
**TOURISM IN HIMACHAL PRADESH AND RAJASTHAN: AN ANALYSIS
OF THE TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS' (RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS)
ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS**

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the perceptions and attitude of tourists and residents about the tourism in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. The study was focused on the tourist expectations about the tourism facilities and the actual satisfaction attained by them after visiting the study areas in both the States. The expectations and satisfaction of residents or facilitators were also studied. The detailed questionnaire has been prepared for both the stakeholders and responses were collected. The focus was also to put the SWOT analysis of all the studied outcomes of both the states. The tourism policy area was also been touched while conducting the study. The recommendations were also put forward for the future developmental aspects of tourism industries in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Keywords: Stakeholders, Expectations, Satisfaction, Perception, Tourism, Policy, Development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism stakeholders' (residents and tourists) attitudes and perceptions, though very crucial for assessing the impact of tourism, are often ignored by the authorities. Most of the empirical tourism studies usually analyse only international tourism, thereby ignoring domestic tourism. However, the present study has studied both the residents and tourists. The residents included both the tourism dependent and tourism independent residents. On the other hand, the tourist respondents included both the domestic as well as foreign tourists.

Thus, the entire universe of tourism stakeholders was included in the research study. The present study aimed to clearly identify how tourists perceive existing tourism products in the Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, and to provide inputs into marketing the destination in the future. The tourism product is multi-faceted, comprising many different elements. As a result, the research study followed an approach, which investigated both the satisfaction with tourism objects as well as dimensions of tourism experience.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To attempt a detailed analysis of tourism industry in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.
2. To assess the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impact of tourism in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.
3. To investigate into the level of satisfaction and expectations of the tourists.
4. To suggest policies and measures to promote tourism in both the states.

3. Research Methodology Adopted in the Present Study

3.1 Coverage

In Socio-economic surveys in India it is felt that more than the total sample size, it is the geographical spread over the country that is more important from the point of view of statistical efficiency. This applies perhaps even more so to tourism, whose distribution across the population is likely to show large degree of heterogeneity. Consequently, a notable feature of the study is that the tourist destinations selected for the study are spread in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, with the objective of enhancing the precision of the study.

The universe of the study were the States of Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. The study uses both secondary and primary data. The present study concentrated on tourism excluding religious and pilgrimage tourism. Similarly, the nature of tourism in metropolitan cities in India also has different characteristics as compared to other tourist places in India, therefore, the metro cities have also not been included in the survey. Considering the above-mentioned limitations, the present study selected the major tourist destinations in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan from the list of major places visited by domestic tourists travelled as per the Domestic Tourism Survey 2002-2003 conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

3.2 Data Collection

The research was conducted using a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The research design of the study was exploratory in nature and a quantitative approach has been employed to provide insight into the perceptions of the tourists. The research intended to be both a demand-side and supply-side survey.

The first phase of qualitative research involved individual face to face interviews, focus group discussions, immersion interviews and 'groups on the move'. The second phase involved survey where random sampling technique was used and the sample size consisted of 320 tourists, and 320 residents {160 tourism-dependent residents (i.e. hotel owners/ managers, tour operators, vendors, tourist guides, waiters, etc.), and 160 tourism-independent residents}. Thus 640 questionnaires were canvassed in total to different respondents across tourist destinations in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.

3.3 Sample Size

The tourist destinations for the survey were selected on the basis of the Domestic Tourism Survey 2002-2003 conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The NCAER survey had ranked all the major places visited by domestic tourists travelled for the purpose of leisure, holiday, religious and pilgrimage. However, for the purpose of the present study, only the places of leisure/holiday tourism were selected for the conduct of survey.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..1: Sample Size Residents

| Sr. No. | Destination | Total Resident Respondents (Tourism Dependent & Tourism Independent Residents) |
|----------------|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Shimla | 60 |
| 2 | KulluManali | 60 |
| 3 | Dalhousie | 20 |
| 4 | Dharamshala | 20 |
| | Himachal Total | 160 |
| 5 | Jaipur | 60 |
| 6 | Mount Abu | 60 |
| 7 | Udaipur | 20 |
| 8 | Jodhpur | 20 |
| | Rajasthan Total | 160 |
| | Total Survey Respondents | 320 |

