



A STUDY OF KEY STRATEGIES REQUIRED TO EXPLORE TOURISM POTENTIAL OF MITHILANCHAL

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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry world over is going through a great shift in ideas and beliefs. Today, fuelled by a massive increase in purchasing power and development of faster and cheaper modes of travel, more and more people are travelling across the world. The purpose of travels now tend to be more of leisure, and increasingly so, for getting to know new things and experiencing cultures, cuisine, traditions, etc. This kind of travel is called 'experiential travel'. Today, the discerning traveller is prepared to go greater distances and to previously unknown places to get the unique experiences and also to cater to her own special interests. The tourist is also looking at being a responsible traveller, about giving back to the community and interacting with the host community so that he has a visible stake in the whole development of the region. This paper is a modest attempt to study the tourism potential of mithilanchal and also focuses on the marketing strategies required to explore tourism potential.



KEYWORDS: Strategy, Religious Tourism, Tourism attraction, Tourism destination, Tourism Potential.

INTRODUCTION

Mithilanchal has a wide range of tourism potential, which has not been utilized to its fullest because of the critical geographical location of the locality, insecure environment and inaccessibility. Mithilanchal in any depth, daunted by the poor tourist facilities but the State has plenty of cultural and natural resources. It is realized that a little can be done for the impacts of strategic location and insecure environment but the existing tourist sites and the travel circuits need to be strengthened, new tourist sites and travel circuits to be identified and made more accessible to enhance the state's tourism potential.

While exploring the options for development of tourism products, the following aspects are to be kept in view.

- Tourist Composition
- Tourist requirement/expectation on various tourism activities and facilities as revealed in the tourist survey
- Future target segment
- Potential tourism activities

- The Plan for Tourism Development should be in conformity with the plans mentioned in the IXth Five Year Plan, the State Governments development policies, the Industrial Policy for the State and the National Tourism Policy.
- The overall development plan to take into account WTO's Bali declaration on tourism development which emphasizes that the Government should be committed to the preservation of cultural diversity in the world by incorporating cultural heritage principles into their development projects and related activities.
- The tourist products identified should encourage local community participation and protection of cultural identification, awareness programmes for local participation and local commitment to the project. It should also encourage women folk participation.

The basic tourist composition shows that majority of tourists are domestic. Choice of options does vary among the domestic and foreign tourists. A close examination of potential places, which have been identified through various surveys, reveals that, a lot of developments are possible to enhance tourism. A destination must be perceived in the market place as being an attractive place to visit. Destination image is crucial.

Potential Tourist Destinations of Mithilanchal

District Darbhanga

- Brahmpur: 8 kms. from Kamtaul. The village is noted for the Gautam Kund and a temple of Gautam Rishi.
- Kusheshwar - Asthan: 22 kms. north-east of Hasanpur Road Railway Station. It is noted for the temple of Lord Shiva. The origin of this temple is traced to the epic period.
- Makranda: 5 kms. south of Manigachhi Railway station. The place is known for its old temple called Banwaristhan.
- Darbhangha: Darbhanga is the seat of the maha of Darbhanga. The Raj areas is a well developed and beautiful laid-out complex of palaces, temples, offices, parks, gardens and ponds. There are a number of palaces built by successive Maharajas. The Maharaj of Darbhanga has traditionally been very great patrons of art and literature and through their magnificence has always prided encouragement to the scholars of Maithili and Sanskrit.

District Madhepura

- Chandisthan: 8 kms north of Murligan Railway Station. The place is famous for its temple of Goddess Chandrika.
- Singheshwar 7 kms north of Madhapura. The place is noted for its temple of Lord Singheshwara (Mahad)
- Ramnagar: 16 krns. from Murliganj Railway Station famous for the Temple of Kali.

