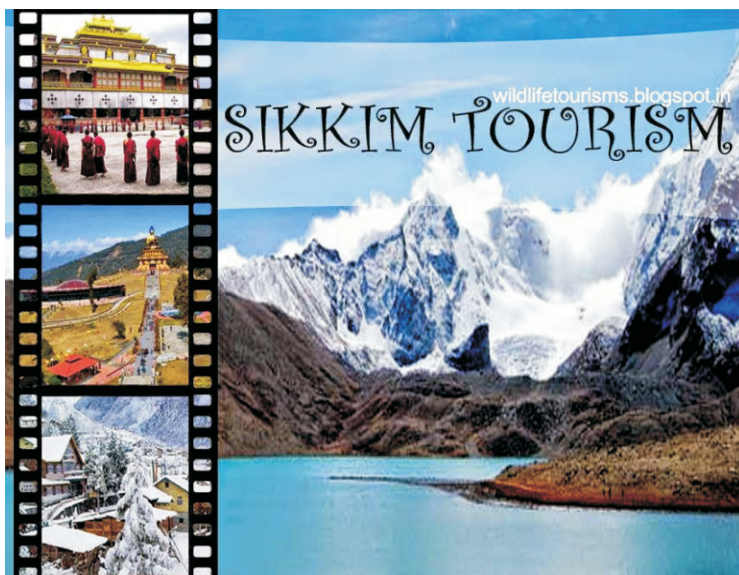
India, where the millions of people are still depends on agriculture sector for their primary means of livelihood. Even after completion of eleven five year plan India struggling with several problems like low production of agriculture, food security, etc. World second largest populated country called India lives under the maximum pressure of poverty and unemployment even after spending billions of rupees under various schemes for alleviating poverty and decreasing unemployment. So for the development of country and for the betterment of its citizens the Government of India started investing on tourism sector from past few decades. The historical, social and cultural profile of the country displays its potentiality in tourism sector. Indeed now a day tourism sector is a growing investment sector in organised as well as unorganised column of a country. As a result of development and investment in this sector it has become strong linkage with the economic growth and development in India. Along with its contribution towards

country's GDP and foreign exchange reserve of the country it also provides employment. Apart from economic development of country it will make social reforms and promoting mutual understanding. The outcome of massive investment in tourism sector shows some increase in foreign and domestic tourist inflow in India that is 1.68 million and 66.67million in 1991 to about 5.78 million and 740.2 million in 2010 respectively (Kumari 2012). Further tourism industry of India generated \$121 billion or 6.4% of the nation's GDP in 2011 (Calculation based on the World Travel and Tourism Council) and create 39.3 million jobs which is 7.9% of its total employment (Reddy, Basha and Kumar 2014). In pre independent period development of tourism was not recognised as an important sector because of colonization. Than after also that is first half post independents the new India didn't pay much attention to this sector. While the creation of the Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) give new hope for the development of tourism as an industry.

KEYWORDS: Tourism in Sikkim, agriculture sector ,low production of agriculture.

INTRODUCTION :

Sikkim the small state of India situated under the circle of North-east reason. The North-eastern part or the eight sister states covers 7.05% of total geographical land of country with the total area of 2.62 lakh in square kilometre (Rizal and Asokan 2013). According to Census 2011 the total population of Sikkim is 607688 out of which 286027 are



female and 321661 are male. Further this census shows 12% growth rate in population in 2001-2011. Regarding literacy rate the states able to reached 82% in total out of which 87% are male and 76% are female who can read and write (Sikkim Human Development Report 2014). In early days of statehood development process concentrate only on few sectors called education, roadways, and infrastructure. At the same time state could not entertain outsiders as tourist and not able to develop tourism sector as an important sector for economic development of a state. But things has been changed now a days, the educated unemployment, increasing tourism activities in other states and various development policies generated by central government for the betterment of tourism drag the small state towards development of tourism sector. As a result of that curious interest and investment, Sikkim able to attract 7.2 lakh tourists in 2010 and national awards on Comprehensive development of Tourism Award 2011 (Sikkim Human Development Report 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The whole study is based of secondary date. The data has been collected from different publication on the topic related to tourism in India. To verify the strength, weakness and threats in tourism sector in Sikkim researchers used participation and observation method too. Further findings and conclusion of this study is totally based on mentioned methods.