Although in the North Indian States of Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, there are famous religious and pilgrimage destinations, but these were not included in the survey. On the basis of ranking in the list of NCAER, the top ranking leisure/holiday tourist destinations from these two states under study were selected viz. Shimla, Jaipur, KulluManali, and Mount Abu; from each destination 60 residents were interviewed randomly. Some lower ranked tourist destinations from the list were also selected viz. Udaipur, Jodhpur, Dalhousie, and Dharamshala; from each destination only 20 residents were interviewed randomly. Thus,160 residents from each State were selected for the survey, thereby in total 320 residents of important leisure/holiday tourist destinations were surveyed during the research study.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..2: Sample Size Tourists

| Sr. No. | Destination | Total Tourist Respondents |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Shimla | 60 |
| 2 | KulluManali | 60 |
| 3 | Dalhousie | 20 |
| 4 | Dharamshala | 20 |
| Himachal Total | | 160 |
| 5 | Jaipur | 60 |
| 6 | Mount Abu | 60 |
| 7 | Udaipur | 20 |
| 8 | Jodhpur | 20 |
| Rajasthan Total | | 160 |
| Total Survey Respondents | | 320 |

Similarly, on the basis of ranking in the list of NCAER, the top ranking leisure/holiday tourist destinations from these two states under study were selected viz. Shimla, Jaipur, KulluManali, and Mount Abu; from each destination 60 tourists were interviewed randomly. Some lower ranked tourist destinations from the list were also selected viz. Udaipur, Jodhpur, Dalhousie, and Dharamshala; from each destination only 20 tourists were interviewed randomly. Thus,160 tourists from each State were selected for the survey, thereby in total 320 tourists of important leisure/holiday tourist destinations were surveyed during the research study.

4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The major findings and conclusions of the study are briefly presented in the form of a SWOT analysis, which may be a precursor to assess the policy implications and suggest necessary recommendations.

4.1 Strengths

1. The tourism in the selected tourist destinations has increased significantly in the last five years. The opinion of the residents reveals that the overall carrying capacity of the tourist destinations has not been exceeded.
2. The hotel accommodation facilities were broadly reported as satisfactory. Similarly, the price and quality of food was also reported as good.
3. The benefits of tourism are greater than the costs for the local population.
4. The selected tourism destinations are blessed with immense natural beauty. These destinations have rich flora and fauna, which is diverse as well as rare. These destinations are ideal locations for eco-tourism, including trekking, natural walk etc.
5. The study conclusively indicated that the residents are friendly towards the visitors and their behaviour is attuned to the ancient Indian cultural belief where the guest is treated as the God i.e. '*Atithi Devo Bhava*'.
6. The study found that there was ample scope for more operators in the tourism market in the destinations.
7. The tourists' first impression on entering the tourist destination was reported as positive in the study. Similarly, the study revealed that the destination's overall image before the trip was considered to be positive by the majority of the tourists.
8. The primary survey data emphatically revealed that the predominant proportion of the tourists reported feeling of rejuvenation and satisfaction after spending quality leisure time in the destinations.
9. The survey study revealed that more than 90 percent of tourists are likely to recommend the tourist destination to the friends and relatives regarding their future travel plans.
10. The expectancy disconfirmation approach in the study summarily concluded that in the study a positive disconfirmation occurs as the performance exceeds the expectation level, and the tourist is satisfied.

4.2 Weaknesses

1. The tourism development process in most of the destinations was not participative and most of the respondents were never involved in the tourism process.
2. The present system of environmental clearance has been so convoluted and complex that they may impede tourism development.

3. The seasonal and unstable nature of income from tourism and its related social, economic and environmental impacts is a major issue for the tourism industry.
4. The study found the length of the stay of the tourists at the destination was quite low.
5. Condition of roads in some of the destinations is very bad, especially in the inner remote tourist spots.
6. The fragile ecosystem of the tourist destinations gets disturbed during the tourist season with the growing menace of pollution and traffic congestion.
7. The tourism in the destinations was not activity-oriented.
8. The study found that the tourism industry has not been able to attract talented people to opt it as a career.
9. It was observed during the study that the tourism service providers often discriminate between the foreign and domestic tourists both in terms of quality and prices.