District Madhubani

- Andhrathari: 19 kms from Jhanjharpur railway station. It has an old temple known as Kamladitya. The temple contains images of Surya, Vishnu, Lakshmi and Astacal Kamal.
- Balirajpur: 25 kms. north-east of Madhubani. Tradition ascribes the fort to King Bali of the epic period.
- Bhavanipur: 5 kms. away from Pandaul Block. The place is noted for its temple of Ugranath and traditional association with famous Maithili poet, Vidyapati.
- Bisfi: 9 kms from Kamtaul Railway Station. Famous for the birthplace of Maithily poet, Vidyapati.
- Sourath: Famous for Somnath Mahadev Temple. It owes its importance to the annual Sabha held by Maithil Brahmins for negotiation marriages.
- Phulhar: 6 kms west of Harlakhi block. Famous for Goddess Gina temple. Princess Site used to come here every day to worship the goddess. Lord Rama saw her for the first time at this place.

- vii. Jainagar: It contains the remains of a mud built fort, now in ruins. It is probably one of the several forts, which alauddin Hussain, King of Bengal constructed from Kamrup in Assam to Bettiah in order to resist, the incursions of the hill tribes.
- viii. Vasudevpur 16 kms east of Madhuban. It was an important centre of the old Raj kingdoms of Bhara arid Canciha.
- ix. Uchaitha: Sanskrit renowned poet Kalidas was blessed by Bhawati at this place.

District Saharsa

- i. Dewan Sal Mandir: One Shiv Ling is established in the temple. It is said that the Ling was established by Maharaja Shalivahan sometime in 100 B.C.
- ii. Darhara: Famous for Lord Shiva Temple.
- iii. Nauhatta: The place has a 'Shiva Temple' about 80 feet in height
- iv. Madan Bharati Asthan (Mahishi): The place is situated in village Mahishi. It is said that a religious discourse (Shastrarth) was held between Shankaracharya and the local scholar Mandan Mishra. Barti, wife of Mandan Mishra, who was also a great scholar, was named as judge for the discourse. it is also said that Shankaracharya, after Mishra, was Challenged by Bharti, was outwitted by her and accepted defeat.
- v. Tarn Asthan: 16 kms. west of Saharsa. Famous for an ancient temple of Bhagwati Tara is built
- vi. Ukahi: it contains an ancient image of Goddess Durga, discovered during excavation.
- vii. Mahapura: Saint, Baba Karu Khishav Ashram is situated in this place.

District Samastipur

- i. Malinagar: 35 kms. south-west of Lahenasarai famous for Mahadev temple.
- ii. Vidyapatingar: This place is famous for Maithili poet Vidyapati, who breathed his last in search of Lord shiva.

District Sheohar

- i. Deokuk: 19 kms. west of Sitamarhi. Famous for Shiva temple at Deokuli (or Dhekuli). Legends have it that Draupadi, the wife of the pandavas was born here.

District Sitamarhi

- i. Baghi Math: 7 kms northeast of Sitamarhi. There is a big Hindu monastery, which contains 108 rooms.
- ii. Pupri: Famous Baba Nageshwamath temple is here. It is said that Lord Shiva himself had appeared here as Nageshwar Nath Mahadev.

Potential Tourism Activity

Mithilanchal has immense potential for various tourism activities, first and foremost being religious tourism. The history of Mithilanchal indicates a rich heritage inherited from various dynasties & great personalities.

The archaeological & historical value of this heritage still remains to be explored & recognized in the international scenario although there is an influx of foreign tourists in the present situation. The wildlife, birds & sanctuaries hold vast potential for nature based eco-tourism. The river Koshi and Kamla all along its stretch offers potential for water based sports & riverfront activities. Based on their potential, various tourist places have been identified for tourism development.

Religious Tourism Potential of Mithilanchal

Hindu Tourism

- 1) A number of places associated with Lord Rama & Sita and the epic 'Ramayan' are in this state.

Table 1: Identified Hindu Tourism Sites

SI No	Tourist Centre	District
1	Balirajpur	Madhubani
2	Punaaura	Sitamarhi

2) Bihar has a vast untapped potential for religious tourism for Hindus from all over the world. There are innumerable temples dedicated to Lord Siva spread throughout the state.

