

Positioning Chhattisgarh State as a Tourist Destination

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ABSTRACT

Even though the true potential of the tourism sector not only as a revenue generator to the country but also as a major employment generator, has been recognized by different sections of the society, the necessary measures to remedy this situation fall short of expectation. The scenario can be remedied by initiating certain measures. Creating a better infrastructure, communicating right information, utilization of existing resources and creating a secure environment are expected from the government. Developing a sense of responsibility to behave nice with tourists and encourage them to revisit the rich cultural heritage is crucial. The importance of tourism though being realized by various states has still not created the will that can really make them realize the potential. Chhattisgarh state in the central part of India is one such state that can do a lot with its tourism potential but still it is lagging behind. The present study has been carried out to underscore what the state's potential in tourism sector and how to enable it to achieve it.

Key Words: Tourism Industry, Positioning, Chhattisgarh, Heritage, Emerging Economies

I INTRODUCTION

Travel is today developing as one of the world's largest industries according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. It has been estimated that travel & tourism generated us \$ 7.6 trillion (10 % of global GDP) and 227 million jobs (1 in 11 jobs) for the global economy in 2014. Recent years have seen travel & tourism growing at a faster rate than both the wider economy and other significant sectors such as automotive, financial services and health care. Last year was no exception. International tourist arrivals also surged, reaching nearly 1.14 billion and visitor spending more than matched that growth. Visitors from emerging economies now represent a 46 % share of these international arrivals (up from 38 % in 2000), proving the growth and the increased opportunities for travel from those in these new markets.

About 22.57 million tourists arrived in India in 2014, compared to 19.95 million in 2013. This ranks India as the 38th country in the world in terms of foreign tourist arrivals. Domestic tourist visits to all states and union Territories numbered 1,036.35 million in 2012, an increase of 16.5 % from 2011. In 2014, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh were the most popular states for tourists. Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai and Agra have been the four most visited cities of India by foreign tourists during the year 2011. The travel and tourism competitiveness index (TTCI) 2013 of The World Economic Forum has ranked India 65th out of 140 countries covered in its study to rank countries on travel and tourism competitiveness. In the 2011 study India's rank was 68, thus indicating an improvement by three places. India is ranked 11th in the Asia-Pacific region. Among India's neighbors, Shri Lanka comes closest with the 74th place while Nepal (112), Pakistan (122) and Bangladesh (123) have a long way to catch up with their giant neighbor.

Though these are encouraging signals about the Indian tourism sector, there is another side to this story. There is a huge gap between the untapped potential and the reality. If we make a comparison with our Asian neighbors, we will find significantly larger volume of international visitors in these small countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia. .. Further even neighboring China has a share of 4.3% of world tourism's earnings, India with a comparable diverse culture and heritage has a share of only 0.89% in world tourism's earnings. This discernible difference and the huge untapped potential provide opportunities to both the government and other stake holders of the tourism industry. This less return of true tourism potential is often attributed to a lack of promotion of its tourism destinations.

Tourism has been a neglected area hitherto in our country. Of late, though the government has identified the revenue earning potential of tourism as an industry and has stated giving some real improvements. The 'Atithi Devo Bhav' campaign of Ministry of Tourism is slowly but surely picking up, yet lot has to be done. Against this back drop the present study aims to carry out a strength analysis of Chhattisgarh, one of the newer states of the country which has potential but it is not able to capitalize on that.

II LITERATURE REVIEW OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

(a) Literature Review

The British Tourist Authority's definition of Tourism, "a stay of one or more nights away from home for holidays, visitors to friend or relatives, business conferences or any other purpose except such things as boarding education or semi-permanent employment."

According to UNWTO, "Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes."

"The temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs." According to Mathieson and Wall.

(b) Objectives of the Study

This research paper tries to explain the different ways as how this state can be positioned as tourist destination and how this will ultimately benefit the employment generation and growth of different related sectors and sub-sectors. This paper also tries to aim at the strengths and opportunities this state of Chhattisgarh is blessed with. Thus the study aims to explain the following objectives:

- (i) To study the potential of the state in positioning it as tourist destination.
- (ii) To study the attributes to differentiate the state to make the best use of its limited resources.
- (iii) The study aims to know the benefit of tourism to its stakeholders and to the population of this state as a whole.
- (iv) The research paper also focus on importance of tourism infrastructure so as to preserve handicraft, folk arts and culture of the state and thereby attract more tourists.

(c) Research Methodology:

An exploratory research design and a qualitative research approach have been undertaken in this research study. Secondary data were collected from books and the internet along with personal observations. The study attempts to explain the contribution of positioning of Chhattisgarh as tourist destination.