4.3 Opportunities

1. The opportunities for night life in these tourist destinations may be increased and accordingly the operating hours may need to be adjusted.
2. These destinations have the major advantage of a wide base of English speaking population.
3. Tourism has encouraged local government to restore historical buildings.
4. The study shows a significant potential for sustainable community based tourism and pro-poor tourism development through home stay programme.
5. The study found that there is scope for establishment of new tourism service providers and commercial activities including hotels and restaurants, shops, etc.
6. There is also great potential of furthering collaboration among domestic tourist establishments and foreign travel agencies.
7. There is a scope to develop yoga and meditation tourism in Himachal Pradesh.
8. Tourism has provided an opportunity for the local craftsmen to make handicrafts articles.
9. There is great potential for organisation of international sports events promoting tourism.

4.4 Threats

1. The nuisance activities like prostitution, alcoholism and drugs have emerged as the major threats in tourist destinations but people generally do not want their areas to be defamed and often feign ignorance about the existence of these problems.
2. Increasingly these destinations are becoming concrete jungles and the natural beauty for which the tourists visit these destinations is becoming rather extinct.
3. The increasing intolerance in the country perpetrated by certain religious fanatics and fundamentalists has been giving the image of inhospitable culture for tourists in India all over the world, sometimes even being compared to the disgraced Taliban culture.
4. There are genuine fear of the tourists, especially foreign tourists, regarding their safety and security, not only from dreaded terrorists and *naxalites* but also from heinous crimes like sexual harassment, molestation, eve-teasing, rape and murder. In the recent times racial discrimination has also been reported from India which is becoming a serious dampener to tourism from the African countries.
5. Lack of proper hygiene and sanitary conditions in the tourist destinations are proving to be a bane for the tourism. Consequently, there is greater risk of contagious and other diseases.
6. Dharamshala and Manali in Himachal Pradesh have earned a bad name for rave and full moon parties which usually flout all laws in the air, the party is a cocktail of liquor, narcotics, sex and music.
7. In many tourist paradises, it is very common to see stray dogs, cattle and monkeys which pose danger to everyone, especially the tourists.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Emphasis on Generating Local Employment

The maximum social advantage from tourism growth may be derived through rapid rise in local employment rates. This provides the unemployed with greater job experience, puts upward pressure on local wage rates, and reduces the pressure on public infrastructure capacity associated with additional population. Thus, the clause requiring employment of minimum percentage of domicile local labour must be strictly enforced.

5.2 Skill Development

There is need to foster convergence of the tourism development policies with the National Skill Development Mission that was launched in 2008. India has the potential advantage of reaping

the benefits of 'demographic dividend'. Tourism Industry association may be involved in developing course curriculum and collaborate with training institutions.

5.3 Infrastructure Development

Lack of adequate physical infrastructure like transport system, roads, airports etc., adversely affect the competitiveness and productivity of tourism industry. Uninterrupted power supply is a necessary condition. Adoption of Private-Public-Partnership (PPP) model can facilitate faster and cost-effective development of infrastructure. The comprehensive and holistic infrastructure development will increase the carrying capacity of the destinations and make the tourism sustainable.

5.4 Efficient and Cost-Effective Public Transport System

Priority should be given to public transport in India and especially in tourist destinations. There is need for a comprehensive public transport policy in India and even destination-specific approach may also be explored to arrive at some innovative solutions to the problem of traffic congestion. Besides the main public transport system we also have to emphasise on the last mile connectivity in public transport.

5.5 Participative Tourism Development Process

The study revealed the need for continuous and comprehensive government interface and consultation with tourism industry and other key stakeholders. The political will at the central and state levels, enacting relevant legal and administrative measures and empowering local communities and all the stakeholders are sine qua non for the emergence and operationalization of the participative tourism development approach.

5.6 Pro-Poor Tourism and the Revival of Traditional Industries

To make the tourism pro-poor, the government must promote and incentivise traditional fine arts and handloom works which helps in the trickle down of economic benefits of tourism to the lowest strata of the local population and providing direct and indirect employment opportunities to the skilled unemployed youth.

5.7 Special Incentive Package for Tourism Industry

Special incentive package may be made available to the tourism industry for encouraging new tourism projects as well as expansion of existing tourism units. Taxes are important component

of tourism product pricing. To reduce the product prices, especially accommodation and airfares, reduction of tax rates specific to these segments can be considered.