TOURISM IN SIKKIM

The small Buddhist country called 'Sikkim' where the mix ethnic groups called Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepali community stand with a great diversity of cultural traditions and practices became of part of India as the 22nd state of the Indian Union on 16 May 1975 (Joshi and Dhyani (2009). The physical structure of the state presents 'rich biodiversity, panoramic view of mountain and valleys, lakes, natural hot spring, waterfalls, Buddhist monasteries (School of Lamaism cum Buddhist Temples) which preserve the back date history of Sikkim, trekking trails in the deep green forest and cannon of the snow mountains, religious and cultural festivals of Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepali community' to the state as a important elements for the development of tourism in the state. On the other hand investment in tourism sector was not confirmed by state government in first one decade of its statehood. Investments on public goods like roads, schools, electricity, hospitals were in the hot list in those days. Later on in 1990s only the government of Sikkim started investment in tourism sector. As a result for the first time in Sikkim's History tourism sector developed unexpectedly with the growth of infrastructure. Thus from that period Sikkim presents a varied experience of urban mass tourism, village tourism, religious tourism and cultural tourism and adventure tourism as well. In the present time tourism sector is considered to be a needful and potential growth sector in economy. It will definitely help to reduce unemployment, poverty, burden of deficit in foreign currency in homeland. Especially in hilly states like Sikkim where the altitudinal variation and lack of plain land affect the industrial development and agricultural output, the tourism sector help to grow state's economy in sustainable form. While the state government put all possibilities through practice alternative forms of tourism such as eco-tourism, village tourism and agro-tourism to maintain balance between the need for socio-economic development of local people and the need for conservation of rich bio-diversity.

Generally in Sikkim the national or domestic (Indian tourist) tourist share a major part in tourist inflow activities and they are basically form south, plains of northeast reason and middle India. On the other hand foreign tourists are concern the majority of tourist are belongs to western European countries, U.S.A and Japan. While some of the basic reasons like summer holidays of the schools in plains, close honeymoon destination for the northeast and middle states of the country are the push factors which are responsible for high inflow of domestic tourist from that reason. While the good and green environment, peace attitude, cline towns and other artificial tourist points are the pull factors for the same. The physical structure of the state gives solid combination of Snow Mountains, green forest and human habitation with their organic

cultivations attract foreign tourist from western European Countries, U.S.A and Japan for tracking on Himalayas glaciers and experience the beautiful engineering of nature. The issues of Gorkhaland in Darjeeling district of West Bangle push both domestic and foreign tourist towards Sikkim and this is also an important factor for high inflow of domestic tourist in Sikkim. While within the state opening of tourist police, frequently visit of police in local taxi stand and main line taxi service stand prove that State Government put every possible alternative to present friendly environment to the increasing number of tourist and maintain peace, law and order in the state.

The increasing pattern of tourist inflow in state after 1990s, force the state government to develop the sector in a fusion style to maintain ecological balance in the system and sustainable development. The installation of eco-tourism, village tourism and agro-tourism give new shape to the Sikkim tourism. The increase in number of visitors as a tourist in state increases the demand for goods and services which naturally increase the employment opportunities and income generation pattern. As mentioned earlier, Sikkim is a hilly state which discourages the industrial development due to absence of flat land, so tourism can be the solution next to primary sector for the problem of poverty and employment face by the state.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Tourism is a human resource based activity where education, social behaviour of the citizens, religious and cultural rituals of the communities matters a lot. Along with these, plan investment, infrastructure development, basic facilities, development in transportation and banking sector are also creates difference in movement of tourist. Any expansion or contraction on these fields leads to positive or negative growth in tourism industry deeply.

Strengths

- a) Sikkim is rich in biological diversity, multi-climatic zones and mountainous nature. The green environment.
- b) Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, is connected by National Highway 10 from Silliguri (West Bangle) and it is the only connectivity of the state with the rest of the states. While travelling in National Highway 10 through Silliguri every visitors experience the physical formation of hills because it shows the live and perfect combination of plain and hills (Silliguri, the last plain which connect Sikkim to the other states of India). The plan for alternative highway is on hot list in the central and state plan investment mechanism. However for the development of tourism Government of Sikkim introduced Helicopter service between Gangtok to Bagdogra Airport (West Bangle).
- c) Sikkim is rich in historical places and monasteries which are scattered throughout the state. These places and monasteries secure the rituals and social practise of different communities of the state.

In East District

Gangtok (Head Quarter of East District), Rumtek Monastery, Enchain Monastery, Cottage Industry, Tibetology, Chorten, Saramsa Garden, Hanuman Tok, Ganesh Tok, Tashi View Point, Changu Lake.

In West Sikkim

Geyzing Bazar (Head Quarter of West District) Pelling, Singshore Bridge, Khachopari Lake, Yuksom, Tashiding Monastery, Sangacholing Monastery, Dubdi Monastery, Barsey, Rabdentse Palace Ruins, Dzongri.

In North Sikkim

Mongan (Head Quarter of North District), Kabi Lungchok, Phodong Monastery, Lachung, Yumthang, Phensong Monastery, Chungthang, Singik, Lachen.