III ABOUT THE STATE OF CHATTISGARH

On 1st November 2000, the Chhattisgarh state was formed by carving out 16 Chhattisgarhi speaking south-eastern districts of Madhya Pradesh. Today the state has 27 districts and its capital is Raipur. This new state has large stretches of forest and greenery. In fact in a way the division of Madhya Pradesh has worked to the advantage of Chhattisgarh as the area under this state is blessed with huge natural resources.

With the formation of the new state, tourism potential of the state can be exploited to the hilt. 'Beauty' as is popularly said is in the beholders eye", and is largely perceived and suggestive. One of the world's most

famous waterfalls is Niagara Falls and it is only around 175 feet high. Compare this with world's highest cascade; Venezuela's Angel falls at 3200 feet or even our own Indian one, The Jog falls of Karnataka at 830 feet. This is what marketing does. And this is what the state needs to do – aggressive marketing.

IV TOURISM POTENTIAL OF THE STATE

The state has a tremendous potential for tourism. Its tourism strength lies in several areas such as Eco-tourism, Pilgrim tourism, Business tourism, Culture and ethno-tourism, Culture heritage and village tourism etc. Chhattisgarh has three national parks and 11 wildlife sanctuaries which can be positioned as national and international tourist destination. This forest area is full of greenery and beauty of nature which can be a boon to the people who want to relax and get away from their tension.

There are places of religious importance which can be developed as pilgrim tourism. Places like Rajim, Champaranya, Dongargarh, Shivrinarayan, Girodhpuri, Dantewada, Ratanpur, Sirpur and others are popular and main destination for pilgrim tourism. This state shares its historical background with the religious faith of Ramayan period. Places like Balmiki Ashram, shivrinarayan and many other are still there with a lot of potential.

Manpat which is in the northern part of the state is also a very promising tourist destination which is one of the most beautiful tourist spot. Apart from this Dussehra of Jagdalpur(southern part of Chhattisgarh) is also very important festival which is already very popular but still has a lot more to do to popularize it in a better way.

Tribal culture and villages of the state can also be the part of tourist attractions if explored in a way that makes people to feel different. It can make people to relax and show them the beauty and simplicity of the tribal's culture of Chhattisgarh. Today there is cut-throat competition in the market. Life is very busy and hectic in such a chaos and disturbance of urban part of our country if people get an environment which is away from all these and which lives as the creation of nature.

The state thus has the potential to attract tourists of every hue and color. The only requirement is to market its tourism potential aggressively. An analysis of the tourism potential of the state is carried out in the ongoing lines to present a clear picture.

Chhattisgarh has the potential to become a very popular tourism destination given the various tourist attractions it can offer. In fact there is something for every kind of tourism in the state – right from

pilgrimage to eco-tourism. Chhattisgarh has places which are famous pilgrimage sites. Its tourism strength lies in several areas such as Eco-tourism, Pilgrim tourism, Business tourism, Culture and ethno-tourism, Culture heritage and village tourism etc.

- (a) **Eco-tourism:** This state is fortunate to have 12% share of India's forests, three national parks and 11 wildlife sanctuaries. The national parks are the major attraction of Chhattisgarh. It has several modern attractions in protected areas such as Kanger Valley national parks, Barnwapan, Seetanadi, Udyanti and Achanakmar sanctuaries which has now become home for the wild buffalos and even more endangered Hill Myna are the state animal and state bird respectively.
- (b) **Pilgrim tourism:** The state encourages development of pilgrimage centers. Rajim, Champaranya, Dongargarh, Shivrinarayan, Girodhpuri, Dantewada, Ratanpur, Sirpur and others are popular and main destination for pilgrim tourism.
- (c) **Business tourism and Travel Tourism:** Chhattisgarh encourages investments in establishment of business -cum- recreation centers to cater to the needs of business tourists with higher purchasing power, facilities, such as hotels, entertainment and amusement parks, multiplexes, health, spas, shopping malls and Golf courses are being encouraged.
- (d) **Culture and ethno-tourism:** Chhattisgarh is very rich in its culture, traditions and festivals. Now it has identified and is developing ethnic villages and private sector is encouraged for proper maintenance and professional site management of important heritage site / monuments.
- (e) **Culture heritage and village tourism:** state will identify and develop heritage properties i.e. old palaces, Havelies etc. as places of tourist interest. These will be integrated with the eco – tourism circuits. Boramdeo, Rajim, Sirpur, Tala, Malhar, Shivrinarayan, Rock paintings of Raigarh, Ramgarh, Tumhan, Barsur and Kharod will be promoted as prime heritage sites. Festivals like Dusshera of Bastar, Madai of Narayanpur and Dantewada, Ramoram mela of Sukama, Boramdeo, Khairagarh and Chkradhar samaroh of Raigarh will also be promoted.

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V TOURISM IN CHHATTISGARH- AN OVERVIEW

Tourism in Chhattisgarh can be a major source of revenue and economic sustenance for not only the country but various states too. Particularly the ones that enjoy bounty of the nature, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh have already done it. States like West Bengal are aiming at it.