5.8 Good Governance by Letting the Professionals Lead

Good governance is the most important factor facilitating tourism development. There is need to reduce the cost of doing business. The independent professionals should be allowed to lead tourism development in an autonomous manner with no hurdles from the political change and the bureaucracy.

5.9 Reform Archaic Land Laws

Conflicts over land are one of the biggest stumbling blocks to India's economic modernisation and have brought numerous proposed projects to a grinding halt. The complex bureaucracy surrounding land acquisition and the lack of clear land titles are often cited as major obstacles to economic growth.

5.10 Protect the Tourism Product

We must understand that our tourism survival depends upon the sustenance of the key tourism products – heritage and nature. The historical buildings have great importance and urgent steps need to be taken for their restoration and upkeep. Simultaneously, the government has to take serious measures to work towards sustainable tourism development, protecting its products from degradation, abuse and pollution.

5.11 Encouraging Film Shooting

Motion pictures have been found to be an important factor influencing consumers' decision making process in choosing a destination. Bollywood films play important role in building place imagery in the context of tourism.

5.12 Targeted Promotion of Tourist Destinations

The tourism product should be packaged to align with International Trends. The marketing of tourism products should be deliberate and targeted, keeping in view the international trends. Potential tourists are influenced by promotional tools in their travel decision.

5.13 Green initiative

Green initiative should be adopted for both private and public buildings, such as adoption of solar energy system, green architecture, rainwater harvesting, and plantation of more saplings. The environmental issues must be incorporated in the comprehensive tourism development plan to make the development process inclusive and sustainable in the long-run.

5.14 Effective Implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission

Under Swachh Bharat Mission, picking up brooms for merely photo-ops has been the trending idea all over India. But the campaign can only be sustained if the governments allocate sufficient financial resources for cleanliness and adequate manpower is engaged for cleanliness.

5.15 Facilities for Nightlife

A good nightlife is part of today's Gen Y tourists. The government should facilitate the development of facilities for nightlife i.e. entertainment in the night, which may include theatre, bars, pubs, discos, musical concerts, etc. There is need for relaxing and amending different laws regarding consumption of alcohol, closing hours of restaurants and dance bars, etc. keeping in view the international trends in this respect.

5.16 Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Use of Modern Surveillance Technology for Tourist Security

The provision of CCTV cameras and other modern surveillance gadgets in the tourist places at strategic locations need to be installed to instil the perception of confidence among the tourists regarding their safety and security. Police verification of tourism employees should be compulsorily enforced. India also needs to do a lot more in the area of prevention of sexual harassment of women.

5.17 Pragmatic Environmental Policies

The tourism authorities and the local administration including the department of forest and environment must take pragmatic approach and try to minimise the negative environmental impact. However, the old traditional approach followed in judicial interventions and over-activism of judiciary is antithetical to development, and against the latest concepts and principles of environmental economics that are being followed all over the world. The survival and sustenance needs of the local poor unemployed populace in ecologically fragile ecosystems are of utmost importance and must get precedence over all other issues and concerns.

5.18 Learning from Mishaps

The excited tourists, especially youth and students, should not get too much carried away by the beauty and adventure of the rivers and overindulgence in photography especially taking selfies. Public awareness in this regard should be generated through media and display of warning notices on the specified danger sites. The dam authorities have specified protocol and procedure to be followed for giving prior warning to the public downstream before releasing water, which needs to be religiously followed.

6. Conclusion

The present study, based on primary sample survey, provides useful insights into the critical factors that are considered important by the residents and the tourists. The present research has important implications for managers, entrepreneurs and policy makers, insofar as the perceptions and the opinions of the residents and tourists can make the difference between failure and success.

This present study has analysed the tourists' expectations and satisfaction towards tourism products and markets in the select tourist destinations. Since tourist satisfaction is directly related to the quality of tourism services provided by the tourism industry, they are the prime stakeholders. If the factors identified for growth and development of tourism industry are properly and adequately taken care of, then tourism industry may become the major and most important employment and income generating sector.

Our study tends to concur with other literature on the topic, which suggests that the government policies have been sub-optimal. Rather, the government policies need to be designed and implemented with care through participative tourism development process and in a manner that will ensure that their positive impact will considerably exceed the costs and limit any potential negative side-effect.

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