In South District

Namchi (Head Quarter of South District), Tendong Hills, Temi Tea Garden, Mainam Hills, Phur Tsa-Chu, Rabongla, Jorethang.

d) Along with these, Rhododendron Trek, Khangchenzonga Trek, Coronation Trek and Kasturi Orar Trek are some famous trek routes which pass through the green forest and White Mountains.

e) The major nature parks and sanctuaries are

- 1) Kanchengzanga National Park
- 2) Fabong Lho Wildlife Sanctuary
- 3) Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary
- 4) Kyongnosla Alpine Sanctuary
- 5) Mainam Wildlife Sanctuary

6) Barsay Rhododendron Sancturay

f) Since Sikkim was a kingdom in past decades and it has many historical monuments throughout the state which attract tourist from different parts of world.

g) Along with above mention features Sikkim is also rich in lakes and other religions monuments.

h) As far as adventure is concern, Rafting, trekking, rock climbing and paragliding etc is common in land of Sikkim. Government of Sikkim has taken necessary steps to motivate energetic educated unemployed youth to actively participate in tourist attraction activities.

i) In Sikkim village tourism and home stay are common which not only provide employment to educated and uneducated youth of village but it protect the tradition and culture of different social groups because tradition, culture and rituals lives in village.

Weaknesses

Sikkim is a hilly state where roads are damaged by heavy rain, land slide etc, which discourage the tourist flow. Thus, Internet facility, Bank-core Banking and ATM facility are some problems which influence the tourist.

Inner line permit is also important factor which influence the tourist inflow in state. To visit Tsangmo Lake, Nathula pass and north district every individual of the state and outsider has to take inner line permit from department of tourism Government of Sikkim. But in this process sometimes tourist are not able to get permit on their schedule days. So in this case tourist are usually redirect to other states.

OPPORTUNITIES

The state Government of Sikkim has recognized and funding to organize various tourism festivals in different towns of state. Many tourist lodge and tourist resorts are run by the state tourism department which provide high class service to visitors.

The development of village tourism and eco-tourism activities in state save its cultural heritage and tradition, so those travellers are of interest to experience the rural life in Mother Nature can enjoy it. Through encouraging educated youth to participate in tourism development activites state government on only provide employment to them but it also explores the potentiality of attraction of tourist.

Threats

a) Development of tourism sector is important for state and countries GDP, but sometimes it led to the destruction of social harmony, pace, cultural heritage etc. So it should be guarded.

b) In the ground level mass inflow of tourist effect the local environment due to increased pressure on the eco-system. Increasing Road connectivity for the development of tourism sector leads to deforestation and

effect land structure. In other words increasing trend of tourist inflow in Sikkim obviously increase the state revenue and employment along with increase in solid waste, air and noise pollution which are the reasons for acid rain, global warming.

c) With the protection of environment state government should make plan and execute it on time to increase tourist inflow otherwise burden on the fiscal policy may increase and tourist may diverted to other states.

d) State Government should encourage educated youth, government and non-government organisation for social responsibilities for the betterment of state and pull tourist from other states otherwise ability of attraction will decrease in near future.

CONCLUSION

While the findings of the study shows that, road connectivity, availability of electricity in remote rural areas, availability of basic needs for the travellers in remote rural areas, attractive character of nature with perfect innovation of mankind on it, supportive nature of the common citizen and police etc are the strength of the Sikkim which increase potentiality of the state in tourism sector. Further the peace environment of the state along with the back yard of rural Sikkim which is decorated by tradition, culture and rituals of three important habitation of human society called Lepcha, Nepali and Bhutia are the next important strength of the Sikkim tourism. However the urban scenario of the Sikkim reflects the modern behaviour of human society but the silent nature in deep cannon of rural habitation explore the original behaviour of human society While the low literacy, absence of railways, airways and ATM facilities (especially in rural areas) are the major weaknesses for the development of Tourism sector in Sikkim. However as compared to other states the availability of basic facilities such as road, telecom and electricity is well managed by the government even in rural areas as well. In this study researchers found that, the small states of northeast region provide maximum opportunities for the development of society and state economy. The creation of employment in organised and unorganised sector, increase in inflow of foreign currencies and increase in State Domestic Product are the main opportunities provided by tourism sector. The recent steps taken by the state government for the development of rural areas called village tourism not only give opportunities to the common men of village but also explore the unexplored beauty of rural life. At the time it develops the organic farming in village through home stay. In most of the states of India sometimes the maximum inflow of western tourists' origin from different cultures leads to the destruction of the traditional fabric of community. So along with this, spread of HIV and misbalance in eco-system are the common threats of Tourism.

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