Table 2: Identified Hindu Tourism Sites

SI No	Tourist Centre	District
1	Brahampur	Darbhanga
2	Kusheshwar Asthan	Darbhanga
3	Makranda	Darbhanga
4	Andhratharhi	Madhubani
5	Bhawanipur	Madhubani
6	Sourath	Madhubani
7	Pupri	Sitamarhi
8	Malinagar	Samastipur
9	Vidyapatinagar	Samastipur
10	Deokuli	Sheohar
11	Dewan Ban Mandir	Saharsa
12	Dharhara	Saharsa
13	Nauhata	Saharsa
14	Tara Asthan	Saharsa
15	Sigheswar	Madhepura
16	Ramnagar	Madhepura
17	Phulhar	Madhubani
18	Baghi Math	Sitamarhi
19	Sabhagachhi Sanstha	Sitamarhi
20	Mandan Bharti Asthan	Saharsa
21	Mahpura	Saharsa

Heritage Tourism Potential of Mithilanchal Historical

According to the Archaeological Survey of India at Darbhanga town fort is unearthing what is now believed to be the tallest fort than of Red Fort of Delhi. Archaeologically, Madhubani is full of "Temples" concealing the beauty of archaeological.

Table 3: Identified Tourist Sites

SI No	Tourist Centre	District
1	Darbhanga	Darbhanga
2	Rajnagar, Jainagar	Madhubani

Rural Tourism Potential of Mithilanchal Arts & Crafts & Rural Tourism

Mithila paintings are famous the world over for their intricate designs and motifs. The folk paintings of the women of Mithila are the exclusive monopoly of the women artists. The studies about tribal art tend to show formal similarities with the ancient drawings found in some grottos.

Table 4: Art & Craft Sites

SI No	Tourist Centre	District
1	Darbhanga	Darbhanga
2	Madhubani	Madhubani

Major Marketing Strategies for Exploration of Tourism in Mithilanchal:**a) Strategy to Identify Tourist Attractions**

- Maintain and highlight the State's unique and special attributes
- Establish a strong sense of place and local identity
- Identify diverse base of special interest attractions in designated Notified Areas
- Create tourism magnets through integrated tourism based activities
- Minimise the adverse impact of tourism on the State's natural resources and cultural values
- Help in establishing quality visitor experiences which meet expectations and will encourage positive word of mouth promotion by those who have enjoyed visit to Bihar

b) Strategy to Develop Tourist Attractions

- Bring a balance of many attractions as per the categories given below:
 - natural features
 - historic and cultural heritage attributes
 - shopping and entertainment facilities
 - educational and interactive learning facilities
 - sport and recreational facilities
- Bring clusters of attractions to provide unique experiences to tourists and their involvement in the attractions
- Create tourism development which is low impact and non-degrading to the environment.
- Provide basic amenities and reliable services on all tourist circuits and in all tourist centers to be developed in the State
- Select and priorities those sites which embody qualities that attract broad market interest, have attributes which are unique to Bihar
- Package the State's array of attractions and tourist infrastructure in such a manner as to draw visitors to and disperse them to other tourist destinations in the State.
- Preserve the country's patrimony which enabling tourism to contribute to the social and economic well being of the Bihar

Options for Tourism Attraction**i. Eco-Tourism**

This is a very popular tourism product and is widely accepted form of tourism. This essentially means, tourism activities related to the ecology and natural environment. This may include bird watching, study tour on botany & zoology and so on. The Eco Tourism Options are as follows;

Camping/Nature Camps

Camping/Nature camps is one of the old concepts, older than the term "ecotourism" itself. Nature camps are meant mainly for enjoying the environment and adventure activities, Students, foreigners, and adventure tourists like to visit these places as excursion or in search of thrill, Safety of the campers needs taken care of. Campers often like to cook food for them. If attractive and delicious food options are accompanied with camps, these can also lead to increased employment opportunities to the local people.