Given the number of beautiful tourist spots that the state has, if the Chhattisgarh government takes proper steps tourism can be developed into a major revenue earner for the state's kitty, creating income generation opportunities in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

It may be pointed out that in a very short duration after the formation of the state, the government of Chhattisgarh analyzed the potential for developing the state and took some concrete steps to promote and develop tourism in the state. It had announced a forward- looking tourism policy, which clearly recognizes the strengths and weaknesses and potential of tourism in the state. This tourism policy is not only a policy statement but is an attempt to analyze the tourism potential and strengths of Chhattisgarh along with the weakness and challenges.

The strengths and assets of Chhattisgarh clearly are pilgrimage, cultural tourism, heritage, eco-tourism, adventure tourism and wellness.

The challenges are the augmentation of infrastructure facilities with particular focus on improving air, rail and road connectivity and development of new tourist destinations, enhanced private sector participation, an aggressive and well planned publicity and marketing strategy , a more action oriented tourism administration and management, year round tourism and the more active participation of local host communities.

In order to ensure planned development and growth a master plan approach needs to be adopted. Though the state government initiates several steps to improve the air, rail and road connectivity a lot still needs to be done. Air connectivity of the state is poor and Raipur is the only city having an airport that connects to some states and cities of the countries.

VI ISSUES AND ACTION NEEDED

True, the state government has realized that tourism can be a major revenue earner for the state. But a lot needs to be done. What is required is to get the basics right first. Specifics can follow. Moreover, once the basics are taken care of the strategies for promoting tourism at various sites can be dealt on case to case basis. The tourism product is different from other

products. A tourism product is the combination of tourism services and offerings being provided by the different constituents of the tourism industry. The landscape, lush greenery, wildlife adventure, stay in hotel, traveling, festival, tradition and culture of the destination etc. constitute the invisible and intangible structure of the tourism product. These must be identified and properly classified.

(a) Important issues as regard to tourisms

- (i) Understanding the tourist needs, wants, tastes and attitude,
- (ii) Achieving sustainable growth in tourist arrivals,
- (iii) Increasing tourist traffic during lean seasons,
- (iv) Attempting to increase the length of stay of the tourist,
- (v) Dispersing tourist to new destinations and ,
- (vi) Enhancing image and popularity, etc of tourism destinations.

(b) Major Areas Where Action is Required

So, what are the hurdles that need to be done to be overcome for promoting tourism in Chhattisgarh? First of all tourism in Chhattisgarh has not yet received the focus of a state activity. Tourism development In Chhattisgarh is also affected by the fact that awareness and sensitivity about the potential of tourism has not percolated to all sections of the society. Following ground realities should be kept in mind about the state-

- (i) Inadequate and poor quality of infrastructure,
- (ii) Carrying capacity by air, road, and railways,
- (iii) Clean and comfortable lodging facilities at reasonable prices,
- (iv) Trained guides and tourist amenities of international standard,
- (v) Adequate entry points,
- (vi) Positive image building abroad,
- (vii) The need to preserve the heritage and natural resources,
- (viii) Safe and secure tourism.

Now keeping these ground realities in mind, what should be the action plan for Chhattisgarh? The future action programme should revolve around creating adequate infrastructure of international standard to make arrivals easy and a pleasurable experience.

VII CONCLUSION

In little over a decade, India has become one of the significant emerging economies. Its economy is growing at over 7 percent a year, making it the fastest growing free-market democracy. Indian industry is ticking along at double digits, while service sector

continues to lead the overall growth surge. It is tourism, however which has recorded the highest levels of growth – more than 15 percent per annum over the a few years.

It is now recognized that India's economic growth has to be employment driven and blend with social equity. Tourism has the capacity to capitalize on the country's success in the services sector and provide sustainable economic growth over the long term. It can stimulate most economic sectors through backward and forward linkages and cross- sectoral synergies. A recent study by National Council for Applied Economic Research reveals that tourism's contribution towards GDP (both direct and indirect) is 5.9 percent and towards employment (both direct and indirect) 8.78 percent. Opening up of the skies and a successful branding and posing campaign 'Incredible India' have driven the growth of tourism in India. Air transport is a driver of economic development. The economic stimuli of airlines, airports and direct affiliates beyond their direct impact can be expressed using output and employment multipliers. The states too need to pick up their cues.

The state needs to be positioned properly and in this endeavor the support of travel agents, tour operators, travel writers, representatives of travel and hospitality industry association, experts in the tourists and cultural sectors, diplomats, journalists and other opinion leaders is crucial. Effective positioning depends on a number of factors that together determine the attractiveness of the tourist destination. Positioning must promise the benefit the customer will receive, create the expectation and offer a solution to the customer's problem. In the light of above, Chhattisgarh state needs to market tourism in right earnest in order to exploit the potential that present. There is need for careful, systematic and long term perspective.

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