Theme/Amusement Parks

Theme parks in the area where no plantations are there will give a boost to grow the place as a major tourist destination. Some interesting concepts of artificial lakes for boating, different interesting rides viz. toy train and rain dance will attract many tourists.

Filming (plus viewing)

This can be a very prospective place for shooting of films where artificial sets can be made as per the requirement of the films. The place shall be on hire basis that would yield good revenue to the tourism department. Additionally, there could be an entry fee to the general public including tourists, for viewing the shooting of the movie. This shall provide added attraction to tourists. This will even be a very good promotion for the new tourist place in the making.

Heritage Tourism

This form of tourism has gained immense popularity among the tourists. Mithilanchal with its historical sites including and Archeological sites can offer a great deal of potential for heritage tourism. As such, a reasonable part of the tourists, surveyed, has shown interest for heritage tourism. The activities under this category include guided tour to forts, ruins of dynasties and cities and other archeological sites, arts & cultural events etc. This would attract both domestic and foreign tourists.

Rural Tourism

A relatively new concept - rural tourism can be developed based on a model traditional mithilanchal village to attract tourism. This form of tourism may particularly enthrall foreign tourists, who take interest in ethnic lifestyle, day to day activities, cultural events and food habits.

Urban Haat concept

Urban Haat is an upgraded version of the traditional weekly market offering a delightful amalgam of craft, food & cultural activities. There would be adequate stalls in the Haat to sell authentic Indian cuisines of various regions in the country by rotation. Like Dilli Haat, same kind of Haat concept can be introduced in certain places of Mithilanchal.

Health Tourism

Ayurvedic health tourism is one of the major area for tourism development. In Kerala, Ayurvedic health tourism accounts almost 40 percent of the state's tourism revenue.

The 3000-year-old system of Ayurveda medicine as practiced in the Indian State of Kerala, is gaining immense popularity among those suffering from stress related symptoms and living life in the fast lane. Cardiologists from USA, stockbrokers from Vienna, retired couples from the UK, writers from South Africa, any number of senior executives from all over India - all visit these spas for physical, mental and spiritual cleansing.'

Like Kerala, Mithilanchal has also very good scope development of Ayurvedic health tourism. There are numerous plants having medical value. The state has also traditions that focus on the holistic healing of individuals and on elevation the individual to a higher plane of consciousness and awareness.

Mental and Physical Well Being (Meditation and Yoga)

Mental and physical exercises meant to isolate the ego from the body and mind - designed to hone your concentration, improve health and help attain peace of mind through eight stages of training:

1. Disciplined behavior(yama)
2. Self purification(niyama)
3. Bodily postures such as the lotus position (asana)
4. Control of breathing (pranayama)
5. Control of the senses (pratyahara)
6. Fixing of the mind on a chosen object (dharana)

7. Meditation (dhyana) and

8. Samadhi - a state of being where you experience absolute tranquility and well being.

More Strategies Need to be Given Due Attention

- i. **Creation of Special Tourism Area.** The new potential sites shall be suitably delineated and shall be declared Special Tourism Area. The purpose would be to draw the attention of private developers and tourists as well. Projects involving development of Special Tourism Area in the state should be taken up on a priority basis. Suitable tax incentives strategies could be formulated for private sector funding on development projects in these areas.
- ii. **Speedy development of infrastructure** i.e. roads, water supply system, sanitation, power and telecommunication facilities for connecting new areas with existing major urban nodes and transport hubs should be focus of policy.
- iii. **Exclusive marketing strategies** for promoting new areas and innovative tourism products.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The conclusion of the above discussion is that aforementioned four categories are the basic tourism products, which if innovatively packaged could unleash a new era in the tourism sector of Mithilanchal. But to make the efforts fruitful a set of strategies is believed to be a must, which shall provide the broad framework of guidelines to effectively initiate such activities.

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